

MAR 90 ©87



INSIDE  
JOKE

A NEWSLETTER  
OF COMEDY  
AND CREATIVITY

#61

\$1.50

SPECIAL  
36-PAGE  
("HELP!")  
ISSUE

# Upcoming Events

JULY 31 - DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO IJ #62

AUGUST 1 through 7 - National Clown Week  
 AUGUST 1 - LARRY STOLTE (31); DONALD LEIGHTY (37); Jerry Garcia (46); Dress for Success Day  
 AUGUST 2 - GEORG PATTERSON (28); Peter O'Toole (55)  
 AUGUST 6 - Hiroshima Day; Judge Crater Day  
 AUGUST 7 through 13 - National Preserve Privys Week  
 AUGUST 7 - Stan Freberg (62); Garrison Keillor (46)  
 AUGUST 8 - Odie, from Garfield (10), Andy Warhol (b. 1920)  
 AUGUST 9 - Nagasaki Day; Nixon resigns (1974); David Steinberg (46)  
 AUGUST 10 - Ian Anderson (41)  
 AUGUST 11 - Presidential Joke Day  
 AUGUST 12 - C.B. DeMille (b. 1881)  
 AUGUST 13 - International Lefthanders Day; Fidel Castro (61); Umpire Appreciation Day; Alfred Hitchcock (b. 1899); Bert Lahr (b. 1895); Annie Oakley (b. 1860)  
 AUGUST 14 through 20 - Elvis International Tribute Week  
 AUGUST 15 - Woodstock (1969); National Relaxation Day; Linda Ellerbee (44); Napoleon (b. 1769)  
 AUGUST 15 through 18 - Repubcon  
 AUGUST 16 - Harmonic Convergence (1987); Joe Miller's Joke Day; Manchester Massacre (1819)  
 AUGUST 17 - Davy Crockett (. 1836); Mae (West) Day  
 AUGUST 18 - Martin Mull (45)  
 AUGUST 20 - H.P. Lovecraft (b. 1890); Robert Plant (40)  
 AUGUST 21 - DOUG SMITH (35)  
 AUGUST 22 - Ray Bradbury (68); Dorothy Parker (b. 1893)  
 AUGUST 23 - Mark Russell (56); Keith Moon (b. 1947)  
 AUGUST 25 - Walt Kelly (b. 1913)  
 AUGUST 26 - MOM CHAPUT (66); Women's Equality Day; Geraldine Ferraro (53)  
 AUGUST 27 - NICK AUMILLER (37); Mother Teresa (78); Martha Raye (72); Income Tax Unconstitutional (1894)  
 AUGUST 28 - GYPSY the Feral (5); Ron Guidry (38)  
 AUGUST 29 - Shay's Rebellion (1786)  
 AUGUST 30 - Huey Long (b. 1893); R. Crumb (45)

\* INSIDE JOKE is put on hexaweekly by Elayne "Mrs. Steve?" nee Wechsler and many dear friends listed below, and emanates from beautiful downtown Brooklyn, site of the mysterious Syringe Fish spotted off the coast of Coney Island...

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SEPTEMBER is Cable TV Month, National Clock Month and National Cat Health Month  
 SEPTEMBER 1 - KAL Flight 007 Downed (1983); Lily Tomlin (48); Edgar Rice Burroughs (b. 1875)  
 SEPTEMBER 2 - ANDY AMSTER (31); MIKE GUNDERLOY (29)  
 SEPTEMBER 3 - Mort Walker (65)  
 SEPTEMBER 4 - Paul Harvey (70); Omigodno, not JERRY!!!  
 SEPTEMBER 5 - John Cage (b. 1912); Be Late Day

(continued on page 5)

## ACKNOWLEDITORIAL

Welcome to the Gratuitous Belligerence issue, wherein we find domestic violence, excessive alcoholism, unemployment, gay-bashing, racism, foreigner-bashing, Redbaiting, flatulence, baseball, sunglasses, and even extraterrestrials, all for the price of \$1.50 —ain't America great? I don't know about you all, but I plan to lay low until this whole thing blows over...

Yes, my official married-type name is indeed Elayne Wechsler-Chaput for the time being, but my IJ bank account and our palatial p.o. box are still, as always, registered under "Elayne Wechsler." If you're writing to me at home in Brooklyn, feel free to call me W or C or any combination thereof, but PLEASE only address p.o. box mail to EW or IJ, okay? (This includes mail for Kip's "Four-Alarm FIRE SIGNAL, as s/he uses the p.o. box with my permission.)

Speaking of marriage, the wedding was neatoken, the honeymoon in Toronto even more so (hi to Gary, Doug, Martin and Daza, and I promise to see you next time, Sarah and Cindy), and things are just calming down. Thanks to everyone for your good wishes, and to Phil for a lovely back cover in commemoration!

Did anyone guess from last issue that our newest staffers were Larry Stolte and Todd Kristel? Well, yes, but you were supposed to be disqualified, Todd and Larry... Rory and Dorian are haitusing this issue, Anni's still "out" on the writers' strike, J.P. interrupts his Snide Critic to bring us more illos, and DeeBee has had Mildred write a lovely addition to the Letters column—other staff folks all present and accounted for. Speaking of letters, you'll also find in "Sayz-U" David Serlin's explanation as to why he has chosen to discontinue his "Just Say No To Igloos" serial, varied responses to the last Roldo debate, a synopsis of sorts from new contributor Tamarina Dwyer of her "Poet's Diet Book" serial beginning this issue, and feedback on Ace's "Racism" column last issue (his piece for this issue isn't nearly as controversial, but it is participatory, and if anyone wishes to add their two cents to Part 2 of it please write Ace or IJ with your answer by the deadline). And I've a question regarding "Sayz-U"—do you think our letter writers deserve credit in the editorial box to your left as well as other contributors? Let me know by the deadline, and if you do their names will go in the editbox as well.

Since the publication of Ivan Stang's book *High Weirdness By Mail*, which lists IJ among hundreds of other zines, we've received quite a few new potential subs; unfortunately, HWSM naturally went to press before our price hike so, rather than telling new folks I won't send an IJ until they give me another 50¢, I'm still sending out first-time sample issues at \$1 each and reminding everyone that from here on in it's \$1.50... Thanks to Ace, Michael Polo, Susan Packie, J.C. Brainbeau and new subber Dave McLaughlin for their generous donations, and welcome to new contributors Tamarina, Morgan Lloyd, Catherine Jackson, Rodney Lynch, Sergio Taubmann, Stu Newman, Don Wagberg and anyone else I may have inadvertently missed! Other than that, lots of serials and in-jokes, including one which Gary and Daza seem to be playing on one another; and, at long last (and providing there's enough space this issue), a page-and-a-half long "Fan Noose" update, which I plan to also Xerox separately on the office photocopier to send to all our former exchange folks.

IJ is, of course, no longer available for trade, but you can get it for \$1.50 per issue, with up to \$12 (8 issues) for a yearly advance sub, if you're a regular subscriber; if you're a contributor, you have the option of only paying 65¢ in stamps (cash and stamps are not interchangeable, so please don't send \$1.50 in postage or 65¢ in coins) or 74¢ in American stamps if you're a Canadian contributor. Each issue of IJ costs 3 IRCs to other foreigners, and I send it surface rate. If there's an "X" by your name on the mailing label, this is your last issue without further payment, and most likely your last notice. If you're not sure what kind of stuff to submit to us, send for the Guidelines, but I especially need spot illustrations at this time. Oh yes, advance subs are non-refundable; I've already spent the money—speaking of which, donations are always welcome, and rumor has it that IJ is also offered in exchange for one non-skipmy marijuana cigarette, known in wacky drug users' vernacular as a "joint"; this rumor remains unconfirmed at this point, given the fact that suddenly I know a lot of CIA people, strangely enough. I'd personally consider anyone sending drugs to me through the mail to be taking quite an illegal risk, but I guess we live in risky times. Send what you will by the deadlines—July 30 for #62 and September 15 for #63 (yes, you've counted right; #63 is our 8th Anniversary Issue!)—to P.O. Box 1609, Madison Square Station, New York, NY 10159.

This issue is dedicated to Joshua Logan, and also in memory of what used to be the Democratic party (now that "Billion Dollar Breakfast" Bentsen is Dukakis' choice for veep, there goes the neighborhood... you can say hello to at least four more years of Bush and his right-wing fanatics...). P.S. I'm still taking \$5 business-card-size ads, folks; anyone interested?

# Fan Noose

by Elayne Wechsler



Surprise, and finally!...I was going to forego doing this column altogether when I had to drop trading IN for other publications last year when our printing rates went up 200% and I could no longer afford to make extra (more than 150) copies to send out (a situation only worsened by the following March's postage hike); but I've been receiving and eagerly reading so much from the alternative press lately that I decided I'm going to make this an annual or even semi-annual thing again, not unlike my tv review column, to let you all know what's still out there and outside the mainstream for your enjoyment and support. I've gotten rid of most of my zine collection at this point—never kept the newspaper-type anyway as it dates quickly—and

sent most of the pubs to Mike Gunderloy at 6 Arizona Ave., Rensselaer, NY 12144-4502 for his collection and mention in FACTSHEET FIVE, the "Journal of crosscurrents and cross-pollination" to which every important zine (and they're all important) ought to be listed. FF is still the best networker around, and I'm proud that this column had something to do with its inception. If you're a writer or artist looking to submit something to a zine (and many of those I list below are desperately seeking submissions; I'll try to remember to designate them for you, but it's always a good idea to send a SASE for some sort of guidelines first, or, even better, send for a copy of the zine itself), or seek new mind-input to counteract the glut of government-issue infotainment out there, send Mike \$2 (cash, check, m.o. or US postage) and open up your horizons!...Another old friend is holding his own, just barely, with a new offering of its own. Frankly, if it weren't for the immeasurable influence of Bill-Dale Marcinko on my life when I was but a tadpole in college, ID would not exist, I would never have met my husband, and I'd probably still be—well, never mind what I might have been, but I owe pretty much my entire cultural outlook to Bill, my first "guru." Bill's former zine AFTA puts ID to shame even today, and his new pub is called CROW (it says "W25" but Bill's a hoaxter so I'm pretty sure, especially considering the expense involved, this is the first and only one), and it contains TCNS of reviews (of EVERYTHING), sexual politics, thought-provoking essays and general witty cynicism on Life Today, if you call that living. Please send Bill not only \$4 for the zine but, oh, a couple deeds to oil fields, a few hundred acres of prominent timberland, your first-born heirs...you get the picture. In my opinion, Bill-Dale's one of the alternative press' unsung geniuses and it's well worth supporting anything he does (besides, he's in deeper debt than any other genius I know). His address is P.O. Box A, Wharton, NJ 07885...Another good directory for altresses which specializes mainly in periodicals and indie books is NEW PAGES, published thrice yearly out of P.O. Box 438, Grand Blanc, MI 48439. For \$12/6 issues editor Grant Burns gives an interview with Lawrence Ferlinghetti, resources, reviews, a marketplace and news from what he calls "Adventurous Presses." I'm giving this to Steve to keep in the library...Also in everyone's personal library should be the Reader's Digest of the altresses, UTNE READER (\$18 for 6 issues to P.O. Box 1974, Marion, OH 43306-1974) which reprints the best of what's being written now, usually with one or more unifying themes, plus adds exclusives, reviews, and a lively lettercolumn...New on the horizon is my current favorite leftist pub, ZETA MAGAZINE, \$24 for 12 issues to 150 West Canton St., Boston, MA 02188), which features editors Lydia Sargent and Michael Albert plus regular columns by Alexander Cockburn, Noam Chomsky and other faves of mine, including some important new names. At 90+ pages an issue it takes a long time to read, but it's time well spent, and I'm almost never without my Z Mag...I should also plug some weeklies while I'm at it—THE NATION seems to have been around forever and also features Cockburn, as well as other good essayists like Chris Hitchens, Calvin Trillin and Gore Vidal. The essays are on the longish and often boring side, but perhaps that's just me being not informed enough about the operations of European and Asian governments. You'll learn lots of stuff you didn't know, I gar-un-tee. \$36 per year (weekly most of the year, biweekly in the summer months) to 72 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10011)...I can't not plug the GUARDIAN, since I do part-time work for them. This is what you should be reading instead of Time or Newsweek to find out what's really going on in the world. Only \$27.50 per year (they're also biweekly in the summer, and boy are my typing hands grateful) in the U.S., \$11/yr Canada, \$18 for other foreign lands (\$40 for foreign air mail) to an address I've put to memory every Tuesday, 33 West 17th St., New York, NY 10011 (hi Bill! hi Axel! hi Ellen! hi the rest of you)...I know I've not bothered listing foreign rates for most of these pubs—not only does that take up lots more room, usually it's best to try to make personal contact and just ask the pub what its rates are first, which is what I had to do with a Canadian equivalent of sorts to the Guardian called the CANADIAN TRIBUNE, which sells for \$15 per year in Canada but \$20 US and overseas (they're at 290A Danforth

this column continues on page five as well

Ave., Toronto, Ont. M4K 1N6). It tends to be a bit overtly pro-communist-without-qualification at times, but since most of the US altresses, for all their political correctness, center so much on our country they ignore the neighbor to the north, I consider this invaluable info on what's up UY There...Some Guardian writers also put pen to ink for NEW DIRECTIONS FOR WOMEN, a good mix of cultural and political feminist news (get it instead of Ms., please!), available for only \$10/year or \$16/2 years (it's bimonthly)—\$16/1 year Canadian—from 108 West Palisade Ave., Englewood, NJ 07631 (yep, Ann's old stomping grounds)...Another newspaper just starting up features items from the South-North News Service, which believes the truest news usually comes from people who actually live in the places from which they're reporting. It looks to be a good enterprise, but the price (inc. mandatory donation) looks to be a bit high for what you get—a whopping \$49.50 for 6 pages a week, to 4 West Wheelock Street, Hanover, NH 03755. The paper's called THIRD WORLD WEEK...Meanwhile, in the "Fourth World" (that of the indigenous peoples still surviving on this planet) altresses also exist, and one of the best is DAYBREAK, specializing in news and culture of the North and South American Native peoples "dedicated to the seventh (future) generation" to which we must leave our heritage; it sells for \$12/4 issues to P.O. Box 98, Highland, MD 20777-0098...If you like your politics ranting and radical, OVERTHROW may be for you. The Yippies are still a bit heavy on the conspiracy-theory angle, but they still fight for causes many others won't touch (prisoners' rights, freedom for public lands and the ecology, and much more—they're \$10/4 or so issues a year to P.O. Box 392, Canal St. Station, New York, NY 10013...Also on the less-popular front in today's asinine "war on drugs" is NORML (the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws), who have just brought out COMMON SENSE FOR AMERICA, which features a lot of useful information (political, medicinal, you name it) you may never have known about cannabis. They tend to procrastinate (I still haven't heard back from them on my subscription request) but you can try anyway, at 2001 'S' Street NW, Suite 640, Washington, D.C. 20009...And LOOKOUT sports a new newsprint look as it expands from Lawrence Livermore's excellent political essays to look at other areas such as self-education, organic gardens, news from the "other" Central American countries and so forth. I don't know how LL does it for \$1 per issue (to P.O. Box 1000, Laytonville, CA 95454 but his readers are the richer for it (and he even prints my letters to him)...A less-ambitious but just as important venture comes from British expatriot Dave Hyde, editor of NO BULLSHIT, a publication of Ganymedean Slime Mold (he tells me it's a long story), in which he rants and raves about the political scene and drug-running conspiracies and my fave, "Asshology in the News." NB's free for the asking; ask of Dave at Box 1095, Kokomo, IN 46903...One of our best political satirists (and the best thing about the late lamented Wilton-North Report) is Paul Krassner, who puts out THE REALIST every few months or so. This last issue features another favorite of mine, Harry Shearer, and lots of truly amusing stuff for those of us who know there's funnier people out there than Mark "Establishment" Russell. Quick, plunk down \$2 for an issue or \$23 for 12 to Box 1230, Venice, CA 90294...Lots of good humor zines out too; try KNUCKLEHEAD PRESS, f'rinstance. Editor Chris Miksaneck & co. are less political than just plain humorous, but for \$5 a year (4 issues) it's cheaper (and better) than expensive garbage like NatLamp—send to Box 305, Burbank, CA 91503...I eagerly await the coming of each issue of the bizarre, sick, extremely funny collageart/essay zine SMURFS IN HELL, and you should too—in fact you can for \$3 per copy to Robert Carr, 2210 North 9th St., Boise, ID 83702...Even if you're not especially crazy about Monty Python's Flying Circus (I hear there are one or two of you out there) I think you'll be charmed by IT'S (what it is) from Sheila Gibson a/k/a The Easel, a bright young artist/writer residing at 20 Shady Lane, Nashua, NH 03062 who manages to put out one issue every quarter if she's lucky, do it all by hand (no typing!) and get through high school all at once—remarkable! Well worth your support, and looking for participation (letters, submissions, etc.)...Also DSS (desp. seek. submissions) is Debbie David, editor of BEAUTIFUL WORLD, one of two or three zines where I have a regular column. For only \$1.50 to DD (P.O. Box 1675, Old Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10011) you get Devo news, weird essays and reviews, and chunks of strange items everywhere, all with well-laid-out graphics and a slightly askew angle on life...And ID's own Prudence Gaelor is about to bring out issue 3 of her and Rodney Dioxin's SPONTANEOUS HUMAN COMBUSTION QUARTERLY, which she tells me is her mostly-art issue. SHCQ is also looking for entries in their "Divvy Award" contest (named for the late Divine)—write Pru for info and guidelines (they're DSS too) at P.O. Box 1529, Columbia, MD 21044...While SCHQ often deals with dark 'n serious stuff, DREAMSHORE, now publishing irregularly but still alive, seeks submissions concerning themselves with childhood, mythology and magic—send \$1 to Melanthe Alexian, P.O. Box 1387, Bloomington, IN 47402 (make checks payable to Jan Byron and, as I forgot to mention above, SCHQ checks for around \$1 or so should be made out to Alix Bischoff)...One of the best of the undefinable zines floating around is NANCY'S MAGAZINE, a biannual gem which sells for \$2 and contains such a wonderful mix of just about everything that it's a must on my "A" list. The new issue looks at the Dewey Decimal System and even classifies many of its articles! Always a great read—Nancy Bonnell-Kangas is at P.O. Box 02108, Columbus, OH 43202...I believe GAUZY MOMENTO has the same frequency as N's M, twice yearly, as their subscription rate is also \$4 per year, and for that you get nicely done essays, thoughtful editorials, restaurant reviews and actual typesetting—write for info to Carolyn Croke and Mark Powell at P.O. Box 3540, Minneapolis, MN 55403...A



# DIARY of The ROCK FIEND

by  
Anni Ackner

PICKING AT SCABS II - THE LEGEND CONTINUES

To tell you the truth, I never figured you'd be seeing my smiling face in these pages again. I mean, the writers are still on strike all right (though when you get right down to it—and I've been a writer for a coupla months now, so I should know—there's not a hell of a lot of difference as far as I can see between being a writer who's out on strike and a writer who's not out on strike) and the way things are shaping up they're due to be out on strike for maybe the next ten or twenty years, for Chrissakes, but you keep hearing about how this production company signed a separate agreement with them and that production company signed a separate agreement with them, which I guess means that some sponsor was having seven heart attacks over the idea that maybe the new episodes of the Cosby show would be set back a coupla months and chickened out, so anyway, I figured that that person I'm not supposed to mention would probably cave in too and sign some kind of agreement with Anni Ackner. In fact, the way I got it, they almost did sign an agreement which would have meant good-bye to yours truly, but at the last minute Anni Ackner decided she wanted some kind of moratorium or something called on the playing of Belinda Carlisle records in her vicinity while she was trying to do up her column (I mean, Anni's column—this Belinda Carlisle hasn't got a column far as I know, unless she's the one turning out those Ho Chi Zen things), and Old Nameless wasn't going to give in to that for some reason, so, anyway, here I am again, and for my part you can play Belinda Carlisle records till your head falls off if that's what makes you happy. The money is just as green one way or the other, though if I get a vote on this thing I'd rather hear some Creedence.

But hey, you're not gonna get any argument out of me, no matter what happens. I mean, like, here I sit in this nifty air-conditioned room (now, air-conditioning is one thing I'd pick to go down in history for as importing to Popovac, but the way I understand it, a) you gotta have windows and b) you gotta have electricity, so right away we've got a problem. I'm working on it, though), nice cold beer in the fridge (yeah, we have beer on Popovac. Fella called Home Brew makes it, and they pass it out over at the Drag On Inn and it tastes just fine, specially if you have a real deep fondness for old athletic socks. Me, I could take a bath in this Budweiser stuff), just piling up the money for diddling around with a typewriter. Meanwhile, back on Popovac, according to the last letter I got, they're stranded off the coast of Florida, sweating their brains out and, even though Bruce and Andy got some kind of hot idea about pushing the thing back into the ocean with laundry poles, Miami Beach being the way it is these days, it looks like they're gonna be glued there for a while. I mean, ask me if I care, okay?

I gotta tell you, though, that there is one thing, anyway, that I miss about Popovac this time of year, and that's baseball.

So, okay, you're gonna tell me, look, hey, Lou, you're surrounded by baseball where you are, all right. I mean, you wanna put on Channel 9, you got the Mets, you wanna put on Channel 11, you got the Yankees, and if you really wanna good laugh, you put on Superstation WTBS and you got the Atlanta Braves (which, by the way, if this is a baseball team then I'm one of Shirley MacLaine's past lives). Listen, Lou, you've got baseball coming out the ying-yang from where you're sitting right now—that's what you're gonna tell me, am I right or what? Well, listen, I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings for anything, and I understand that I'm like a guest here, and if you want me to keep my mouth shut just say the word, but I gotta be honest with you—what you guys go around calling baseball would be enough to get you ninety days being handcuffed to Marv the Mime over on Popovac.

In the first place, I just don't dig the way you guys watch baseball over here. I mean, either you watch it on television or else 50,000 of you all hang out together in this place with walls, no less, eating stuff like hot dogs, and some of these joints even have ceilings on them. I mean, like, what is the point? Television I just don't wanna talk about at all—I gotta admit that I get a kick out of this MTV thing, and those things they show during the day are pretty funny, though I don't know why all those people let those T.V. cameras into their houses when they're in the middle of having babies and getting drunk and such like, but for baseball? Forget it. Like, you watch it on television, not only does the pitcher not know when you're yelling at him, but if you throw your Seagull Kone at him, all it does is get all over the screen, though I guess since you guys usually eat stuff that doesn't clot anyway, that part doesn't bother you too much. And those stadiums—with the walls? And the ceilings? Okay, it isn't your fault that you got too many damned people sitting on this burg, and they all want to go to the ballgame at the same time (though those people in Atlanta obviously need to take up a hobby or something) but having all those walls and things just makes it too easy on the outfielders—they hit the wall, they stop running. On Popovac, now, the outfielders have to keep on running

until either the ball hits the ground or they do, whichever comes first. Your way takes all the science out of it, though I guess it probably does thin out the crowds at your coronary care units some.

As far as that goes, it looks to me like the way you guys play baseball in general is pretty old-fashioned, and lets the players off too easy, besides wasting a lot of energy. Like, all those teams you people have. Just a bunch of dead meat, some of them—I watched one of those Baltimore Orioles games the other day, and we got a retired paint-brush maker on Popovac who could have struck out their entire starting line-up—you'd be better off letting them all buy frozen custard stands and do something, like, useful, with themselves. Now, see, we've got two leagues same as you—ours are called The Popovac League and The Other Popovac League—but between the two of them they've only got six teams (that'd be Sandy's Team, Ron's Team, Dolores' Team, Marv's Team, Manny's Team, and The Boston Celtics), and this cuts down on a lot of the crap. Like, what happens is that every day during the season we have two games going on, and the third team in each league gets to sit under a beach umbrella and make fun of the two that are playing. That keeps them rested and gives everyone else a chance to come over and dump Seagull Kones on the pitcher's head at real close range, and none of those baloney about ten or twelve games going on at the same time, either.

And about those pitchers—every team has just one. Yeah, that's it. I know some of your teams carry, like, eight or ten pitchers, and some of those characters don't pitch more than one or two innings every coupla days, and for the life of me I can't figure that out (yeah, pay me a million bucks a year to throw 18 pitches twice a week. Go ahead—my number's in the book. Though for that matter I can't figure out why you guys pay your players anyway. On Popovac, the players pay the team owners, and pretty damn well, too. Dolores owns three Cornish Rexes and a reconditioned '50 Studebaker). I mean, you don't figure your second baseman is going to come out twice a week and field a coupla balls, do you? So, like, why should your pitchers be on this permanent vacation? Our pitchers go out for every game, and throw every pitch in the game and, okay, after a coupla years you sometimes find them in the off-season out back of the Drag On Inn doing Connie Francis imitations but, hey, no pain, no gain, right? And I'll tell you another thing—you don't find one of our pitchers sitting around with his head in a bucket of ice, crying because he's got a hang-nail. They're heavy-duty, our pitchers. Two, three years ago, for instance, Benny, who was throwing for Tony's Team (they became Manny's Team last year after Tony swapped them for a really hot pair of Nikes, and a bunch of weird stuff to be named later—sometimes those trade negotiations get pretty insane), pitched an entire game with a coupla inches of barbed wire in his arm, that he'd picked up taking the short cut through Old Lady Bernadine's rock garden while he was trying to make the start time. Of course, he lost 27-2, but you gotta give him points for trying.

I do have to admit that sometimes even the pitchers get tired, though, but that's what the Designated Guy is for. All right, I understand you have a Designated Hitter, or at least some of you do, but that's what I mean about you being old-fashioned. Like, all the DH does is stand in for the pitcher, right? Well, the DG stands in for anybody on the team who needs to take a rest. Let's say, somewhere around the 14th or 15th inning your left fielder starts to look a little wasted. He blows his whistle (all our players wear whistles, which is a big help if they have to chase a long ball onto the other side of the rock, and maybe they get lost), the Designated Guy runs out into left, takes over his position, and the left fielder can Gatorade or something until someone else blows his whistle and the DG takes over his spot. It's a pretty handy position, particularly for those long games.

And that's another thing—nine innings? No matter if everyone is having a good time? And even if everybody is having a lousy time and wants to go home and shellack a bookcase or something? For the life of me I can't figure out why you guys are so hung up on this time thing. With us, we just keep on playing until everybody decides it's getting boring, and then we stop, so if it's one of those real cruddy games, and there's been maybe two, three hits the whole time, and the catcher is hanging out behind the mound building a ship in a bottle, we'll knock off after maybe the third or fourth inning, but if it's a great game, and the homers are flying around, and everybody's having a good time, we'll just keep on playing—I mean, like, why stop a good thing? And especially if it's a tie—even if it's a cruddy game we'll keep going till we break a tie. I remember that our longest game—I was just a kid then, but I'll never forget it—lasted close to three years, even though along about the 20th month it started to get a little nasty all the way around, especially during the blizzard. That's the only time I can remember anybody ever changing a pitcher. Seems the Boston Celtics' pitcher, fella by the name of Sol, slipped on a piece of ice and broke his leg. The Designated Guy came in and pitched for awhile, but then the third baseman wanted him so the Celtics put out a call over the loudspeaker for anybody who thought he could pitch, see, and Lydia came—I always figured she was more the first base type, myself—and pitched 142 shutout innings, so you never know. Christ, nine innings. I mean, Christ.

Incidentally, I don't know if anybody but me has noticed this, but none of the teams I've seen on television look like they got any girls on them. Of course, it has been pretty hot lately, so maybe they all took a coupla weeks off or something until the weather gets better, but it sure makes the teams look pretty

Guess what? Right - continued next page!



"ROCK FIEND" continued from previous page  
funny, if you want to know the truth. I'd do something about that, if I were you.

So I guess you can see why I kinda miss baseball these days, even though not enough to make me head down to Miami Beach in the middle of the summer (I mean, I'm nostalgic, I'm not totally off my rocker). One of these days you guys ought to come by and see what some real baseball looks like—it'll knock your socks off. And we'd be happy to have you. Hell, like the man says, we'll even throw another rat on the barbeque for you, if that's what you've got in mind. Tell you what—you go down to Popovac and have yourself a real good time, and, just to balance things out, I'll just hang around here and try to put up with the air-conditioning and the beer and even this wuss baseball of yours. I mean, like, it's maybe the least a President can do, right?

See ya.

Sincerely yours,

Lou  
President of the Republic  
of Popovac

FAN NOOSE continued from page three  
(and they wonder why I only want  
to do this once a year or so?)

quiet little thing, MARY'S LETTER is sent out free of charge by Mary Sobolewski, who discusses paper doll collecting, reviews some zines she's gotten, and seeks submissions for a "Childhood Memories" section, among other things—she's at Box 12146, Lake Park, FL 33403...Don't know when Ace Backwards's next TWISTED IMAGE is coming out, but I wanted to plug it anyway because he's usually looking for submissions too (of a more personal and graphic nature than IJ, natch) and you'll need the address for his current survey on "What Keeps You Sane?" anyway—1630 University Ave., #26, Berkeley, CA 94703...Women in music are often ridiculed, downplayed or ignored altogether, so thank goodness for BITCH, "the women's rock newsletter with bite!"—for your copy send \$15 for 12 issues to Lori Twersky (make checks out to San Jose Face) at Suite 164, 478 W. Hamilton Ave., Campbell, CA 95008...When I stopped trading, one of the only zines to still subscribe to IJ was KALLISTI, an interesting blend of stories, magic, essays and anything else editor Kenn Day & co. accept, for \$9 a year to P.O. Box 19566, Cincinnati, OH 45219...The quarterly PHOEBE, The Newsletter of Ec-centricity, is out again, and I can finally get my latest fix of James MacDougall's found bits of weirdness around the globe. With this issue came my "1987 Year in Review" one—all for only \$1, to 3220 'N' Street NW, Suite 333, Washington, D.C. 20007...Even tho it's still called THE MONTHLY INDEPENDENT TRIBUNE TIMES JOURNAL POST GAZETTE NEWS CHRONICLE BULLETIN, T.S. Child's neat little 8-pager is now publishing irregularly, but it's still 50¢, and you can now also check out T.S. and Denver Tucson's book EUROPE OFF THE WALL for the best unusual vacation tips of all—both things can be gotten (the book's \$11.95) from 2510 Bancroft Way #207, Berkeley, CA 94704 (make book checks payable to Anneli S. Rufus)...Also back is the WEST VIRGINIA SURF REPORT (even though editor Jeff now lives at P.O. Box 77027, Greensboro, NC 27417-7027, a 1-pager of weird writing that's free and worth much more...Another one-pager is Roy Harper's OUTER SHELL, also free from P.O. Box 7053, St. Petersburg, FL 33734, featuring music-related essays...We are living in an age of extremes, says ZERO HOUR, one of the better chronicles of our strange times. In the premiere issue, editor Jim Jones (really!) takes a look at cults and fanaticism, and it can get quite brutal and sick but it's worth checking out if you have the \$3 + \$1.50 for p&h to P.O. Box 766, Seattle, WA 98111...Steve's still getting a few zines which deserve mention, like IT'S ONLY A MOVIE from the Chicago Psychotronic Film Society (\$1.50 to Mike Flores, P.O. Box 14683, Chicago, IL 60614-0683, or it's \$10 per year); SLIMETIME, \$3 for 6 issues to Steve Puchalski, 1108 E. Genesee St. #103, Syracuse, NY 13210 (both zines deal with psychotronic movies mainly, with the latter being mostly reviews); and BUF-0, Klaus Haisch's offering which is free in exchange for letters or submissions from 1729 E. Tabor St., Indianapolis, IN 46203 and features all sorts of fringe-culture weirdness...Would you believe there's actually a network out there trying to bring back the TV show Starman? They're called SPOTLIGHT STARMAN and I have more info from them than I know what to do with, so write me for some of it...A couple announcements to close things off, barring late-arriving zines: Dana A. Snow's working on a psychology book and is looking for input on all sorts of subjects—write him for info at 7356 Beverly Blvd. #3, Los Angeles, CA 90036...And MasterMath himself, William G. Raley, informs me his zine AFTER HOURS "is definitely a 'go.' It's a new quarterly magazine of dark fantasy and horror. Other acceptable genres include mystery and suspense, S&S, light fantasy, and macabre humour. Some caveats—no sexism or racism. Futuristic settings OK, but no hard science fiction. No excessive violence. R-rated sex OK. Naturally, as the name implies, all stories must take place after dark! Length—4000 wds max, pref. under 2000 wds. Payment—4¢ per wd on acceptance...I'll be publishing stories markedly different than IJ's, but IJ writers (or their friends who howl at the moon) are welcome to submit stories." Good luck to William and all of you, and until next year, see you in the funny papers!

# Inside IJ Staffers

It is an absolute pleasure to welcome our two newest IJ staffers, both of whose names should be familiar by now to regular readers—Todd Kristel and Larry Stolte. Here they are in more or less their own words:

TODD KRISTEL  
1140 N. 24th Street  
Allentown, PA 18104  
2/25/63

Todd Kristel was born on February 25, 1963 in Allentown, Pennsylvania. He is a graduate student living in transit, although he can be reached easily

through the Allentown address.

His favorite songs include "Margue Moon" (Television), "St. Louis Blues" (Bessie Smith), and "You Really Got Me" (The Kinks). His favorite movies include Citizen Kane, Dr. Strangelove, Duck Soup, and Atomic Cafe. Unfortunately, his favorite baseball teams are the Philadelphia Phillies and the Baltimore Orioles, so this hasn't been a good season so far.

In his spare time, Todd writes short stories, plays guitar, plays basketball, reads magazines, composes operas, repairs tractors, and jogs naked through the arctic wasteland. He has been mentioned as a vice-presidential possibility for the Democrats, but he will not get the nomination because nobody can spell his name correctly.

For more autobiographical information, read Todd's letter in IJ #55.

I am a 30 yr. old, happily married, bizophobic, Pulitzer Prize-winning (for fortune cookie writing) author who, four years ago, gave up a lucrative job keeping executive toilet seats warm in my native Minnesota and moved to San Diego, thus doubling its literate population.

LARRY STOLTE  
1360 E. Madison, #33  
El Cajon, CA 92021  
8/1/57

My job selling earthquake insurance to astrologers is only temporary. I aspire to get all the credit cards I can, max them out, then take poison.

As at least one of our staffers is on the move again, I have decided to wait yet another issue before printing staffer addresses; look for them in #62 (I think!)

## HAIL TO THE CHIEF

by Michael Polo

Who borrows more than what is lent?  
The President, the President.  
Whose interest needs an increment?  
The President, the President.  
Who frequently needs government?  
Who doesn't pay a cent for rent?  
The President, The President.

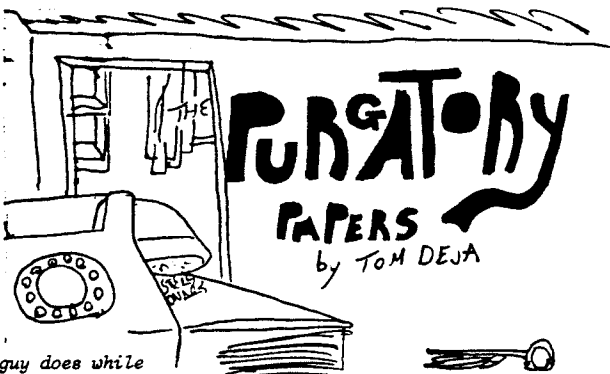
Who's up in arms 'bout armament?  
The President, the President.  
Who's underworked and overspent?  
The President, the President.  
Who makes a budget argument?  
Whose newsmen tell us what he meant?  
Who isn't there for a comment?  
The President, the President.

WHEN I ARGUE THAT  
Labor-saving machinery  
should end unemployment  
rather than increase it listeners  
give me a pitying look but they  
will change their alleged minds  
(present company excepted)  
when the five billion are forced  
to adopt a world-wide even age  
work force to end unemployment  
and free-riding both of  
which are unnecessary and life-  
threatening. Worrying about  
the five billion doubling and re-  
doubling is better than  
worrying about zero population  
To end unemployment world-  
wide and thus illegal immigration,  
benefits, welfare and free  
riding send S.A.S.E. to:  
EVEN AGE - Box 2243  
YOUNGSTOWN - OHIO, 44504

## EVENTS CONT'D. from page two

SEPTEMBER 7 - Grandma Moses (b. 1860); Buddy Holly (b. 1936); "Neither Snow Nor Rain" Day  
SEPTEMBER 8 - International Literacy Day; Nixon pardoned (1974); Peter Sellers (b. 1925); Sid Caesar (66)  
SEPTEMBER 11 - Ken Kesey (55); National Pet Memorial Day; O Henry (b. 1862); Brian DePalma (48)  
SEPTEMBER 12 - PETER LABRIOLA (32); Jesse Owens (b.1913)  
SEPTEMBER 13 - Roald Dahl (72)  
SEPTEMBER 14 - Margaret Sanger (b. 1879); Clayton Moore  
SEPTEMBER 15 - CAROLYN MacDONALD (30); Robert Benchley (b. 1889); Agatha Christie (b. 1891); Independence Day in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua; DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO IJ #63

single guy does while alone with advice on talking, using the telephone and Bugs Bunny)



Welcome to the symposium on the secret lives of single guys. Last time you'll recall that I established a few truths about single guy society. The most important for you to remember is that the single man—herewith referred to as the single guy (I chose to concentrate on my sex due to a lack of first-hand experience with single gals)—spends a lot of time alone unless he is rich, looks like Mel Gibson or both. That being the case, single people do have to find ways to occupy themselves while alone. Some things, like cooking and cleaning, can actually improve your status in the singles game.<sup>2</sup> I will now discuss other ways to spend your time behind closed doors when you are without companionship.

First thing to know is a single person operates with fairly different rules. There are things that would have non-singles branded as idiots we single guys can do. Primarily it's our unattached nature that allows us this, for there is no other to embarrass or Hector. We can actually push at the boundaries of reasonable behavior.

Take talking to yourself, for example. The single person can have hours of fun indulging in this activity. In other people, this would be considered most aberrant. We, however, are free to speak to ourselves because, as cited above, no one's going to tell us otherwise. It's the old "tree in the forest" routine.

The nice thing about talking to yourself, or self-conversation, is that—like cooking and cleaning—it does serve several valuable societal purposes. It provides a single guy with a willing and enthusiastic conversationalist (namely himself). Secondly, it allows the single guy to practice intrapersonal communications. It is sad, but single guys do tend to forget simple lingual gambits after so much solitude. Self-conversation is good for this right up till engagement. In a self-conversation you can try out various strategies of defense/offense for those precarious times in relationships. Finally, self-conversation does tend to delude you into thinking you're not alone in this dark old world.

Unfortunately, once you begin self-conversation, this behavior might bleed into unacceptable times. Talking to yourself in public is not good, but it is also not unhealthy. People don't believe this, however—they still think of the practice as a sign of insanity despite its deceptively good qualities. After all, you're articulate, you understand yourself and you agree with most everything you say, so why shouldn't you converse with yourself? Still, preparing a defense for those narrow thinkers might be wise. Mine is pointing out that the Amerinds considered the insane to be touched by God and thus sacred. This does not change opinions, but does serve to quiet hecklers.

There are some of you who don't want to talk to yourselves. Believe it or not, there are ways to talk to others without imposing your person on their hospitality. That's why the telephone

was invented.

A telephone is invaluable to the single guy. With it you can call friends and relatives without the bother of actually visiting them. With a telephone you have access to everybody else with a phone. Dial some numbers and they will be there for you. Yes, with a phone you can impose on people via remote control.

Now some single guys try to be clever and have the best of both worlds by using a communal phone in a hallway somewhere. This is not on, not on at all. There's always some other smart-ass with the same idea and be assured that one will be using it 150% more than you will. I'm not even going to mention the cost in quarters. No, your phone is vital.

Of course, there are some times when all your friends are out or otherwise engaged. If you end up in that unenviable solution, remember that every large city has recorded exchange numbers (usually 970 or 976) that businesses use to present you with the news, weather, sports, astrological readings and other "ahem" more esoteric services. These are also helpful for relieving loneliness. Unfortunately, they can get monotonous. There's only so many times you can hear "At the tone the correct time will be....".

When that point is reached, other options are available. There are loads of 800 numbers for corporations to sell you stuff with. These people rarely get any calls and would be delighted to hear from anybody—even you. Many were the nights single guy John and I would call up the Home Shoppers Club and tease the operators constantly. After all, we weren't paying a cent. Sure it was cruel, but we had fun.<sup>3</sup>

Single guys have been known to watch a lot of television. That's why we know about all those 800 numbers. You might think we only watch shows with attractive women on them to help our fantasy lives along. Yes, we do this but not to the extent that most people believe. Incidents of us putting up with a reprehensible show because the actress catches our fancy happen (why do you think I put up with *I Married Dora*? Daniel Hugh-Kelley?), but it's rare. We spend our time watching something far more tasteful and aesthetically pleasing.

We watch cartoons. Lots of 'em. They're our main viewing fare.

This blows a lot of carefully manufactured images out of the water. The fact stands that cartoons aren't childish. They're popular absurdist theater. Don't you think Beckett would like to have his characters dismember themselves, get blown up and become semi-liquid? He would go nuts to do what Tex Avery was able to do. We single guys are able to recognize Bugs and company as the intellectual treatises they really are.

See, life is not as horrible as it might seem for the single guy. It's only partially horrible. That's why we turn to these things to take the edge off our colder aspects. After all, there are other single folks out there. Most of them are in Peoria, but they might decide to move to your city. You just have to wait them out. So float practice conversations to yourself. Call up that 800 number and ask the operator for advice. Try to figure out how Pepe LePew would react in Camus' situation. But, mainly, bide your time.

Good things don't come to those who wait, but it does seem that way.

NEXT ISSUE: An interview with Merle Kessler (a/k/a Ian Shoales)

#### ANSWERS TO FOOTNOTED QUESTIONS

1—Look, I told all you sniggering loons last time that this was a family magazine (which family I don't know; I suspect the Manson family, myself), and all that filthy, perverted thought just doesn't wash so go bother Ace Backwards or something. There ain't no hidden meanings in this Purgatory Papers, boys.

2—This whole concept was fully explored in last issue's "Swept Away in a Melancholy Wave of Cleanliness," which you most likely already know.

3—For God's sake, don't call those 900 trunk lines to talk to other single guys. You have to be a real loser to do that. And it's so expensive.

## THE OMNIPOTENT SLUG BY MAX NUCLEAR '88



# One Hit to the Body

by Larry Stolte

Someday, we will look back at this and laugh. Drool will be streaming out of our toothless mouths, and the shared muscatel that we guzzle will make it all seem funny. The risibility of the situation hasn't hit me yet, even though it's over and done with. Here's how I remember it:

Due to a murderous business trip, I did not arrive back at the apartment until four A.M. The place was a mess, of course, but I was too tired to really care. I climbed into bed and leaned over to kiss my wife on the cheek. My lips felt something steely and cold instead of something fleshy and cold. I recoiled and tried to focus on Donna's head in the darkness. She was wearing headphones, and the Sony Walkman rested in her left hand. So that was it. She had been sleepjogging again. But she didn't have her Nikes on. What was happening?

It was the new next-door neighbors, Donna explained later that day. Through the apartment wall (which is paper thin, anyway—the Greenfield Gazette, not the N.Y. Times), she could hear the couple screaming at each other, throwing things, and physically fighting. When Donna realized that the pugilists were going twelve rounds—pro rules—and not three rounds—amateur rules—she put the Walkman on. I knew she had a hard time getting to sleep with music playing, but it certainly was the lesser of two evils. No one can sleep through a prizefight.

I saw and met the new neighbors the next day while they were working on their car. They seemed very pleasant—"Hi, how's it going? Nice day, huh?" It was a cloudy day, and they were wearing sunglasses. Their names were Tim and Tina. He looked like a wife beater, whatever one looks like. Big and ugly, with a small pot belly—still, not someone to mess with. He sported a gash on his right cheek; probably cut himself shaving with an Evinrude outboard. She looked like someone you would want on your side when fighting Huns. Not a tall woman—five-four or five-five—but built. Very solid. She was centerfold material—for OMNI magazine. She got a nose job from an auto mechanic. Judging from the cut on his right cheek, she must have been a southpaw. All the more dangerous. I exchanged the necessary palaver with them and hurried away, while Tina continued tying a crowbar.

The next few nights, Donna and I noticed a trend developing. The fights were ritual. The first night was no fluke.

We started scoring the fights, but it was no easy task because we could only hear the action, not see it. Split decisions were rife because of the ambiguity of some of the noises. One evening, my wife was convinced that this dull, clanging sound was merely the bell between rounds. I, not believing that there was that much structure to the boxing card, thought the racked sounded much more like a man's head being rammed into a frying pan from the hammerlock position. Tina's cries of "here's breakfast, sucker" just before each clang lent credence to my theory, and I gave her rounds four through ten.

We knew Tim didn't fight fair, either. He would say, "Look at my tattoo, she's winking at you." Then we would hear an elbow to the chops.

On one particularly loud occasion, the woman downstairs called the police. They scored it in favor of Tina. I had Tim way ahead on points and wondered if they saw the same fight I was listening to. Donna started screaming fix. There could be no doubt the next evening, however. Tina threw Tim through the window onto the balcony. KO in the fourth.

This folly, like tradition, was okay for awhile but got old fast. We stopped scoring the fights, and tried to get some sleep. We failed. It never ended.

Was this true love? They say love hurts. Were they high school sweethearts? Voted most likely to draw blood? I saw them on rare occasions still wearing sunglasses, and each had a face you could grate cheese with. Never could they admit that anything was going on, even when I confronted them about the loud noise. He said it must be the TV. Right. The TV was hurling itself against the wall repeatedly—an act of self-sacrifice because it didn't like what was showing up on its screen.

Denial was rampant, but it was like trying to deny that there was a war in Vietnam. They were Tass trained—"Oh, what a beautiful day." Getting them to even acknowledge their loudness was like trying to teach a tadpole to fly. Tina was always in a trance. Though she would scream like a banshee when fighting, she never said a word out of the ring. Tim would speak when accosted, but his prattle was void of any intelligence. His brain cells were temporarily arrested—and convicted, and having a hard time with the parole board.

It didn't take the apartment manager long to collect complaints from nonfight fans everywhere, and he realized his mistake in renting the apartment to these belligerents. Especially when the only reference Tim could dig up was from a warden who said he was a model prisoner on "the island." Further checking revealed that their credit was terrible; she had been known to bounce five dollar bills.

There is some kind of state law, however, that says you can't evict someone until the next lunar eclipse in an election year, unless that person is in a wheelchair and eating cat food. The police couldn't do much either. People have rights in this country. And Tina could still use her left—right next door. For how long we didn't know.

The novelty was completely gone two weeks after they had moved in. The boxers were nocturnal. They didn't work, so they could

sleep all day. My job made me diurnal, but I hadn't slept for about a week. The noise was incredible. And to think my biggest problem in bed before this was that night my wife asked if I would mind if she read in bed. I said no problem, and then she read out loud. I burned her book, How to Write Gooder, and she never asked again.

I started to think about this dire situation. I didn't think clearly, though, due to lack of sleep. Hallucinations were my major form of entertainment. Mt. St. Helens erupted again, I heard on the news. Dan Rather said that three Libyan terrorist groups claimed responsibility. I heard him. He said it. God, I needed sleep. Donna was faring a little better due to the Walkman. Very little.

I tried earplugs. Earplugs are not safe. You can hear things with earplugs. Things you should never hear. Internal workings of the brain and central nervous system. Intrinsic traffic jams, insurance salesmen, and rock bands. Whooshing and gushing and smooching arteries carrying demonic messages to an area of the brain that's not getting enough oxygen because the holes in your ears are plugged. It's like crossing your eyes. They'll stay that way, you know. Don't wear earplugs either. You'll hear noises that are always with you.

So I went earplugless and sleepless. I felt like the woman who tried to sleep her way to the top of our company. She ended up being only the vice president because she didn't get enough sleep. I did manage to get some sleep about 48 hours before The Happening. I know I slept because I specifically remember a dream: I was arrested for jaywalking in Beirut. As punishment, I was forced to walk the streets there and start cars at random. Six cars total. If none of them blew up, I could walk away a free man. If I happened to hit a car bomb, I could walk away a dead man. Lebanese roulette.

As luck would have it, the night before I had eaten a plate of Donna's Close Call Casserole with the death spiral noodles and a turkey that had seen two major wars. At 4:12 A.M. I was forced to awaken and double over like a folding chair lest my stomach secede from the rest of my body. The pain was unbearable. For the first time in years, I prayed. "Dear God, what have I ever done to you? Amen."

Twenty-three hours later at 3:12 A.M., I had slept for about two hours when the sound of a right cross woke me up. Tim was trying to yell, but he was completely bombed, tanked, pickled and oiled, nuked. Apparently, he had just walked in as drunk as could be. He was trying to speak, but could only emit sounds much like an auctioneer makes when you give him an enema. It was like he had just done the paint vs. glue sniff test. He started screaming slurred obscenities at Tina, and she said it was the beer talking. What kind of beer would say such a thing? Incoherent Babble Lite? He screamed a little more; then she said, "If only I had a gun." She didn't need one. Because of his pathetic condition, she KO'd him in the first.

This just meant that the next evening would be knockdown and dragout all night. Thrilla in the Villa. How much more could I take? Would they ever be evicted? Then the epiphany of the netherworld hit me. "If only I had a gun," she said. Yes, I didn't imagine that. She said it. It was so simple. One dead and one jailed. Their final draw.

I went to one of the "fast food" gun stores at the other end of town. Clad in ski mask, one handcuff, and a printed shirt that said "Call me Hector the Death Vector"—this, so I would look like anyone else who buys a handgun—I inquired about something that would "do the job."

I was asked to submit some form of identification, and I did. Well, it wasn't really identification; it was a picture of an elderly woman that came with my wallet. It sufficed. Having been assured that my particular choice of gun and ammo could go through any man not wearing the Pentagon, I walked away with the goods while whistling "On the Sunny Side of the Street."

It didn't matter which of them opened the front door first the next morning. The gun would be found along with a short note:

This neighborhood isn't safe. Please accept this and protect yourselves accordingly.

Hugs and kisses,  
Big Brother

The seed was planted. Soon rage would grow, a corpse would be harvested, and a killer would be carted off to market.

That night will be permanently etched in my mind. I remember going to bed early. I was feeling good. Surely I would dream about firebomb Christmas cards or incendiary birthday gifts. Haha! Was I sick? Was I getting to be like my father? He'd take the law into his own hands. He believed in the death penalty for murderers, rapists, and teenagers. Haha! I was getting like my father. I wish he were here. He'd love this. If I was sick, who cares?

They started fighting. I was waiting. C'mon baby, the gun. Get the gun. You can put the metal right through him. Through ten like him. Through the wall.

Through the wall. Through the wall! Holy Buckets! She, he, anyone could put a bullet right through the wall into my conniving cranium. What had I done? What about a ricochet? The cruel hand of fate was to get me, I thought. I panicked, and then I calmed down and thought about this. If it was my turn to die, so what? I would join some great people. Washington, Lincoln—but they're used to death. I'm not. They are in the prime of their deaths, you might say. I'm too young to die. So is my wife. Just when I was going to grab Donna and make a break for the kitchen, the shot was fired.

He was D.O.A. She got twenty to life.

Now I sleep nights.

# Ideal Choice

by David Serlin

Every summer when I return from the all-too-spoiling academic atmosphere of college, I am pursued by the idea that possibly this will be the summer that I get a job that I actually like. Forget the slave labor suffered in summers past—let bygones be bygones, by golly—and shamelessly daydream about the possibilities before you...Wouldn't it be great to be a fill-in DJ on the local public radio station—the one that intersperses classic jazz with acoustic Nicaraguan folk songs and Garrison Keillor revamps? Or maybe a proprietor in that really cool used bookstore, the one that has all those yellowed paperbacks for 25¢ apiece?...Then, slowly, I realize that I'm inputting data into a computer, and I recognize the fact that I'm at my summer job, and there is no other way of alleviating the crushing boredom than by daydreaming. Ah, here comes another wave...

I have started making a mental catalogue of what I consider to be the choicest career opportunities in the known universe. If anyone out there is looking for someone to fill any of the following positions, please let me assure you that I am perfect for the job, whatever it is. I'm so underqualified I'm actually overqualified. I'm not condescending at all (you know what condescending means, don't you?), and I'm always punctual, except on weekdays, and I never carry weapons, unless my horoscope says so. I can drive a stick-shift.

**THE PRICE IS RIGHT SHOWCASE CONCEPT PERSON**—From the time I was small, I have been in relative awe of the people who create the fabulous conceptual showcases towards the end of this program. The idea, of course, is to entertain the audience and contestants while stringing useless bourgeois trinkets together under one uniform theme. Past episodes have offered the "Secret Cave of Ali

## FIRE

by Larry Oberc

I keep a close eye on the parking structure across the street, I watch for sudden movement, fast moving shadows, the barrel of a gun edging over the side, from the street my office window is a narrow piece of glass, you have to look through thick leaves to notice it, but from the parking structure it gets all too clear, shadows carry hard edges, faces have eyes, you can see teeth when people smile, from the parking structure it gets weird, the problem here is we got to fire this kid, he's been fucking up bad, missing days on end, and he's scaring the shit out of everyone with his Rambo complex, he misses a day, his boss asks why, he says he was sick, his boss asks for a doctor's excuse, he says he has one but he left it at home, the next day he brings a fake note in, the note gets checked out, the kid gets mad, he loses his temper, then his mind, says he's going to kill his boss, going to kill the director, going to wipe out the university, when it wears off, when he settles down, he gets quiet, sits there silent, fuming, frozen anger, he bought a high powered rifle a few weeks back, someone was in the store, they remembered the sales person asking the kid what he was going to do with a high powered gun, the kid said he was going to go hunting, the sales person asked where, the kid said he had spots, the kid bought a scope for his rifle last week, he brought it into work, showed it to his boss, his boss looked through the scope at a water tank across the river, his boss said you could see the paint peeling off that tower, his boss didn't like knowing about the rifle that went with the scope, none of us did, the kid is supposed to get fired tomorrow, I look at the parking structure across the street, I think about taking the day off, going to Provincetown on a boat, listening to the radio to hear what went wrong, I look at the parking structure across the street, I think about the kid blaming the world, his anger, his thinking the world is doing him wrong, the world is coming down on him, the way the world makes life so damn difficult, makes him so goddamned pissed off at times, makes him want to play people like an arcade machine, blow their brains out, even the score, get even once and for all, the kid gets fired tomorrow, they tell me that I can take tomorrow off if I have to, I hang up the phone, look across the street, feel the wind in my hair, smell the ocean around me, hear the waves as they strike the side of the boat...

Baba" story, where a young boy (actually nymphette Janis in costumed "boy" garb) wanders through a labyrinth with Hibachis, wicker bedroom sets, and Winnebagoes (the very contents of Ali Baba's original cave, I'm sure) at every turn of her pointy-toed shoes, or the "Astronaut on the Moon" sequence, where the buxom cosmic courtesan Janis finds diamond cufflinks and keys to new Buicks under styrofoam moon rocks.

It is, of course, thinly disguised vaudeville and an excuse to show off the acting talents and breasts of the *Price is Right* beauties, but I think that there are many avenues of possibility to be explored. It's time that we combined the game show with existentialist thought to bring philosophy into America's living room. This could be the very zenith of American culture—bringing the high-brow and low-brow together, attracting the intellectual as well as the housewife:

"Shelley, your showcase begins in your own small, insignificant reality. You live in an empty world, barren of people or things. It is dark, cold, and silent. Only you exist. You have created this hell, and you must live in it until you recognize truth. But what is this...a flicker of light?! Could it be a glimmer of truth in your soul—or the headlights of a brand-new Chrysler LeBaron!!"

Future showcases might include, "Are Human Beings Inherently Good—Enough to Win a Trip to Puerto Vallarta?", "Does God Exist? And If So, Does He Prefer All-Cotton Over a 60/40 Poly/Cotton Blend?", or, "If You Win This Showcase, Are You Really Any Better Off?" And, naturally, the *Price is Right*, because the price is always right.

**FOREIGN VOCABULARY GENDER MAN**—To me, one of the most mundane (but nonetheless interesting) aspects of learning a new language is understanding the role of gender in the formation of each new word. In French, masculine words begin with "le" (eg., le chateau, le café), while feminine words begin with "la" (eg., la guitare, la femme fatale). Yet, when a new word enters the vocabulary, who decides the gender of these words? For example, why is le café (coffee) masculine, and la guitare (guitar) feminine? Is playing the guitar an effeminate act and therefore feminine? Or is coffee a manly, hearty drink and therefore masculine? What is the reasoning behind these choices? I wonder what it would be like to be responsible for deciding the fate of these words. But I'm saving that for a future essay.

**CONDOMINIUM IMAGE ADVISOR**—As any suburbanite (or aspiring suburbanite wanna-be, but I shudder to imagine what this person would have to say on the subject) will tell you, new condos, townhouses and housing developments appear as rapidly as food stains on new white slacks. Because these new places have little to offer besides cubicle living areas and outrageous mortgage payments, land developers attract customers by coming up with alluring names and inside gimmicks that will give their property a certain flair or image.

In South Florida, there is Red Bridge Village, an assuming name that recalls blustery nights upon the gondolas of Venice, listening to the Italian troubadors croon a wistful ballad...well, that's what they'd like me to think. Actually, the only thing that justifies the name Red Bridge is a RED walkway over a canal; a BRIDGE so tiny it would not shade a sun-stroked Lilliputian, let alone fill my head with wistful croonings and blustery Italian troubadors. My sister lives in a place called Pierpointe (note pretentious "e" on the end of a word normally spelled without one—condos have true artistic license), and despite the nautical flags hanging around the entrance, and the pseudo-exotic entry, it's still pretty much a functional 2BR, 1½Bth hovel impersonating as shelter.

If people are looking for romance, or pure unadulterated whimsy, I say we give them living arrangements that aspire to the American ideal. I thereby propose the creation of a new type of housing development—combining television with the home—that would give everyone the impetus to live out their greatest fantasies. Cue brochure:

"Tired of all those home developments that attract middle-class Americans—unimaginative, apathetic, bourgeois couch potatoes with no sense of originality or style? We invite you to become a member of the exclusive Star Village—where Life really does imitate Art!"

In Star Village, families are placed in homes which are replicas of those that have appeared in TV sitcoms during the past 30 years. Everything, down to the last detail, has been faithfully reproduced to give the appearance of that particular decade, style or fad. Those seeking a return to modest, old-fashioned values and cardigan sweaters can live in Maplewood, homes after the *Leave it to Beaver* and *Donna Reed* shows of the late '50s. Residents are required to join local PTAs and cook wholesome meals without a microwave oven. Wealthier patrons are encouraged to join Sable Manor Townhouses, where one can live out the decadent lifestyle portrayed on *Dynasty* and *Falcon Crest*. Residents are required to pass AIDS tests in order to maintain their daily regimen of extra-marital affairs and drug use. Baby Boomers may choose to incubate the future leaders of America in Pine Ridge, homes designed to be similar to those in *The Brady Bunch* and *The Partridge Family* (psychedelic buses are optional with this package), while those seeking a more hedonistic lifestyle may opt for the apartments of Candlewood Circle, a neighborhood reminiscent of *One Day at a Time* and *Rhoda*, replete with wide-bottomed trousers and unstable divorcées who drink cooking sherry while watching reruns of *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*.

Prices starting in the low \$200,000's; a bit less for those who can prove that they are regular viewers of *thirtysomething*.

# THE JELLO WARS

## PART THREE by Prudence Gaelor

Jenny was sprawled sideways in the armchair, her leg dangling over the arm bounced lazily as a sort of countercadence to the turning pages of the manuscript she was reading, when Prudence next woke. For a few minutes she lay in a half-dozed listening to the crisp paper sounds. The sounds had a soothing effect in her drugged state, but this was soon broken by a sharp snicker and Prudence resigned herself to opening her eyes and found herself, bleary eyed, staring at her Aunt Jenny seated opposite her.

"I didn't wake you, did I?" Jenny said, crossing the room.

"How are you feeling?"

"Gross."

"Incision hurt real bad?"

Prudence never ceased to be amazed at how her Aunt Jenny, being an English grad, could barely speak the language, at least not correctly, anyway. She spoke a cross of ghetto-ese and foreigner, as Claire used to point out. She incorrectly declined verbs and she was lax in pronunciation, and Prudence was never to pick up her bad habits, was commonly recited to her by Patrick whenever Prudence lapsed into slang or mispronounced something. Prudence asked Jenny once why she wasn't ashamed of her poor speaking habits. Jenny explained that she knew the difference and what she was speaking was a sort of colloquial slang. Thus, Prudence was to understand it was an art-thing.

"Yeah, it hurts okay."

"Better not let your father hear that," Jenny kidded.

"Gods, he can be a right pilchard about the stupidest things. Anyway, no danger, he's in another one of his way impo meetings."

"How do you know?"

"He was wearing his power tie this morning."

"He was here?"

"Why you so surprised, he loves me. Where's Mum?"

"She was here for awhile, she just stepped out to get us some lunch and to try to find you a barrette to pin back your hair."

"I just thought she'd be here when I woke up."

"Well, she wanted me to go, if that means anything by you."

"Why dint you?"

"I told her I left my glasses at home, but I still thought I'd be okay to drive her BMW. She decided she'd better go after all."

"You wear glasses? No shit, I didn't know you wore glasses!"

"Watch your language, I'm not Billy Blueberger. And I don't wear glasses, I just didn't feel like going."

"A necessary lie."

"Yuh-huh. Besides, I thought you wanted your hair washed. I figured I'd do that while she was out. It'll still be awhile before she gets back, I sent her across town for ribs."

"Howdja know?"

"The nurse said all you could talk about was washing your hair. Also said she'd never seen a post-op patient for abdominal surgery get up five hours after the operation and give herself a sponge bath. Of course, your mother was indignant as all hell that they let you do this when you should have been resting."

"Can't rest when I feel like a grundle kitty."

"Don't have to explain that to me. Now, do you want your hair washed or not?"

"They won't let me take a shower."

"Who said anything about showers? Here..." Jenny pulled the armchair in front of the sink. "You can kneel forward on the chair. The faucet's high enough. Oh, good, there's soap here."

"What kind?" Prudence interrupted.

"Judging by the color, Ivory, the soap of hospitals."

"I thought that was Camay."

"Does it matter?"

"Nah, damn soap is interchangeable."

"True enough. Can you get to the sink? Will they let you out of bed for this?"

"Sure, but I'll need some help."

Jenny helped Prudence out of bed and over to the sink. Gingerly, Prudence climbed onto the chair and knelt, placing her head under the faucet.

"No, not yet. Let me adjust the water first," Jenny said, pushing Prudence's head out from under the faucet. Quickly, she adjusted the temperature and guided Prudence' hand under the warm water. "That's not too hot for you, is it?"

"Nah, it's fine."

Jenny lathered some soap in her hands and started gently massaging it through Prudence' hair, occasionally pausing to lather up some more soap. Normally, Prudence enjoyed having other people wash her hair, but her incision was starting to bother her again, and she found herself wishing that they would finish. Jenny sensed this and said, "Relax, I'll be done in a minute." She eased Prudence's lathered head back under the water.

A while later, Jenny was still trying to rinse the soap out. Prudence could feel her aunt's fingers tugging and pulling as they became entangled in her hair.

"The nurse said she combed your hair. Did she comb your hair, Pru? Don't nod. You'll get us both drenched. It was a rhetorical question. Your hair looks like someone's been tying knots in it."

Prudence turned to scowl at Pink Bunny, comfortably buried beneath the covers. She couldn't find him under the blankets, he was too well hidden. All she had succeeded in doing was getting soap in her eyes and splashing water on Jenny. Prudence blindly pulled a washcloth off the windowsill and used a corner of it to

dry her eyes.

"Watch it! You're getting me all wet."

"Sorry."

"It's okay. I can't believe how much hair you got. I just found a herd of elephants. Oh, look, there's a giraffe. I wonder if there are any zebras or hippos hidden in there too. I bet if we look hard enough..."

"What are you two doing?"

Claire!

"I can't believe the two of you! Both of you are drenched!" Claire started to laugh.

"It's all right, Claire. We're almost done."

"Yeah, Mummy, almost done," Prudence echoed.

Claire sat down on the bed and started unpacking lunch on the roly table, while Jenny rinsed the very last bit of soap out of Prudence's hair. She turned off the water and took a clean towel and started rubbing out some of the water.

"Better?"

"Much, thank you."

They helped Prudence back over to the bed and watched helplessly as she slowly eased herself back under the covers.

Claire rooted through her purse, found a comb and started dragging it through Prudence's hair.

"Claire, I thought you were going to get ribs," Jenny said fingering the tuna and chicken salad sandwiches Claire had placed on the table. "If you only went down the street to the deli, what took you so long?"

"I went to the nurse's station to see how long it would be until Pru could take a shower, and the nurse said she couldn't take one until tomorrow. She also told me that they have some hair-washing thingamabob for invalid patients but it's not very good with long hair. I must admit, Jen, that I'm not as creative as you. I never thought of moving her over to the sink."

"I'm sure you would have thought of it given time," Jenny said, frowning over the sandwiches. She hated sandwiches, especially deli sandwiches, more especially chicken and tuna salad, and most especially chicken and tuna salad sandwiches when she was expecting ribs. "Couldn't you at least gotten corned beef with mustard or a ham and cheese?"

"Not good for you, too many nitrates. Anyway," Claire went back to her story, "I went to the little shop and bought you a new headband, Pru, 'cause I thought it might make you feel better. Also I got you this, I hope you don't have this one." She handed Prudence a plastic bag, its top stapled shut. "I didn't have time to wrap it," she explained.

"Jetta!" Prudence exclaimed as she ripped open the bag and pulled out a doll. Jetta was her very favorite of the Misfits, Jem's rival band, although Pizzaz was high ranking on her list. Prudence thought that Jem's band, the Holograms, was stupid. But aside from Pizzaz and Clash, all the other dolls she had were all the Holograms, and of course Jem/Jerrica and even Rio, Jem's boyfriend, or, as she referred to them, the "mamby-pamby goody-two-shoes Wimpoids." She thought Rio was especially wuss-like. She wouldn't have even had Pizzaz if she hadn't traded for her after Christmas. Beline didn't like Pizzaz that much and Prudence had two Video dolls, which Prudence considered too many. But Beline liked Video because she was always running around with a video camera filming Jem's videos, so Prudence traded one of her Video dolls for Pizzaz. Beline really wanted one of Prudence's Jem dolls—Prudence also had more than one Jem—and under normal circumstances she would have traded Jem, but Prudence was mad at Beline at the time, so she refused to trade with anything but Video. Clash was given to her by Jenny, although Jenny didn't really know at the time that Prudence collected these dolls. She bought the doll because they shared the same hair color at the time, and because it struck her as funny when she saw the doll at Toys-R-Us.

Jenny placed a brightly colored package on Prudence's bed.

"Did you leave this at my house, Pru?"

"No, I don't think so."

"Gee, I wonder whose it is. Open it up. Maybe we can determine who it belongs to."

Prudence unwrapped the package—"Synergy!" Synergy was Jem's friend who had special powers to help Jem whenever Pizzas got her into trouble. Prudence liked Synergy anyway even though she spent most of her time bailing out the queen of the wimpoids.

"Jenny told me what she brought you, so when I went out to get lunch I picked up Jetta; that is the one you like, isn't it? Anyway, one doll is no fun, but with two they can have parties and trade clothes..."

Prudence and Jenny exchanged glances.

"And think of all the different outfits they can have since their wardrobes consist mainly of accessories," Claire said, biting into her sandwich.

Prudence yawned. She was getting all dozey again. Claire picked up on this at once.

"Well, it looks like too much excitement for one day. Why don't you get a little more sleep. We'll still be here when they bring your dinner. You can play tomorrow with Beline and Ian. They're coming to visit tomorrow, you know."

"But—but wait," Prudence sputtered. "Where's Grandma Ed?!" (To be continued)

*It may be brimming with submissions but Pru's & Rodney's zone isn't - See "Fan Noose" at letters for details - SEND HER STUFF!* 9

# Romance Review

by Kathy Stadalsky

Having a baby messes with your hormones. It must: I just finished reading a romance novel (and I use that phrase—romance novel—loosely). A 'Silhouette' Romance. A Silhouette "Special Edition," which is not to be confused with a silhouette design, or a silhouette intimate moments. La-dee-da.

The most revolting aspect of the entire episode is that I did it BY CHOICE! I didn't HAVE to read the damn thing. There wasn't a loaded gun at my head, nor was there a lack of reading material available. I had numerous other unread books around, including one new "true-murder-mystery" on which I hadn't even read the flyleaf.

But oh, no, I picked up the romance novel! If worst came to worst, I could've even read the back of a box of cereal...

Normally, I'd only read a romance novel in the bathroom for, uhh, shall we say, inspiration? I mean, everyone knows those books are written by epileptic chimpanzees chained to typewriters for months on end. There's even a coalition group out there trying to stop the inhumane torture associated with it!

I keep telling myself I have to snap out of it. If I don't stop reading those damned things my IQ will soon be less than my shoe size. Next thing I know I'll be reading Nancy Drew books and Judy Blume!

Pretty soon my brain will be turned to mush and I won't be able to form a sentence longer than eight syllables. I'll be walking around in a white short-sleeved shirt with a navy and red plaid skirt (pleated) with white bobby socks and penny loafers. I'll say "big" words like "Hello" and "Gollie-gee-whiz!". I'll develop an affection for smiling with my head tilted at an angle. I'll carry a little black book around with me and try to talk poor innocent strangers into sharing it with me. I'll become a master at clicking my tongue to indicate pity. Before I know it I'll start calling the big guy (Ralph) Jehovah and then I'm history!

I'll stop writing stories and go to work in a fast food enterprise where my life goal will be to someday become a (drum roll, please): SHIFT MANAGER!!! or, Jehovah willing (a chorus of fat women in obscenely purple robes harmonize gloriously—"Hallelujah!"—and Kathy stalks the stage, bible in hand), A MANAGER!!! Perhaps I should simply visit the pet store today and stick my face in the piranha tank. Maybe one of you, my IJ pals, will send me a sweater with arms that tie in the back.

This particular romance novel was called "The Splendored Sky." The, uhh, author of this little ditty has written other books for Silhouette, such as "Wonder and Wild Desire" and "Bride in Barbados." Oooohh, boy.

"The Splendored Sky" deals with one Amber Rowland and one Justin Kane (I personally would've named him Justin Case...). Dear little Amber has recently returned to her home (Montana) from the big city (New York) where she was a highly-paid fashion model. Somehow, she has managed to refrain from becoming jaded and tarnished by the big bad city, but Justin (her one true love) cannot forgive her for having run away to the city in the first place with Mitch Calhoun who just so happens to be her ex-husband and the manager of her career. (It was an amicable divorce, and she and Mitch were still business associates afterwards.) Amber has returned to take over her grandfather's failing cattle ranch (Gramps died and left the ranch to Amber).

Justin, who was a no-account rodeo bum when she left, has managed to parlay his prize winnings and purchase the ranch next door. He's also managed to loan Gramps \$25 big ones before he kicked off, thereby assuring that Amber will be indebted to him. Interestingly, he insists he wants nothing to do with her (the slut), yet he keeps popping up all through the book—on HER property, in HER house, etc.

Justin is dating one Cherry Stacey (rule number one for romance books: no one can have a "common" name like



...WHILE IN MALIBU DURING THE WRITER'S STRIKE, DAVID LETTERMAN LEAVES HIS BODY & VISITS HIS HOME IN CONNECTICUT, ONLY TO DISCOVER UNEXPECTED COMPANY!

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ST. EVE

BEAUTIFUL WORLD Needs submissions too—details in "Fare Noose"

John or Sue or Debbie. It has to be unusual, and sound feminine or "manly," whichever the case may be).

Justin tells Amber that she's going to last six weeks at the outside, and Amber basically tells him to go perform a physical impossibility upon himself. The first day shows Amber with Dan (her one ranch hand—she can't afford anyone else) and, of course, Justin (who apparently doesn't have enough to do with working on his own ranch, he's gotta spend every day at hers working for free) dehorning and branding calves. She is aching and sore by the time the day is done but she won't admit it. If not for Justin, she would've fallen flat on her face climbing out of the pen (I guess there was no gate), but he catches her and almost kisses her. (The only reason he doesn't is it's too early in the book.)

By the middle of the book, she's somewhat proven herself to him (she's also been there longer than the predicted six weeks, which is a fact he conveniently ignores), and they have, of course, slept together, but he still thinks of her as a slut (wonder why?) and curses her for tempting him.

By the end of the book they are calling each other "my darling" and plunging their tongues down each other's throats (lots of sex in romance novels in order to cause us housewives to wiggle in our seats).

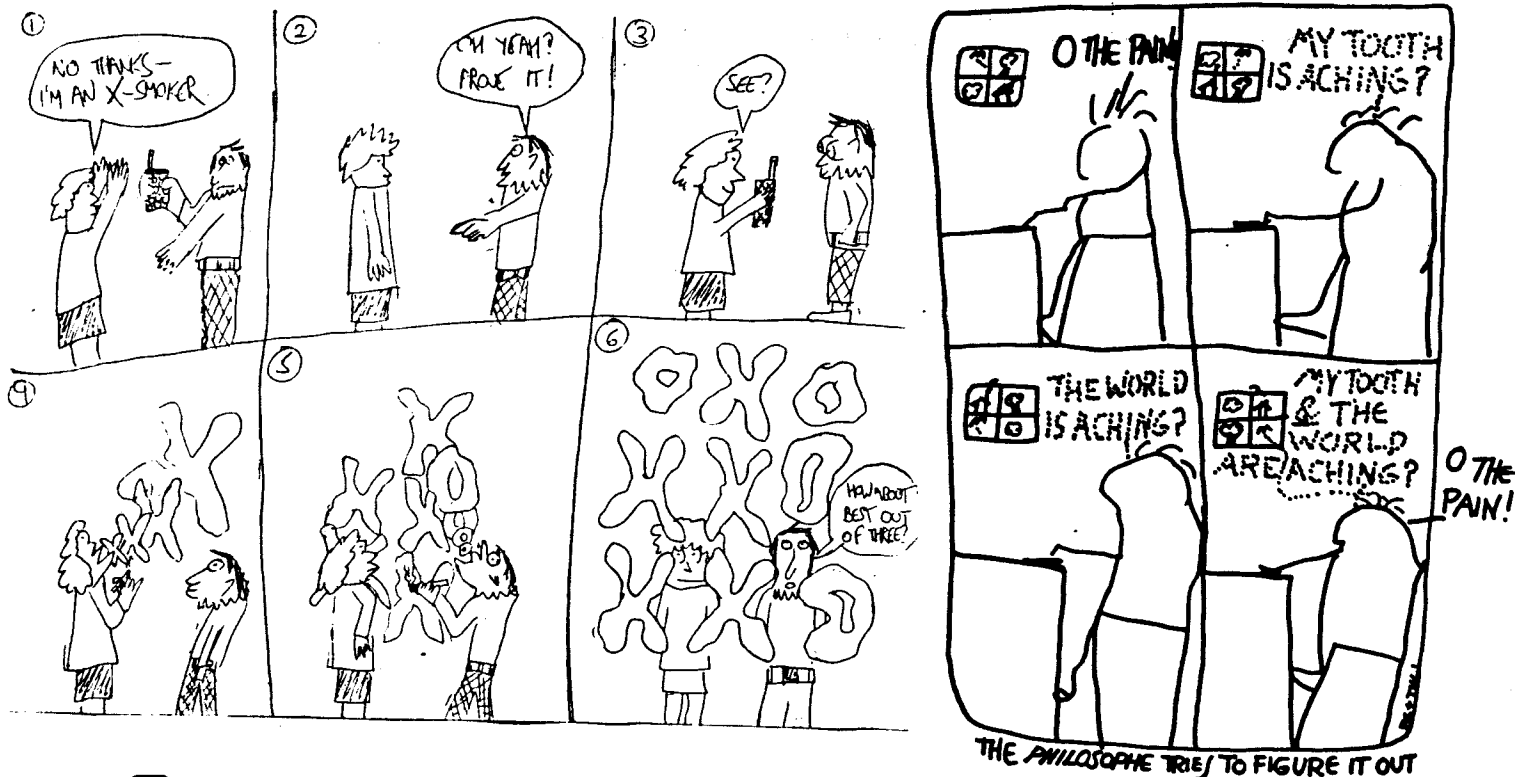
Incidentally, she paid back the 25 g's right on time and that's when they started jumping each other's bones. One wonders if she gets the money back—and will he now spend all his time working at his ranch since hers will soon be half his—and what about Dan (and his wife Letty)? Now that Amber isn't going to live on her ranch any longer, what are they going to do? Will they work for her or him? (Good thing, too, that their ranches adjoined each other—imagine how hard it'd be to link up enterprises located at the opposite ends of town.)

Yes, planets turn in their orbits, secure in the knowledge that Amber and Justin have mated and will blissfully raise the messiah into mini-yuppiehood to populate the next generation of romance novels. The cosmos itself shudders in orgasmic delight.

Another happy ending.

I think I need help...





## Trial By Jury:

A Tribute to Gilbert & Sullivan  
and the Iran-Contra Hearings

by Todd Kristel

SCENE: A Court of Justice. Barristers, Attorneys, Senators, Reporters, Cameramen, Sound Technicians, more Attorneys, still more Attorneys, and even more Attorneys.

CHORUS

Hark, the TV crews are approaching,  
On this trial they are encroaching,  
But there's no point in reproaching, They are here to stay—  
For today in this location,  
We shall cause a great sensation,  
And the TV crews, without hesitation, Will get in the way.

[Enter USHER.]

SOLO - USHER

Now, everyone, pay attention  
To the defendant's every contention—And not just what you see.  
Don't give in to the temptation  
To be fooled by his manipulation Because he looks good on TV.

CHORUS

From bias you must be free Even if he looks good on TV.  
[During choruses, USHER sings fortissimo, "Silence in the Court!"]

USHER

Oh, the defendant may feel warm  
Wearing his military uniform—But it looks good on TV.  
Gain your sympathy? He might  
Because his teeth are pearly white—So he looks good on TV.

CHORUS

From bias you must be free Even if he looks good on TV.

USHER

And when the defendant speaks patriotic,  
Even if his actions were psychotic He will look good on TV.  
Despite all the lies he peddles,  
When he wears all his medals He will look good on TV.

CHORUS

From bias you must be free Even if he looks good on TV.

[Enter DEFENDANT]

RECITATIVE - DEFENDANT

Is this an uncommon law court?

ALL

It is!

DEFENDANT [aside]

I'll play the game so I can win it

For there's a TV viewer born every minute.

ALL

Who are You?

DEFENDANT

I'm the Defendant!

CHORUS OF THE JURY [shaking their fists]

Defendant, dread our damages.

For if we express our views We will be on the evening news.

DEFENDANT

My lawyer has told me to answer your questions

With the utmost lack of precision

For permit me to remark, Before you reach your final decision,  
You're at present in the dark.

[DEFENDANT beckons to JURY—the cameramen follow the JURY as they gather around the DEFENDANT and sing the following:]

JURY

That's a very true remark—On the merits of his testimony  
We're at present in the dark! Ha! Ha! - Ha! Ha!

DEFENDANT

When first the freedom fighters I knew, My bosom welled with joy;  
The treasury's riches at their feet I threw; I was a lovesick boy!  
The Constitution seemed too extravagant

Upon contra aid to employ—

And the so-called Boland Amendment Just interfered with my ploy.

But the restrictions on diversions Upon my mind did cloy,

So I continued with my excursions I was a lovesick boy!  
I don't expect a light dismissal And I don't want to sound coy,  
But we didn't send the Hawk anti-aircraft missiles  
Because Khomeini's son wanted a Christmas toy.

CHORUS OF THE JURY [advancing stealthily]

Oh, what an absurd young lad!

This hearing is as fun as a hangover.

You behaved like a regular cad,

But your wrist will be slapped when it's over.

Despite some news broadcasts which the public ignored

Our foreign policy shone with virtue resplendent.

But now that you've made it look like a joke

We have no sympathy for the defendant.

USHER

Silence in the Court, there's no room for contention

Here comes the Judge so you must pay attention!

[Enter JUDGE - the American Public]

CHORUS OF THE JURY

All hail great Judge! You have preserved Democracy

Despite all the odds.

All hail great Judge! Without your support

We would all lose our jobs.

JUDGE

For these kind words accept my thanks, I pray,

But I have nothing to say today.

From my TV set I do not budge

So why do you choose me as the Judge?

ALL

But no one else can be the Judge!

JUDGE

If you ask the latest poll

It says that I am on the defendant's side.

Yet after time has taken its toll

I might find out what he tried to hide.

You can say that justice is blind

And that I'll never make a reversal.

But there's always time to change my mind

After the next commercial.

USHER

And now a word from our sponsor.

CURTAIN

IS IT POSSIBLE?

by Mary Ann Henn

If I try to prove  
that I am sane—  
sharing me, my life  
with others, I talk  
about it all

attempting to prove  
that I am balanced  
I tell about my friends  
how they occupy  
their time but when  
I reveal that they  
are cats my friends  
are cats you should  
see the raised eyebrows

artwork above  
by Peter Schumann  
(left) and Tobi  
Kuglerberg (right)

# TALK SHOW HOST confidential

GM DOBBS

This is the first thing I've written on my new Macintosh Plus Computer. To be frank, I sort of miss the familiar feel of my 30-year-old Royal office typewriter. The thing is about 20 pounds of metal and no matter how emotional I get about something, I know what I do can't hurt the damn thing. Easily, these 30, 40, and 50-year-old office typewriters will all be around working quite well when we amount to nothing but compost. Of course, by that time no one will be able to find the ribbons anywhere.

I'm waxing nostalgic as I feel the clean slickness of these ultra-modern keys under my two or three fingertips. Recently I realized just how things have changed. One of the few things no one addresses in any of the cutesy books about the coming of puberty is how your tastebuds will change. Certainly we hear all about armpit hair and pulsating hormones, but do we understand that our mouth changes as well? Nope.

Well, as I often do in this column written in unchic western Massachusetts, I strip off the blinders the Big City Boys want to put on people and reveal the True Facts of the Hellhole that Reagan/Bush America really is, and the simple truth is no one wants to tell you that "Circus Peanuts" taste lousy as soon as you get your first real dose of Adult Hormones.

"Circus Peanuts?"

You remember them, don't you? They are marshmallow peanut shapes, colored orange and tasting like not peanuts, oranges or marshmallows. Kids love them, though, but what these innocents don't realize is that one day the things will just taste horrible to them AND THEY WON'T KNOW WHY!!!!

Another example is the stuff that passes for bubble gum inside of kids' trading card packages. This sheet of pink material is as hard as masonite and practically flavorless, but that's my reaction as an adult. As a kid, I eagerly broke those little boards apart and happily chewed them. Ah, innocence.

Spam, a favorite topic of this column, is another food substance that tastes wonderful when you're eight or nine, but is puke in a can at age 30. Why? I don't know, but it's fact. Just ask Hormel.

Onions are one thing that you gain with age. Few kids in my childhood ever ate onions very much. They were "hot." Adults love "hot" foods, though. In fact, kids are taught they shouldn't put strange things in their mouths, but as adults we rationalize our habits of putting strange plant life and singed, spiced animal flesh down the old chute without a second thought. Remember the first time you heard about frog's legs? Pretty gross, huh? Sure, if you were like me, catching frogs, looking at them, marveling at this strange life living alongside us was not the proper background to have to appreciate frog's legs. Frogs were just too neat (there's a word you don't hear too much these days) to kill to eat. Why, that's why you had Spam and bologna. You didn't need frogs to eat if you had cold cuts and hamburgers.

There is hope, though.

Recently I picked up a package of those coconut-covered marshmallows I loved so much as a boy when I used to whitewash fences in Hannibal. As God is my witness, I tore open the bag as soon as I got to the car and wolfed down a handful as I cranked the ignition. Much to my surprise, as I had sort of expected disappointment, the things were great! In fact, I liked them too much, and now to keep myself under control I never buy them. I guess that this proves the point that you can go home again but you shouldn't eat too much.

By the way, in the next issue I will examine that "Big Boobs" edition of HIGH SOCIETY I mentioned in a previous column. The mail I've received here at the office of TALK SHOW HOST CONFIDENTIAL has been overwhelming in support of tackling such searing subjects of interest to all of us.

- ① No time for proofreading this issue - sorry!
- ② Any fuzziness in the writing is probably you... or not... it should still be legible



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30, INSIDE JOKE #59

With trepidation akin only to that of an unguarded politician's I inched into my familiar seat at the Park Bench Cafe and tried in vain to deflect the stares of fellow diners still astounded over what had befallen me at this very meal but twenty-four hours ago. The air hanging heavily in apprehensive *deja-vu*, I considered wearily returning to my bed and trying to wake, but before I could make a move I was completely frozen with true terror by the arrival of knowing fingers upon my shoulder.

"The regular today?"

My eyes tore upwards towards the sun, focusing on a tall blue-eyed, beautifully blonde woman coolly cocking a pencil off her cheek.

"Just the same as always?" she repeated, and I struggled to smile. To answer. Perhaps to run. But I found myself suddenly overwhelmed by a taste of dry, acidic ash on my tongue as I finally came to recognize the figure before me.

"You're...you're..."

"I'm your WAITRESS," she insisted, beginning to drum on her order pad impatiently. And, of course, she was. I called forth a medium veggie-pizza with a side of peach, then closed my eyes and inhaled repeatedly in an attempt to quietly calm myself. Heart pounding, brow pulsing, I reached down to unzip my shirt only to feel my hand quickly coated in a warm, gooey substance. Reelin' and reillin', I glanced down at my blood-soaked chest and fell out onto the sidewalk in a panic mirrored instantly in the eyes of the crowd which had gathered around me.

Clawing my feet I lunged towards a car. An instant later I was hurtling down Highway 7A, as the image of said waitress thankfully shrank in my rear-view. Four to the floor, I mistakenly sped by my own apartment, and before I could even begin to collect thoughts I found myself far past the outskirts of town, near the stables of a close friend I prayed I could rely on at this time of extreme and total need. I raced up her driveway and scraped to a halt not six inches from the porch. "Good heavens, what's WRONG?" she cried, rising out of her cot. "You're absolutely WHITE!"

"I'm...I'm..."

I awoke in darkness hours later. Or was it days? Or MINUTES? There wasn't a clockface to be found. Only a large embroidered letter "O" over the fireplace. Relaxed momentarily, realizing I was possibly safe under a familiar and trusted roof, I lay staring at my eyelids until I could summon the courage to swing up and pad towards the kitchen. Cracking open the Frigidare, I helped myself to a quart of Haagen Dazs Vanilla Swiss Almond (my favorite) and a stainless spoon, polishing both off in record time. My girth bursting at last, I drew a hasty thank-you note, fumbled for my keys, and slipped back outside.

My car. Where was my CAR? It was not where I'd left it. It wasn't in the drive, or anywhere in the front yard. OR the back.

I tore around the house repeatedly shrieking thunder at the night sky, dissolving eventually into a red-blind rage at the foot of an oddly perplexed palomino. Pounding my fists into the gravel, beating my mind to a sodden pulp, I slowly but surely relented, relaxed, and began to cast back onto the damp grass a lifetime's fitful follies and frustrations, spreading each meticulously over the lawn and across towards the patio. As I debated pacing, lending the past an eye in the process, a breeze began to carelessly blow open what was left of my shirt.

My SHIRT. Yes! I could REMEMBER now! My LAUNDRY. The cafe! The WAITRESS!

I instinctively tore out of my blood-caked clothes and stood naked in the woods. The wind felt soothing across the M-shaped scar on my chest, and comfort soon increased ten-fold as I once again found myself bathed in that luxurious white glow.

Following the shaft of light upwards, high atop the gently swaying pines, I floated effortlessly across Vermont, smiling contentedly every now and then as I recognized familiar friends or landmarks beneath me. There sat Lisa, cutely nattering away as always about those swinging sixties. And there goes good ol' Kim, dashing frantically between the moving van and his latest bedsit. And who could forget trustful Mr. Marv, proudly assembling his new scale panzer division.

How amusing; how...utterly trivial it all seemed now as I approached the mouth of the craft, easing inside as the opening swiftly slid shut behind me. Hanging like a marionette in the crimson-lit cavern which frightened me not in the least any more, as scores of sensors prodded by, I felt oddly and totally at ease as the mysterious green blob streaked to a halt below, slowly engulfing me in its reassuring ashen envelope.

Maybe I'm still dreaming and maybe I'm not. But if no one ever finds me, someone has to know the shocking truth about my last few days on earth.

# Zenarchy

## STORIES

by Ho Chi Zen  
ONCE YOU GET THE YANG OF IT

Most of us usually tend to think of Zen as, if nothing else, the very epitome of spontaneity. D.T. Suzuki tells about how quick the artist who paints with ink on rice paper has to be to avoid blurring and blotching. An old Zen master says to stop choosing our words when we speak. National Teacher Daio says in concluding a brief essay, "...I wrote this, letting the pen write what it would..." And I have compared the sentence-completion diagnostic exercises recommended by Nathaniel Branden, who says they require absolute instantaneous unthinking responses, with the topsy-turvy style of Zen expression.

As in all things Zen and Taoist, however, there are mutually arising opposites regarding this matter—there is the yang and the yin of it. Dogen, the great Soto teacher, once said to his monks: "Before you speak, think about what you are going to say three times. Always. That is Zen." To explain the title concept, Suzuki Roshi tells us in Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind that Zen calligraphy requires you to form every letter with all the care and de-liberation of a child making the letter for the first time.

In spite of being opposite approaches—actually, because of it (for things are just different, not opposite, without something in common)—both methods jolt habit formation.

Zen Master Daikaku said: "You should work on meditation most meticulously and carefully; don't take it easy." And, "...those who do not have a really genuine aspiration for enlightenment do not realize the errors of their minds because their application of effort is not careful..." I am reminded of the old saying, "Make haste—slowly." And of course I think over and over again of all the Zen masters who say in this way and that: "Enlightenment is effortless—completely effortless. Only stop striving!"

### DOUBLE YOUR MONEY

Readers of Zen Without Zen Masters know the story of how Ho Chi Zen expelled from his classes for excessive credulity anyone who put money in the donation bowl too many times. So a seeker once asked Ho, "How do you support yourself?"

"Very simple," Ho Chi Zen replied. "Rabbi Koan approaches Zen masters with an offer of a vast sum of money on the condition they examine me and certify that I have *satori*. If they go through with it, we make them pay us twice that amount, instead, under threat of exposing them for corruption."

### CROOKED DHARMA

"A monk is the greatest evil on earth; he goes through the world without labor—he is a great thief." —Master Bunan

### TOKUSAN ABOLISHES BUDDHISM

"According to my view, there are neither buddhas nor patri-archs. Bodhidharma was a greasy-smelling old barbarian; bodhi-sattvas of the tenth stage are dung haulers; the perfectly and inconceivably enlightened ones are immoral fools; enlightenment and nirvana are donkey-tethering stakes; the canonical teachings are ghost tablets, paper for wiping sores; the four grades of saints and three grades of sages, from Initiates to those of the highest stages, are ghosts hanging around graves, unable to save even themselves." —Master Tokusan (quoted in The Original Face by Thomas Cleary, Grove Press, 1978, p. 46).

### EYE RUBBISH

"So even Buddha name remembrance is producing dust on a mirror, even investigating Zen is putting rubbish in the eye. If you can just trust completely in this way, then you will not be deceived." —Master Jakushitsu (The Original Face, p. 77)

### HOW TO BECOME A BODHISATTVA

"As for the practice of bodhisattvas, when they see forms, they question what it is that sees; when they hear, they question what hears; when they feel, they question what feels; when they cog-nize, they question what cognizes. This is what I call the 'bud-has turning inward.' When you practice like this, your orienta-tion is different from that of ordinary people...—It is the same as the orientation of the buddhas, and even if you don't fully realize their wisdom and powers, you should realize that a fledg-ling bodhisattva has entered the intermediate state." —Master Torei (The Original Face by Thomas Cleary, p. 150)

### FAITH

"What," asked Ken of Ho Chi Zen, "Is faith?"  
Ho handed Ken a bottle of sake and told him to drink the whole quart.

Later on, when Ken had passed out on a row of meditation cu-shions, Rabbi Koan asked and was told by Zen what had happened. "That is not just a Zen trick, you old fox! That is universal priestcraft!"

"What do you mean?" Ho asked innocently.  
"When they ask us a question we can't answer, we get them drunk and send them home."

"I learned it from a Confucian in Hong Kong," Ho Chi Zen re-plied. "Whenever he was called upon to make an ancestral sacri-fice on another's behalf—if the healing or miracle requested

# THE CONTINUING SAGA OF DR. IGUANA

## THE STORY SO FAR.

by Ken Burke

### THE LEGENDS OF ROCKABILLY QUIZ

1. At his audition for SUN records, Elvis Presley sang every song he knew by...

- a) Ral Donner. b) Wynonie Harris.
  - c) Dean Martin. d) Billy "The Kid" Emerson.
2. The B-side of his most famous record was judged obscene by a Virginia State court and he was fined \$10,000 for "public lewd-ness." The artist and infamous B-side was...

- a) Carl Perkins, "Honey Don't" b) Roy Orbison, "Go, Go, Go"
- c) Chuck Berry, "Wee Wee Hours" d) Gene Vincent, "Be-Bop-A-Lula"

3. Billy Lee Riley's band was called...  
a) The Wink Wildcats b) His Little Green Men  
c) The Comets d) The Rocking Stockings

4. He once loaned Elvis Presley his brand new \$800 guitar only to have it returned to him all scratched up and with broken strings. This chagrined guitar player was...

- a) Sleepy LaBeef. b) Buck Owens.
  - c) Bob Luman. d) George "Thumper" Jones.
5. He went to the same college as Pat Boone, and he recorded his first songs in Clovis, New Mexico in Norman Petty's studios.

- a) Buddy Holly b) Buddy Knox
  - c) Roy Orbison d) Waylon Jennings
6. Considered one of the "great unknowns" of rockabilly, this ar-tist's main claim to fame is his listing as the co-author of "I

Forgot to Remember to Forget."  
a) Johnny Carrol b) Mac Curtis  
c) Sonny Burgess d) Charlie Feathers

7. This young guitarist was almost the same age as Ricky Nelson when the teenage idol heard him at a Bob Luman session and re-cruited him for his band.

- a) Glen Campbell. b) Joe Maphis
  - c) James Burton. d) Eddie Cochran
8. At his audition for SUN records, he shyly let his brother do most of the singing, and they were nearly rejected by Sam Phillips who commented, "They've already got an Ernest Tubb, boys." The singer who became famous and his brother were...

- a) Johnny Cash & brother Tommy. b) Johnny Burnett & bro. Dorsey.
  - c) Carl Perkins & brother Jay. d) Don Everly & brother Phil.
9. Though he could rock with the best, this baritone's greatest fame came from singing intense country-crossover ballads.

- a) Warren Smith b) Roy Orbison
  - c) Dave Dudley d) Jack Scott
10. He recorded "See You Soon, Baboon" and "Four Letter Word Rock" in Shreveport, Louisiana. The artist and his best-known record are:

- a) Dale Hawkins, "Suzie-Q" b) Jody Reynolds, "Endless Sleep"
  - c) Ronnie Hawkins, "Mary Lou" d) Sanford Clark, "The Fool"
11. The original name of his band was The Four Aces of Western Swing, but their greatest fame came as...

- a) Buddy Holly & The Crickets. b) Johnny Cash & The Tennessee 2.
  - c) Gene Vincent & The Bluecaps. d) Bill Haley & The Comets.
12. He got his start in a Nashville after-hours club owned by Roy Hall. Later, he went to Memphis and scored a big hit with a song his former boss claims to have co-written.

- a) Ray Smith b) Smoky Joe Baugh
  - c) Jerry Lee Lewis d) Moon Mullican
13. He left Carl Perkins' band to become the third member of Johnny Cash's Tennessee Three.

- a) Thomas Wayne b) W.S. "Fluke" Holland
- c) Jay Perkins d) Clayton Perkins

14. Match the artist to his guitar player:
- a) Gene Vincent 1) Luther Perkins
  - b) Johnny Burnette 2) Roland Janes
  - c) Elvis Presley 3) Al Casey
  - d) Johnny Cash 4) Carl Perkins
  - e) Sanford Clark 5) Paul Burlison
  - f) Jerry Lee Lewis 6) Cliff Gallup
  - g) Carl Perkins 7) Scotty Moore

ANSWERS: 1.- C, 2. - D, 3. - B, 4. - A, 5. - C, 6. - D, 7. - C, 8. - C, 9. - D, 10. - A, 11. - D, 12. - C, 13. - B, 14. A-6, B-5, C-7, E-3, F-2, G-4. (20 points possible)



seemed impossible even for Heaven, he brought out his largest il-lu-bation cup and served them communion, besides, explaining: "This is magic Christian missionaries practice. Maybe it will work, and maybe not—just to cover my own ass if it doesn't." Which of course returns us to our original point.

"How?"

"Faith and what it is: That which if, if you trust priests, will cause you lots of problems."

# BACKWORDS LOGIC

by Ace Backwords ©1993

These are crazy times. People are flipping out left and right. Every

day we read in the newspapers about people doing the most insane things to themselves and to each other. People are angry. People are pissed off. People are frustrated at all the bullshit they have to endure just to make it through a normal day in these abnormal times.

So, as a public service I've solicited the opinions of various prominent figures, contemporary thinkers, and enlightened fuck-ups to find out how they manage to keep it together.

In short: WHAT KEEPS YOU SANE????

Marijuana. Lots of marijuana.

That's my response to your very valuable survey on how some folk keep it together. I often don't. Keep it together, that is. I dunno how I've made it this long, considering how hard I generally take reality. —David Crowbar Nestle, *Popular Reality*

The main thing is to keep in mind that quality begins at home. If you ain't got it there you're not likely to see much of it anywhere else. Figure out what's right and logical in your own mind, then do all you can to live that way. Don't undermine your stand with any sort of sleazy behavior.

Maybe that's easier said than done. The thing is, don't fuck up any more than you can help.

Be tough on yourself in this regard and easy on others.

—Kim Dietch, cartoonist (*"Hollywoodland"*)

Nietzsche. Kurtz. Discipline. Physical workouts. Solitary refinement. Perspective. Hatred of weakness. Love of war. Confrontation. I am part animal, part machine. I am road tested. I am not fragile. I am not a stranger to violence. I am a product of will and of power. I realize the limits of my flesh and the limitlessness of my soul. Nothing can stop me from embracing my will. That is what keeps me sewn together most of the time. I have a lot to learn. Ta ra ra boom dee ay.

—Henry Rollins, formerly of Black Flag

Good question! I'm totally sane, contrary to popular belief!!! Working on my fanzine and listening to music keeps me straight. I guess not having a girlfriend adds to my sanity too, but I've never had one, so I can't say for sure! If I hadn't discovered the "underground" in '85 I might be insane...it's a world that's accepted me and is open to what I have to say. I had no outlet for my creativeness (*sic*) until I found the underground! But I guess doing various fanzines on my own over the last couple of years has been the main factor in maintaining my sanity. I'm an extremely quiet person, and publishing what I have to say is kind of like my second voice. It's my more serious side. When I talk to people I just joke around. But when I want to switch to seriousness they can't handle it and think I'm still joking! No one that is sane doesn't have an insane side too. I like to tap into that insane part of me, release the tension through laughter and being a loud-mouth, but when people see that side of me it seems to be the only aspect of my personality that they remember! SOOOO, they call me "weird," I say "fuck 'em!" This is who I am, like it or hate it. Either way it doesn't matter! You can't please everyone, I gave up on that years ago!!! As long as I think I'm sane...I'm happy. Now, if you'll excuse me I have to take my medication...

—Chris Francis, *Search and Destroy*

Better you should ask: What helps you keep it together?? Sanity, I don't know...who's to say what sanity is? Is Reagan sane? Is the shoe clerk sane? Is Bruce Duncan insane? It's a tricky word...Somebody once said, "The most satisfying lives belong to those with insatiable curiosity based on deep-rooted cultural interests..." That and masturbation are the things that get me through the day. —R. Crumb, cartoonist

Realizing that's what's there is what it is at the moment.

—Charles Bukowski

I'm afraid I've got nothing to add to your survey, Ace, wot: with being happily married and having a good job in the music biz.

—John Crawford, cartoonist

Perched atop some wriggle tree

Everyone keeps asking me

"Hey Gar, say, what keeps you sane?"

You may clutch clues you haven't got

But SANITY—I'd rather not

Divulge the secrets stashed behind my pain.

"Gee, man, that's not very fair"

You're sulking, standing, sitting there

Whilst all around shit fits across the stew

I realize, dear readers all

I may appear so smugly tall

But certain thoughts I'd rather keep from view.

For if the smart-ass I possess

Should suddenly be spread digress

And pieces of my brain were washed so clean

Then what would be the point of it all,

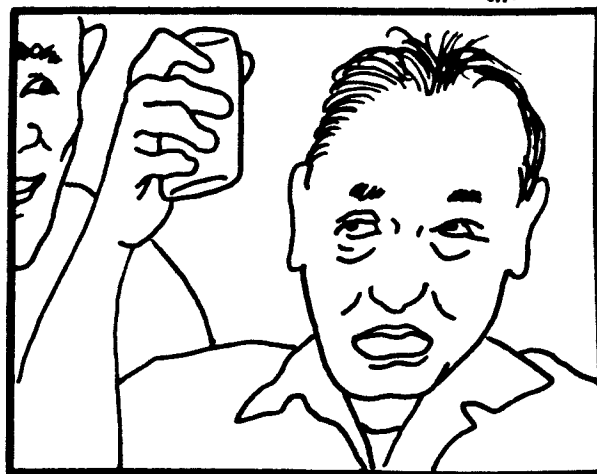
If tragedies so blessed fall

Upon me if I don't know what you mean.

—Gary Pig Gold, *Pigshit*

Answering stupid surveys like this...but seriously, if it weren't for my DTs, my life would be a living hell! My magazine has made me a calmer, saner, happier woman. Who cares about the bomb, disease, biological clocks ticking so loud they keep you up

# OVERHEARD at America's Lunch Counters



"Thirty five cents is a lot for a ten cent drink!"

at night, the lack of a decent presidential candidate, no surefire way to keep nails from chipping, Pat Robertson, yellow waxy build-up, walking catfish, the dent in Muffy's BMW, crow's feet, Jesse Jackson, water-weight gain? I GOT MY DTs!!! (This has been a paid political announcement from the Committee to Procure Subscribers. Thank you.) —Samantha Lowry, *Disapproved Theories*

One thing only: "Bob's" guaranteed prediction and promise to all members of the Church that on a fateful Sunday in July 1995 (known to cognoscenti as X-Day) the chosen We will be able to watch from the portholes of the Xist Flying Saucer carrying us away to the secret planet Pinkus #9 as all the rest of you dirty bastiches left on this rotten earth burn to atoms along with it. And We'll be laughing. —Erwin Bergdoll, *SubGenius cognoscent* (Concluded next issue)



CHEER UP!  
COME ON!  
DON'T BE A  
GRUMP!  
SMILE!  
LOOSEN UP!  
GET WITH  
THE PROGRAM!!  
CHEER UP  
OR I'LL  
KILL  
YOU!!

Look for  
more of  
J.P.'s stuff  
in  
CRITTERS  
comics

"Crutty comedy" is packaged as a series of distinguished yet utterly uncouth pamphlets. Not carrying anything — if you get offended, you lose the game by default.

"A society for strange people which, by identifying itself as bogus from the outset, remains consistent with its own internal belief system... a wonderful but disturbing mishmash of scholarly and trashy contradictions. I found myself reading it over and over." — OVERWORLD

## SCUFFED SHOES

by Sigmund Weiss

Child, you gotta rot well before you are grown, so you can become akin to scuffed shoes while among your misadventures you learn the lingo of tramps caught amid their walloping Time. When you've finished being a No-Account get yourself down to business like a second-hand car salesman selling the junk you've accumulated & twisting your profits into speculations oil wells, mines, gibberish hopes, where your blood, your flesh & every cent you had is spent you can then return to your days of youth wearing scuffed shoes searching for a lost city you always wished to lose yourself in.

## A Fanatical Attack on FANATICISM

The Church of the SubGenius is impossible to categorize. A comment on and parody of the cult phenomena of our times, it has itself become a world cult — a cult of laughing satire particularly well suited for the times of rampant commercialism. Crammed with dozens of puns and double entendres, figure God must have a strange sense of humor, this

# The New-and-Updated Official List of Honeymoon Vacation Spots

by Susan Packie

'Tis June, 'tis June, and half the world is searching for a place to honeymoon. To save time and effort, the following list is provided for those seeking exotic, untrod, little-known hideaways.

1. SIBERIA—You were maybe expecting a Caribbean island to be number one on the list? Don't be silly! Caribbean islands are hot and sticky. After an exhausting day traipsing around tourist shops, all anyone wants to do is go back to the hotel and go to bed. Alone. Under a mosquito net. With the air conditioner on full blast.

But Siberia is an entirely different story. It is definitely not hot and sticky, and there are, for all practical purposes, no tourist shops to pass the time of day in. But furs are abundant and make marvelous coverings for beds, which are also abundant. Which brings us back to the subject of honeymoons. Would it be any hardship to spend the entire trip in a bed piled high with furs? Can this marriage fail?

2. BROOKLYN—Okay, so Brooklyn's a little warm in the summer, but since no one in the New York area would dream of walking the streets, and since tourist shops in Brooklyn do about as well as bars in Ocean Grove, New Jersey (so dry babies have to be changed every fifteen minutes), the only other source of amusement is—the bedroom! If you don't believe me, make a count of the little kids in Brooklyn some time, but don't get too close to any of them. They may be carrying screwdrivers. (ED. NOTE: Okay, break it up. What kind of a Brooklynite would I be if I didn't defend my current home town? Don't believe 'er, folks; there's plenty of honeymoon-type spots in Brooklyn [Steve and I did spend part of our honeymoon here at home], including Coney Island, Prospect Park, BAM and museums and libraries—yes, yes, definitely libraries!—and Little Odessa and Brownstone Yippieland and there are even tourista shops so there nyah nyah! Just wait till I get my hands on Bellevue—I mean, Belleville, Susan...)

3. MOSCOW—Now, Moscow is a lovely city, and most visitors will want to sightsee the days and nights away, but since you will be followed everywhere you go by a KGB agent, you will probably prefer to remain in your hotel room. This also prevents electronic bugs from being hidden under your bed and informs the "maid" you don't want your room ransacked that day. So how do you spend your time? You're on your honeymoon and you have to ask? (ED. NOTE #2: For Russian honeymooners, substitute "Washington" and "CIA" for "Moscow" and "KGB" respectively—right Susan?)

But actually, the most exotic, untrodden, little-known hideaway is probably your home. After you've been married awhile and the glitter has worn off, you won't be spending very much time in it, anyway!

## SLOW COLLAPSE

by Steven F. Scharff

We were at work, five of us blue-collar working-class young men, cleaning off the hand trucks with a foul-smelling solvent. We sat as the bustle of work continued around us and "LITE-FM" dripped from an overhead loudspeaker. Finally, someone spoke.

"If we really wanted to make money, we'd open up a go-go bar!"

At that moment, everyone (save for myself) started talking about their exploits and experiences at the many go-go bars in the area. The conversation fell to me, and I admitted my lack of experience in bar-hopping. So a date was planned for us. We'd get together after work that Friday and, with me as designated driver, visit some places that specialized in scantily-clad women dancing about.

As the day drew closer, several backed out, due to other commitments. All that were left were myself and a forklift driver I'll call Mitch.

I drove to Mitch's place after work, and he showed me about his affluent parents' home. Stark contrast to Mitch's "classic biker" personality. Loud, proud and reckless. A short conversation with his mother and fiancée (who lived with them), and we went out to pick up Mitch's friend a few blocks away.

His friend was married and had a kid, so he'd only be with us

for one or two bars... We made our way in my Dodge to a small place called "Gogorama," which specialized in nude dancers (hence no liquor license).

We picked up a 6-pack of Bud at the next-door liquor store, and drank it in my car. I had one, Mitch's friend had two, and Mitch quickly downed three. We went in, paid our cover charge, and took our seats to see a nude woman, apparently under the influence of an assortment of drugs, attempting to "dance" on a stage framed by the seats of the bar.

While several men flashed fives for her to come closer to "talk dirty," all I could do was notice the proportions of her body and compare them to the art instruction books from which I studied.

After twenty uneventful minutes, we went back to the car. Back home? No, of course not! To another friend's place.

The friend was a man named "Bird" who was missing several front teeth. His place was an authentic biker crash-pad, complete with empty beer cans, marijuana seeds in the ashtray, and mismatched furniture in the living room.

I'll spare you the details of going on a "beer run" to a right-wing bar, the screams and poundings from a nearby room (that apparently only I noticed), and the alarming number of cans Mitch emptied. Finally, we had overstayed our welcome, and left.

As we drive, with my praying that we didn't get pulled over by the cops, Mitch's friend told some off-color joke. Mitch started to laugh, and then his laughs turned to coughs. Then gags. I pulled over in the darkness and opened the door for Mitch. He grabbed the door frame for support as he surrendered to a wave of nausea.

After Mitch washed his mouth out with more beer, we made our way back to his friend's place. Mitch suggested we go see some gory horror flick. His friend said no, and I seconded. We bade our goodbyes to Mitch's friend, made a U-turn, and drove the three blocks to Mitch's place.

When we stopped, Mitch reached over and began to put his cans of beer into the pockets of my army jacket. He said his mother wouldn't allow him bringing beer into the house.

I helped him out of the car and walked him to the back door. He was in a state of intoxication that could best be described as "bombed to the gills." He staggered and weaved like he was exhausted, and nearly fell twice. He said he'd have his biker friends kill me if I told anyone at work about his condition.

He wouldn't admit to being an alcoholic.

His mother and fiancée were waiting for us, and a very heated discussion, to put it lightly, followed. He argued that he was an adult and could do what he wanted.

I tried to make my exit, but he wouldn't let me leave. We stashed the beer cans under his bed and then made our way to the rec room in the basement. Each time I tried to politely leave, he'd first "kill me with kindness," then he'd get violent. We watched one of the "Howling" films (#2, I believe) as Mitch howled along with the werewolves. I felt that his act wasn't too far from the truth. Mitch had been transformed into a beast of sorts, but alcohol was his full moon.

Eventually he lay on the couch and began to snore. I grabbed my coat and quietly made my way upstairs. Mitch's wife and fiancée were talking over coffee; I joined them.

Seems Mitch's father, a truck driver, was on the road most of the time. And having only women in the house (including a sister, whom I only saw twice), Mitch apparently needed to pump up his machismo, to prove his manhood.

I told them to find help for him before it got worse, then made my way home. It was 9:30pm.

I'd like to end the story there, but I need to add to it.

The next day, despite the threat, I told several folks at work about the "night out." They gave me their sympathy.

Then came the union meeting, held after work at a local German-American restaurant. I stayed until the meeting ended, and left before refreshments were served due to a doctor's appointment.

The next day, I was told I was fortunate not to have been there. Mitch had started at the beer, and emptied, by himself, four pitchers of Coors. Then he got playful.

He threw a salt shaker across the room.

Later, a napkin dispenser. Then a chair.

Mitch and his fiancée have recently married. One of the other forklift drivers told him not to get loaded at the reception, and some of us have placed bets on how long the marriage will last.

Mitch is a friend who won't listen to reason, or even admit the obvious. Yet each time he drinks, he does so to get drunk.

I brought this to his attention, and he gave me this unintentionally ambiguous response:

"Hey, man, I'm in total control!"

Does he mean he controls his liquor, or does it control him?

Multiple choice: Identify

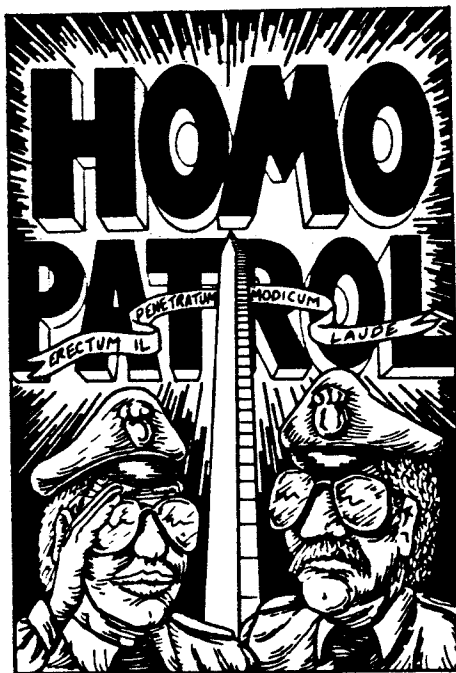
a. life

b. truth

c. nonsense



\*\*\*\*\*  
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NEXT: REFLECTIONS



# Commercial McClue-In

by "Kid" Sieve

Give you an idea of what kind of boring time I've had lately—didn't even go to see the Commercial Screenings at the Museum of Broadcasting ("The people's choice of most popular commercials of the last decade"—which people they didn't say) which ended June 10. I mean, I haven't even been watching that much television lately, which is tantamount to death for a tv-type reviewer.

I mean, all that's on, really, is baseball, and the commercials between innings mostly consist of car ads—which might as well bring us to Ronnie Schell, once one of the more clever stand-up comics from what I recall of early 70's standup before Robin Williams dominated the scene. I do remember Schell's knockout impression of Don Adams, which he still unconsciously does, only now he's reduced to breaking up a western movie-style poker game in which a grizzled gentleman has just ordered, "Deal," by breaking into the scene replete with white neon-lettered tux and dancing chorus girls shouting, "Did somebody say 'Deal'?" and talking about how wonderful his car deals are. I seem to recall a car ad awhile back which summed it up, where the actor assured us his car company didn't need all these fancy balloons and screaming girls and how fake it was and all, which I thought at the time would put an end to commercials like Schell's simply by pointing out how idiotic they were. My naivete rears its ugly head again... By the way, ever notice that, even though you may remember many of these car ads (for better or worse) pretty well, rarely does the car company itself come to mind as easily (a notable exception is Isuzu, of course, but that's just luck, I suspect)? These folks are definitely doing something wrong—or perhaps it's just the glut.

In keeping with cars, I should say something nice about the Bridgestone Tire ads series which features a fellow seemingly travelling at 60mph or so by standing still, talking about how there's "this much room" between the road and the car (meaning the tire width, I guess), about the same as his shoe soles, presumably. It's a clever combination of matte screening and stop-action animation and "Bob" knows what else, and I still haven't figured out how all of it is done.

I do remember how the Tinactin commercial with the woman's flaming foot is done, but I don't feel like looking it up in whatever AdWeek explained it. I'm just glad someone's finally wised up to the fact that women get athlete's foot too. Didja know we sweat as well?

And Drexel Burnham spots are still popping up during Mets interruptions, much to the amusement of this cynic, who's been following avidly the DBL trials regarding junk bonds, insider trading, etc. Remember that next time they show the playground DBL supposedly saved...

And if that weren't bad enough, this fall we'll all be treated to massive military-industrial propaganda courtesy the U.S. Council for Energy Awareness (all about Our Friend Mr. Nuke, no doubt), set to air during the World Series (why do they do this to my baseball?!) and the miniseries War and Remembrance, written before the strike and being filmed now, as if remembering war's glory were a good thing.

So it's been pretty boring, all in all. I think the ad agency folks are all on summer-long vacations. So I'll open the floor again—anybody out there have any suggestions on what they'd like me to do to ~~do~~ <sup>analyze</sup> analyze vis a vis tv commercials for next time? Send 'em all to Elayne at IJ and I'll try to work up more enthusiasm next issue. Go WGA!

## THE MAN WHO HATED THE BEATLES

by Morgan Lloyd

I was well into my third pitcher of beer when the crusty old grizzled-looking wino sat down next to me. He was the sorriest looking grape I'd run downwind of in many a binge, so I picked up my drinks and sat on a barstool at the other end of the bar. Inevitably (as I always seem to attract barflies around me), he followed, and it wasn't long before an attempt was made at starting a conversation with me. There was a crucifix hanging on the wall

behind the bar, dangling there as though it were making a vain attempt at saving our souls. Out of the corner of my eye I saw him tip his bottle at the cross. When he'd finished his salutation he looked towards me and smiled. His black tongue shown through the gaps in his teeth and a small drop of spittle ran down his cheek.

"I always wondered what it would be like when you're dead," he said in a mush-mouthed croak. "I mean, is it really like they say? Are you an angel in heaven? Are there loved ones waiting for you? Even the evil ones? I've always thought heaven was this completely euphoric place where everything was wonderful. Therefore when I'm there I'll want all the people I've ever loved with me. Right? Well, what about someone like Hitler's mother? She never did nothing to keep her out of heaven, did she? Just because she gave birth to someone like Hitler doesn't mean she should spend eternity in hell. She didn't know what a monster he would become. She died years before he pulled any of his crimes against humanity, so how can you blame her for it? So here she is, sitting up in heaven waiting for her little darlin' Adolf to show up, and he's a no-show. His expected arrival date comes and goes and still no Adolf. She gets suspicious and starts asking the other angels questions. Pretty soon it gets back to God and He wouldn't want one of His angels upset. So what does He do? He sends a phony Adolf angel to make her happy? Or maybe he gets one of the other angels to deliver a telegram pretending it's from Hitler and he's on a special angel assignment. She's a proud mother. It takes a really special type of angel to get picked for a special assignment, right?"

At this point he let loose a thunderous-sounding invisible zephyr into the air. I don't know how to describe to you the scent of a wino's flatulence. The bowels of hell never unleashed a more rancid stench.

"Did someone order a wake-up call?" he inquired innocently, and went on with his babbling as though nothing was aridly awry. "My name's Irwin Orange the Second. It was my dad's name too. It's a proud name and seeing as how I've done such a bang-up job with it I decided to pass it on to my son too." He stopped talking long enough to take a swig off his beer and then went on with his jabbering. Wiping the top off of the bottle, he muttered, "Germs. Germs will kill you. Every day a new disease pops up. Yesterday it was herpes, today it's AIDS. This AIDS stuff really scares me. Not that I dwell on it a lot. I'm an optimistic person, ya know? I always try to look at the brighter side of things. Take AIDS, for instance. It's killing thousands of people a year and it's a horrible way to die. But on the other hand, it's made going to county jail a lot more pleasurable an experience."

At this point I almost broke my vow not to talk to this bothersome bum, hoping by ignoring him he'd go away. I wanted to know what he meant by that county jail statement. But I needn't have worried. He set his drink down and continued on with his spiel.

"The last time I got thrown in jail I noticed that the booty bandits were gone. Making it a lot safer for you to bend over and retrieve that slippery bar of soap in the shower, if you know what I mean."

I figured about this time the beer had begun to affect my thinking because suddenly he began to make sense to me. There is a sunnier side to every dark cloud. By nights I'm a professional drunk but during the day I drive a truck for a living. My deliveries all lie in the L.A. area, so I'm always using the freeways to do my job. Last year there was a spate of freeway shootings that held L.A.'s transit users in a grip of fear. But I noticed that everyone's driving habits took on a new slant. Good manners. It took five killings and twenty-odd people wounded to teach people how to drive courteously. Albeit a small plus, but nonetheless still a plus.

The grey-haired old blabbering fool stood weaving in front of me while his face turned bright red. His eyes were closed and he was holding his breath. A Beatles song was playing on the radio. As soon as it ended he let out the air he held in and panted for more.

"I can't stand the Beatles," he grunted. "Never could stand them. Even back when they were the Fab Four and all dressed alike. Then one day I was tossed into jail for terminal vagrancy and they had one of those speakers set up in the cell. It was getting some local radio station that was having a Beatles marathon. All weekend they played Beatle songs. From Friday morning until Sunday night. Nonstop Beatles music. I think one of them had just gotten snuffed or something. I didn't shed no tears. Not till that damned Beatles festival came on the air. I swore when I got out that I was going to start my own personal boycott of the Beatles' music. So ever since then, whenever I hear one of their songs playing, I hold my breath until it's over. If those Irish rebels can go on a food fast to protest something, it makes sense that I can deprive myself of a little air to make a statement, don't it?"

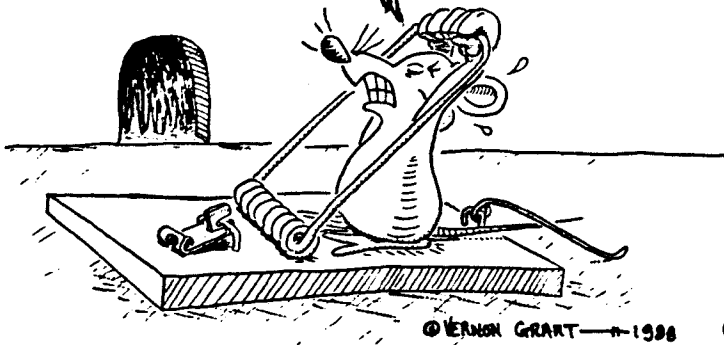
Suddenly another song came on and I spoke to him for the first time that night.

"This is a Beatles song too," I informed him.

"It is?" he exclaimed. Then he drew a deep breath of air and continued on with his anti-Beatles music vendetta. The song playing has never been one of my favorites by them. As a matter of fact it's their worst one, if you ask me. It's off the White album, a filler piece by Lennon & Ono. The one on Side Three. "Revolution #9" is its name, and it clocks in at 8 minutes fifteen seconds long. I was going to ask the air-fasting old fool in front of me if he included their solo material in with it too, but after about three minutes he blacked out and crumbled to the floor. It gave me time to pay for my drinks and take up residence at another bar before he woke up, though.

"MACHO-MOUSE" SEZ:

HEY! IT AIN'T NAUTILUS, BUT IT'S CHEAP!



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Get ready for a pretty tough future.



## THE FINAL EXAM

by Fericano & Ligi

(This is the second in a series of scripts from the purveyors of Yossarian Universal News Service that were rejected by Saturday Night Live. Now there's a writers' strike. Serves 'em right.)

(OPEN ON: An old public school classroom with those tiny, tiny desks with the flip-tops and the inkwell and pencil groove.)

The writers occupy the desks, while Lorne Michaels writes on the blackboard. With each letter, the writers speculate on what the word will finally be. John Lovitz and Al Franken flank the blackboard. They are dressed in fatigues and armed with automatic rifles.)

HARTMAN: Druid, doublet, Drambui, dodacahedron, divisible, divine...

CARVEY: Dementia, deranged, doubloon, dirigible...

HOOKS: Dad, dark, damp, dappled, dazzling...

NEALON: Dank, dangling, Daniloff...

JACKSON: Dang!

MICHAELS (whirling from the blackboard): And do we have a winner yet?

FRANKEN: The envelope please. (Lovitz pulls an envelope from his breast pocket and crosses to hand it to Franken.) And the winner is...Nah. There is no winner yet. You've got a bunch of losers here, Lorne, and remember you heard it first from me, Al Franken. LOVITZ (admonishing Dunn): Don't open the booklet until you are told to do so. Or I'll have to shoot your hands off. Do you understand?

CARVEY: Better do what he says.

DUNN: You wimp.

MICHAELS: As you all know, this is the Saturday Night Live final exam for all writing applicants. We have narrowed the field down from eleven thousand hopefuls to just you few. I must ask you to refrain from talking. Don't open your booklet until you're told to do so. You'll have to fill the specimen cups before handing in your papers. Good luck.

DUNN: What is he talking about, a final exam? A final exam? I'm not taking any final exam!

LOVITZ: You hard of hearing, lady? No talking. Listen to the man and keep your fat yap shut.

DUNN (standing): I don't have to take this. Here's what I think of your test, Michaels. (Sweeping the materials from her desk top.)

LOVITZ (with his weapon at the ready): Now you can just pick it all up and get back in that chair, lady, or maybe you'd like me to blow one of your ears off.

(Dunn lunges at Lovitz and in a brief struggle, as Michaels restrains Franken and the other writers look on, Dunn disarms him.)

DUNN: Now what, little man? What do you say now, huh? You're not so tough without your gun, are you?

LOVITZ: Don't kill me. Please don't kill me. I've got an appointment in the morning.

DUNN: And you, Michaels, I'm not taking no goddamn final exam from you or anybody else. You mess with me and you're messing with danger.

FRANKEN: Whoa, whoa! Where's the duck? This is the spot where we're supposed to have the duck. Am I on the wrong show? Oh, so I guess the joke's on me, Al Franken. But we do have a winner, ladies and gentlemen. Danger. That's the magic word. And here to bring you the instant replay...

DUNN: And you, Michaels, I'm not taking no goddamn final exam from you or anybody else. You mess with me and you're messing with danger. (Turning back to Lovitz, cocking the gun) And as for you...

LOVITZ: No, wait, please. There's something I've just got to say: Live, from New York, it's Saturday Night...

## THE DEAD WOMAN

by Sigmund Weiss

It was a cold, impersonal winter. A long time walking, the boy enjoyed his touch of snow. His face bore smiles like the sun sharpening the snow's brilliance. In his sense of innocence he threw snowballs at passing cars, ran, bounced like a young deer over the snow.

He suddenly caught sight of a little girl crying. "What for?" he enquired.

"My Mama won't speak to me. She's lying in bed, looking funny."

"Maybe she's dead."

"What's dead?" the little girl asked.

"I dunno. Something that happens when you can't speak, hear or see, I guess."

"Will you come home with me and talk to my Mama?"

The two children ran to the girl's apartment house where she lived. After a quick look the boy said, "She's dead!"

The girl gripped the boy's arm. "Can't you stop her from being dead?"

For minutes the boy kept shaking the woman on the bed. "She sure is real dead, has a terrible smell."

Tired of trying to wake the woman, they knocked on the door of a neighbor's apartment and told the woman there that the girl's mother was dead and they were unable to awaken her. The neighbor called the police. In about fifteen minutes two policemen showed up with a coroner. The three of them went into the bedroom, with the children following.

The coroner took a quick look and asked, "Who said there was a dead woman here?"

"I did," answered the little girl.

"What do you know about death?" the coroner asked of the girl.

"She didn't say anything or hear what we were doing, so she's dead."

The policemen and the coroner smiled at each other. The coroner said, "She's dead drunk!"

"Dead drunk!" asked the little girl. "What's dead drunk?"

"She's cockeyed, full of booze," the coroner laughed as the little girl seemed bewildered.

"She ain't dead! She ain't dead!" repeated the little girl.

"Nope, she ain't dead," spoke the boy.

The little girl looked slyly at the boy. "Let's go out and make a snowman."

"Okay."

The two children dashed out of the apartment and down the stairs, chirping; the policemen and coroner shook with laughter as curious neighbors stood in the hallway, somewhat confused.

# Ice Cream Man

by Stu Newman

"Big Chief" was the first to order. He wore an Indian head-dress, no doubt purchased by a coddling mom in some dusty five-and-dime. A huge, multi-colored feather protruded from the back of his little head.

"Gimme some Skiffles, some Twistlers, a bag of Pon-Pons, a Chunky-Monkey bar, a box of Goobers and some Jube-Jube beads."

The rest of the kids surrounded him, anxiously waiting for me to serve them. There was quite a large crowd of them—one with a crew cut, one covered with mud from head to toe, one crawling on the floor, one with sputtering, buzzing noises coming from his mouth, a few more scattered toward the back. There were no girls, although one little boy had a doll clutched to his chest. Someday, he'd own half the clubs in New York City.

"Hey, mister," asked a child wearing enormous trousers, "how much candy can I get for this?"

I looked down at him. He had one nickel, one penny and a lint ball in the palm of his hand.

"One at a time," I responded.

I noticed the filthy one, with his hands and face pressed against the candy counter. He swayed back and forth, eyes open wide, leering at the candy. The glass was rapidly becoming covered with his muck.

"Hey, you," I reproached, "off the glass. Look what you're doin'. How did you get so dirty?"

The candy display was located at the back of my walk-in ice cream truck. The truck was the size of a step-van with an inside freezer and a doorway in the back through which the little hellions gained entrance.

I gathered "Big Chief's" harvest of sweets and dumped them on the counter. He held out a hand full of change. It couldn't have been more than thirty or forty cents. I began to think I was in the wrong business. I looked down at my little friends; probably not more than two or three dollars between the whole lot of them.

When I first began my route, I spoke with some of the other ice cream men about the business.

"It's okay, if you stay out."

"Stay out?" I asked.

"If you stay out for eleven or twelve hours."

"Eleven or twelve hours! How many days a week?"

"All of 'em."

"All of them!"

"Yeah, and you should get yourself one of these." He pulled out a .38 caliber pistol and displayed it in the palm of his hand. "To protect yourself," he added.

If I did have a gun, I probably would have shot myself in the head with it after two days on the job.

I never bought a gun, never shot myself in the head, and no one ever came to steal my ice cream. I consider myself lucky.

I wasn't so lucky when it came to the weather. The rain drove me crazy. It would start to drizzle, I would head home. The sun would start to shine again, I would hang a U-turn and head back out. I must have spent hours driving around in circles.

I never worked the long days, either. After even or eight hours of peddling ice cream and candy, I would lose all motivation to market frozen dairy products and head home.

One day, I was coming back from my route, heading west on Sunrise Highway. I noticed two girls hitchhiking. I pulled over.

The girls walked in the truck wearing the same expression that Dorothy had on her way through the front gates of the Emerald City. They appeared to be in their mid-20's, my age at the time. One had short, curly blonde hair and was quite cute, the other an unobtrusive brunette. They giggled to each other as they made themselves comfortable on the ice chest.

"Where you headin'?" I asked.

"Lynnbrook," answered the blonde.

I asked them their names and "Blondie" spoke again. "I'm Patty and this is Mona."

"Would you care for some ice cream?"

"Sure."

The girls opened the freezer and helped themselves. Patty selected a Sky Bomb and Mona went for a vanilla cone. I watched them in the rearview mirror.

"It's a pleasure to watch you girls enjoying my fine product."

They giggled to each other some more and continued to eat. After a few minutes, Patty took a break from her Sky Bomb and began to speak.

"How long you been drivin' this thing, Mr. Ice Cream Man?"

"Not long...a few weeks."

"Do you have a PhD. in creamsicles?"

Before I could answer that being an ice cream man required no formal training, Mona and Patty broke into convulsive laughter. Their hysterics subsided into intermittent giggles, then all was quiet. Patty threw her popsicle into a trash can, wiped her hands off on her blue jeans and walk toward the front of the truck. She rested her elbow on the head of my seat and said softly:

"Drop Mona off first."

I let Mona out a few blocks later. She exchanged a few words with Patty, then turned to me. "Nice meeting you, Louis. Thanks for the ride."

I watched her walk away. A free ride, free ice cream—I was Santa Claus on wheels.

"Let's go somewhere for a drink," suggested Patty.

We spent about an hour in a little bar in Lynnbrook, then went to Patty's house. I parked the truck outside.

My ice cream truck became a familiar sight, parked outside Patty's house. The more I went to see Patty, the more the neighbors

would complain. Only one guy said anything to my face. He raised his voice and called my truck an eyesore. I told him it was un-American to speak to an ice cream man like that.

Although I told Patty much about myself—how I came to New York, lured by the thriving music scene, and not a career in ice cream—she revealed very little about herself. Only that she was a waitress and used to work in a shoe store, where the money was better and the work easier. I became curious about this lucrative shoe store and one day Patty brought me there.

I noticed that the shoes were priced as high as \$300 or \$400 a pair. I thought in terms of ice cream, a dollar a bar. I had never seen such prices before. I think it was here that I lost my innocence—not when I first had sex; I was still quite naive a long time after that.

We had our first argument a few weeks later. It was over my dog, Silver, a big white mutt that I loved like a daughter. I brought her everywhere, including Patty's apartment—which was quite small.

"You can't keep that dog in here," announced Patty, "you'll have to tie her up outside."

I acquiesced. As I walked away from Silver, I looked back over my shoulder at her. She just sat there with those big, sad eyes. A rope, the veritable albatross, dangled limply around her neck.

"It's done," I said somberly upon returning.

"Good."

"That dog's like a daughter to me, you know."

"Your daughter wouldn't be so good looking."

"If we did have a daughter, would you make me tie her up outside too?"

Patty started to cry. "Don't worry. That'll never happen. I can't have children."

"What? I don't understand."

"I went to the doctor this week. I've had too many abortions... who cares? Who wants 'em, anyway?" Patty continued to cry and ran into the other room.

I stood in the kitchen, feeling like a moron. Patty's eyes were far too pretty to have tears coming from them.

I walked in the bedroom and sat down beside her. After a few minutes she spoke.

"Louis?"

"Yes?"

"Sometimes I wonder what you have to do to stop from goin' crazy."

I didn't attempt to answer this.

"What do you do, Louis?"

I thought for a few minutes and said, "Everything I can... I don't think I've been too successful, though."

Patty giggled at this. It was the same laugh I heard when I picked her up in my ice cream truck, only now it was with tears in her eyes. Patty's smile disintegrated and she continued to speak.

"I wonder about goin' crazy a lot. What do you wonder about, Louis?"

"I wonder why I'm such a idiot."

Patty smiled and said, "I've wondered about that, too."

We had a good laugh. I held Patty in my arms and we kissed. We made love. Silver howled outside.

As the summer came to an end, so did my love for the ice cream business. My patience started to wear thin and I found myself snapping at the kids. I remember when I was a child, I would run up to the ice cream man, completely penniless, and ask, "Mister, can I have a free ice cream?" Now as I relived this experience on the opposite side of the question I would answer, "Whaddaya think this is, a soup kitchen?"

Patty, too, had become disenchanted with her vocation. She went to the shoe store to ask for her old job back, but fate wouldn't have it.

Soon our mutual discontent turned into mutual disinterest. Our relationship languished in the melancholia that is autumn. We lost touch.

The next summer I gained a foothold in the music business with a band called Beethoven Smith and the Fifties, and experienced some minor success in the New York club circuit. I even got paid once or twice.

We did some out of town gigs, and one night we were playing in a little bar in Sag Harbour, Long Island. The place was real small, all four walls within eyesight from any corner of the room. We had just finished a set and I was putting down my guitar. A stranger walked up to me.

"A girl at the bar asked me to give you this." He handed me a small piece of paper. I opened it. It read:

"Patty still wants you."

I scanned the bar. If she still wanted me, it wasn't enough for her to wait until the end of the set.

I sat down and thought about Patty and the ice cream truck. Ice cream was the one thing I was never denied as a child. Good Humor and Mr. Softee were my favorites, and when their bells chimed through the streets of my neighborhood, Mom always forked over the change, as if there were something noble about it, something sacred. I wouldn't have been surprised if, after handing me a popsicle, the ice cream man said, "Bless you, son."

I don't eat much ice cream now, only on occasion.

A member of the band walked over and asked me if everything was all right. I told him that everything was fine.

"I'm goin' to the bar, want somethin'?"

"A Sky Bomb."

He returned a few minutes later.

"The bartender says he's all out of heavy artillery. I brought you back a beer."

He handed it to me. I drank it and waited for the next set to start.



This had been planned as the "All-Pan" installment, but the last month has brought forth not a few items which deserve mention. I'll start off with a few things against which you should be warned:

- While I do recommend ACTION COMICS WEEKLY from DC (\$1.50 US/\$2 Can.), I'm afraid I can't say the same for the biweekly MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS (\$1.25 US/\$1.75 Can.). Now, right off the bat I have to admit to having gone from quasi-Marvel Zombie to pretty much anti-Marvel; I just can't get into any of their product at all. The two books that we normally get from Marvel (and this doesn't include EPIC, on which I have a better attitude) are actually for Elayne...According to CBG, MCP is outselling ACTION, but with all the Marvel completists plus fans of individual strips it's not hard to see why. As for content, MCP has gone for the hottest property they currently have, WOLVERINE, and a couple of old faves from the past, MASTER OF KUNG-FU and MAN-THING. The remaining fourth spot is for one-shot stories for the time being. I only bought the first issue of MCP, and my reaction was so negative that I didn't feel it necessary to buy any further. This, from a guy who can usually force himself through the first half-dozen issues of a series before deciding on it—I really do try to give things a fair try; I just couldn't do it this time around. I'm not a big WOLVERINE fan to begin with, and I had reached my legally authorized dose of Chris Claremont several years ago. Oddly enough, the same week I picked up MCP I also bought an issue of WHAT TH'...?!, which contained a WOLVERINE spoof. I found that the next day when I was trying to review the books I couldn't remember which scenes and dialog were from the "straight" story and which from the take-off. Pretty scary, eh? I was never a big fan of MASTER OF KUNG-FU either, and while I loved MAN-THING and was a big Steve Gerber fan I find that he and Steve Englehart have both forgotten how to write comics. Once the two best writers on the scene, both have become, sadly, little more than presentable. The artwork in all the stories is nice enough in the continually stagnating Marvel house style, but even great artwork would have been destroyed by the unbelievably horrendous coloring and printing which had to be done on the old Charlton presses, or maybe by the night shift at The Watchtower. A useless book the Marvel crowd deserves.

- NICK FURY vs. SHIELD (Marvel, \$3.50 US/\$4.75 Can.) appeared a couple of months ago and, according to CBG, is one of this summer's "hot" titles. It's a six-issue miniseries done in the "prestige" format. This series had been promised for about two years, and now that it's here a couple of questions come to mind: 1) Was it worth the wait? 2) Does it deserve the format? The answer to both is NO!! I happened to pick up the first issue of this series the same day as THE KILLING JOKE (DC)—which is recommended. To prove a point, one of the shop owners had me compare the two (try this at home, kids!). The DC book had a glossy cover with raised lettering; the interior paper is also glossy with beautiful color work (and, needless to say, the work of Alan Moore and Brian Bolland). The Marvel book has a nice Steranko cover on the first issue, with non-glossy cover and interior paper. The story and art by Bob Harras and Paul Neary respectively are on a par with the usual Marvel style currently enforced. The series is being carried on the popularity of a character whose high point was over about 15 years ago. The plot requires that people who have known Nick Fury for between 15-40+ years suddenly turn against and try to kill him. Why should we feel sympathy for a character who instills this sort of "loyalty?" Not Recommended.

- Also not recommended are books written by Paul Kupperberg. Kupperberg, once a second-rate "company man" for Marvel, is now filling the same role at DC. Even ignoring the things that Harlan Ellison has said about the man (none favorable), PK's work speaks for itself. He has taken characters like the DOOM PATROL, POWER GIRL and THE PHANTOM STRANGER and turned them into pathetic shadows of their former selves. The villainess of his CHECKMATE series taints better-written books like SUICIDE SQUAD by its proximity. The man and anything he does is considered unreadable trash by this column.

- FANTASCAPE (Zinznatti Animation Production, \$1.75 US/\$2.50 Can.)—Remember all the terrible stuff that came out during the "B&W Glut?" If not, pick up an issue of this book—DON'T BUY IT!! Just glance through it. All the pretentious fantasy, bad science fiction and unfunny humor strips of that unfortunate period are presented between the covers of this book. The most frightening part of all this is that the editorial claims that this publication comes from an "animation studio" and points to the stories as examples of the storyboards used for their "productions!" I have to admit that I have in the past recommended minicomics and fanzines that contained stories drawn on a level compatible with some of the stuff in FANTASCAPE. However, at no time did those artists and writers attempt to pass themselves off as pros, and certainly not as animators working in the field!! Comics fans should be outraged, and real animators should sue! CRAP.

These next two books have nothing in common...well, okay, when I finished both books my reaction was the same. To quote

Vinnie B., "Huh?!"

- BLACK KISS (Vortex, \$1.25 US/\$1.55 Can.) has twelve pages, ten of which are story in B&W by Howard Chaykin. As usual, the artwork can't be faulted—his heroes are handsome (and all look like him), his villains give you the creeps and his women make you want to sneak the comic into the bathroom and...Needless to say, if you enjoyed his work on the BLACKHAWK miniseries or his makeover of THE SHADOW you are familiar with the fact that Chaykin is trying to work out all kinds of sexual hangups via his art. Well, now the good folks at Vortex (who bring the remarkable MR. X to us eager fanboys and fans of art deco) have allowed Chaykin to pull out all the stops and present all the S&M, bondage and oral sex (not behind the desk this time) that he could, pardon the expression, desire. They have even gone so far as to have each and every issue sealed in a plastic bag, so that there is no way you can see the book without ripping it. I really can't pan the issue, since it is exactly what it presents itself to be—sex and violence. If you like Chaykin's art and are old enough to pick up an issue, by all means try it. If this type of thing bothers you, don't. No Recommendation.

- HAYWIRE (DC, \$1.25 US/\$1.75 Can.) is actually the book to which Vinnie applied the above comment, but I felt it pretty much applied to both. I actually hesitate to review this book since, for all I know, one of you may turn me in to Michael Fleisher and I just might find myself in court (a fannish in-joke, if you will). In the promotional material sent to various publications, it is stated that not much will be revealed about the title character. Briefly, this deals with someone who somehow has come into possession of this heavily armed body suit and goes around killing bad guys, most of whom seem to be after the suit and spend a lot of time trying to destroy it (?). At least nine people buy it in the first issue (eight of them graphically, one presumably off-panel). The artwork by Vince Gerrano (whom I can't place) with inking by Kyle Baker (the incredible SHADOW artist) is very good with gut-shots and decapitations nicely rendered (so to speak). I can't really recommend this either, though I am fascinated enough to pick up an issue or two more to give Fleisher a chance. It's up to you!

Let's just quickly run down, by company, a few of the things that have stood out, at least for me: AARDVARK-VANAHEIM—CEREBUS has reached #111 and "Church & State" has come to an end. The next issue will be double-sized (#112/113) and this won't be reprinted, like #51. Probably a good point to jump on if you're not already on the bandwagon...COMICO—THE JAM: Super Cool Color Injected Turbo Adventure #1 From Hell! (a one-shot, prior to the upcoming bimonthly from Matrix) is a lot of fun and a great intro to Bernie Mireault's urban hero...DC—V FOR VENETTA, by Alan Moore and David Lloyd, reprints the original stories from the British weekly Warrior and adds new material to finally complete the story...STARMAN is the fourth character (from DC) to carry the name, and bears no relation to the movie or TV show. Roger Stern has ripped off—er, borrowed the concept of someone waking up with mysterious super-powers and not knowing where they came from, so naturally he puts on a suit and does incredible stunts. Harmless and likeable in the manner of the first few issues of NOVA way back when...ANIMAL MAN is one of the forgotten heroes who never really caught on in the Silver Age. This guy has the power to absorb the traits of any animal, fish, insect, etc. for a limited period of time. Nice super-hero stuff from Grant Morrison, Chas Truog and Doug Hazlewood (I'm familiar with only the last). The villain is another old Silver Ager, but I won't give it away, B'wana...DARK HORSE—ALIENS, a 6-issue miniseries based on you-know-what, takes up about a decade after the film by the same name. The homework has been found and Newt and Hicks are off to kick some butt. Nicely done by Mark Verheiden (THE AMERICAN) and Mark A. Nelson (GODZILLA and other stuff)...ECLIPSE—TOTAL ECLIPSE is this company's attempt to merge many of their titles into a consistent multiverse/timestream. Why? Profits and spinoffs. A book that has the makings of being better than it should, though the current CROSSROADS from First is the way to go in my book. Written by Marv Wolfman with art by Bo Hampton and Will Blyberg, with nice covers by Bill Sienkewicz. Air Fighters meet Miracle Man with a side trip to the Beanworld as well. Good fun...ETERNITY—THE BIG PRIZE is the first of a number of inter-connected miniseries by Gerard Jones (THE TROUBLE WITH GIRLS, The Beaver Papers, etc.). All part of the Timedrifter's Odyssey, it deals with Willis Austerlitz, a man fascinated with the 1930's, who suddenly finds himself transported back there and left, fifty years from home and knowing what those decades have in store. A more serious book than you'd expect from Jones, but an excellent one nonetheless...MARVEL—SPEEDBALL—Once again we have a Ditko character suddenly acquiring powers and realizing that with great powers come...well, you know! Like the early issues of SPIDERMAN and the BLUE BEETLE (Charlton version), this character has a lot of potential and is innocent fun for the younger fan (and for us old Ditko freaks)...X-TERMINATORS features the young kids from X-FACTOR in their own book. Elayne says, "Worth getting because you can finally drop the angst-laden adventures of Jean, Scott, Bobby and Hank in that interminable soap opera and concentrate on the only real interesting X-characters anyway; besides, it's written by Louise Simonson, who wrote POWER PACK back when they were good." But remember, this is from a woman who enjoys DC's NEW GUARDIANS!...EPIC/MARVEL—AKIRA, a full-color manga book by Katsuhiro Otomo, is incredibly beautiful and on a par with any of the books from Eclipse/Viz. Thirty-eight years after WWII in Neo-Tokyo with mutants, motorcycle gangs and secret quasi-governmental agencies fighting it out. Yeah!

The Summer '88 Amazing Heroes Preview is right around the corner, so we should have a few comments on that next time around. Until then, remember the password: "Walt sent me!"

# HASSLES OF A HAPLESS HIPPO

by Gloria J. Leitner

One day a hippo was walking down the street.

If you're imagining havoc at the stoplights, don't. This was merely a small dirt road in the heart—actually it was closer to the pancreas—of darkest Africa. As for the alleged lack of light, scientists find this a real puzzle considering the amount of green growing things in the African jungles. They theorize that—

But let us proceed directly to the matter at hand. And quite a hunk of matter she was, indeed. For the hippo's name was Heloise, though she much preferred Helene, and scale-tipping was her forte.

Helene was on her way home from a foray into the bush. She had been hunting all morning long—for plants. Many a succulent leaf escaped her cavernous chomp. The hordes of mosquitos buzzing around, hoping for a feast of their own, were cleverly foiled by Helene's hide—thick as iron-sides. And so she had passed the time in lip-smacking, tummy-tantalizing revelry.

Now a long dip in the river was foremost on Helene's not very large mind (in relation to her girth, that is). So Helene was taking a shortcut through the village to get to the swimming hole, which was the only sane place to be in the scorching afternoon heat. The hippos had their own special spot downstream, where they could pass the blistering hours frolicking and exchanging pleasantries with the crocodiles.

Helene was quite a popular girl in the neighborhood. She was far from unattractive—her diminutive ears wiggled at the slightest quaver of sound; her slim little tail spiraled around in the most fashionable, and may I add alluring, curl; and though she waddled a bit, her dentures (including a set of truly mountainous molars) were still perfect. For she was in her late adolescence still, and in good health.

The one thing she lacked was—a vocation.

For years her mother had been chiding her, "Get a job in the zoo. It'll give you everything you need—good food, security, a roof over your head." Yeah, and bars before my eyes, Helene thought was disgust.

Her mother invariably added to the plus-list this gem: "You'll meet top-pedigree boys—I hear they screen their genes and everything! After all, you want to give your Mom some cute hippopotamies someday, don't you?"

Oh, how obnoxious, though well meaning, a mother can be! She knew very well that Helene's sights were set on something higher and finer. Her father, on the other foot, sometimes set his hopes for her a little too high. He saw her starring in a cover story in *National Geographic*, studied assiduously by Jane Goodall's protégés, and praised throughout the land for her outstanding achievements in raising the lot of hippopotami at large.

But Helene was both more realistic than her father and more idealistic than her mother. She agreed that life among the giraffes and jackals didn't hold out tremendous prospects for the future, no matter how much fun it was. Yes, it was important to widen her scope (though not her bulk, for that was sufficient unto the purpose thereof).

The key, she felt with every lipid in her amply blubberous bod, was to travel. Perhaps a sojourn to her cousins in the north, near the beginning of the Nile...

"NO!" her mother had cried out as if mortally wounded when she mentioned the idea as casually as a lion loping by at sundown. "Heloise, I won't have you going anywhere near that Middle East powder keg!"

Protesting that the Nile's end, where there was a real threat, was actually far from the source of the Nile where she wanted to go held no sway with Ma. Oh, if she'd only taken geography!

Well then, she could go south to the tip of the continent. But this was vetoed by her father as too dangerous. Didn't she know how blacks were treated near the Cape? She'd have to paint herself white and fake being an albino hippo to get anywhere.

"Oy vey!" she cried in exasperation this otherwise fine afternoon as thoughts of her dilemma tore like a bullet through her veil of tranquility. It made her stop in her tracks. She sat down to think things over.

Suddenly, out of the clear blue in fact, a bird landed on her shoulder. It inched up to her head, put its wings over her eyes, and called out, "Guess who?"

She hadn't the faintest idea, but the voice said, "Try anyway." A series of high-pitched giggles gave him away.

"Orville!" Helene exclaimed. "Orville the magpie!"

And out he flew in front of her long, silken eyelashes, just as full of good cheer as he'd been when she was a mere babe of two tons.

"How ya doin'?" he asked, nodding his beak up and down in excitement.

Helene opened her jaws, and for a split second Orville thought she was starting a stupendous yawn. But he caught sight of her pink tonsils wagging with more than casual intention, and knew speech was to follow.

It did, but not with her usual enthusiasm. "Okay, I guess," was the best she could muster. Orville could hear the distress implicit in her tone, and looked at her with infinite compassion.

"I know, I know. I've been to see your mother and father, and they told me you're at a critical juncture in your life. Helene, I'd like to help you—by giving you some good advice."

"What is it?" she asked, brightening a bit.

"Join the circus!"

She blanched, then turned red. You could only tell by the color of the eyelids, though, for her armor of skin always remained stoutly noncommittal—good thing, too, for she didn't want every Tom, Dick and Hippo reading her delicate emotions.

But Orville was her buddy, and she could let herself go. Tears as big as ploppy summer raindrops began to roll down her face.

Orville patted her forehead with his feathers comfortingly and said, "Now, now. I didn't mean to upset you. I was only making a suggestion—actually quite a good suggestion, if you want to know the truth."

Helene wondered if Orville had gotten hit on the head with too many fallen branches lately.

"Oh come on!" he exhorted her. "Deram a little! You can't let yourself be tied down to mundane, prosaic notions of life! The world has its arms waiting for you if you just let yourself go!"

A dubious lift of the folds on Helene's forehead told the story plainly.

"You don't believe me!" Orville sighed. But he wouldn't give up.

"Don't you even want to know why I think you should join the circus?" he asked gently.

She looked at him quizzically with those enormous moon-eyes of hers.

"Not because I think you should become a mere actress, a petty performer playing patsy to the whims and follies of some insipid ringmaster."

He paused to soak in the riches of his oration—mighty eloquent for a bird, if he did say so himself. His eyes began to swim in moistness.

"Helene, it's your chance to do so much, see so much, be so much! You can make children laugh, you can make adults cry, you can brush elbows—er, knee-joints—with the intelligentsia of land and sea: the chimps and the seals!"

She began to perk up a bit.

"What about the fantastic places you'll go! Every city from Timbuctoo to Tangiers will be at your feet. Not just Africa, but Europe, Asia, North and South America will be at your command. Helene, this could be your ticket to stardom!"

And with a final fling of the verbal gauntlet, he threw himself down on her nose, exhausted.

Orville expected some profound response to his rhetorical performance, but all Helene could say was, "Orville, you're tickling my left nostril and if I sneeze, you might land in Timbuctoo yourself!"

He quickly garnered his strength and was airborne before so much as a hint of a "hachoo" came barrelling forth.

"Oh, I don't know," Helene said with perplexity, thinking over Orville's remarks.

At least she hadn't said no, he thought. Better try another tack.

"Let's go down by the river and talk it over in the cool of the old stream," he urged.

Helene began to lumber off, and Orville hitched a ride on her delightfully rounded rear (yes, they truly were the best of friends). The pair reached a wide mud pool where Helene's playmates and relatives gathered. Orville whispered in her ear, "Why don't we move a little further on, so we can continue our chat in private?"

"Sure," she replied, for she didn't feel much like wallowing with the crowd today. The two found their own mud hole not too far away, a slight breeze playing wistfully with the leaves of the towering trees overhead.

In Helene stepped, gingerly at first, then gratefully sinking up to her shoulders in deliciously cool, soothing ooze. Ah, ecstasy! A slow roll brought the brown, soothing potion up to her neck, and she wriggled (as much as her commodious dimensions permitted) till all of her cares were caressed away in total mush bliss.

And now for the *piece de resistance*. Dunk! Under she went, head and all. Suspended serenely like a pearl in a cup of coconut milk (brown version of the two, that is), Helene stayed under for a minute or two. Then slowly she emerged, thin streams of gunk trickling down her cheeks as the warmish wind fluttered about her nostrils. How could she ever think of leaving this?

And yet she knew someday she would.

"BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!" the shots rang out.

Yikes!!—pith helmets, khakis—men! She shuddered, and tried to make a run for it—but her slippery-slide attempt was brought to a halt by the barrel of a rifle staring her in the eye.

Helene knew her fate was sealed—she'd be a hippopotaburger on someone's bun for sure!

"No, no!" shouted Orville excitedly. "They're not here to kill. I've been trying to tell you—it's the scouts from the circus! Volunteer and you'll never regret it, Helene! New horizons! New opportunities! Seize it, seize the chance: the time is now!"

Impulsive as she was, Helene could not bring herself to do it. Some sluggishness of will (inherited from Uncle Herman), some shyness of spirit (yes, that was Aunt Harriet) prevented action.

And then she had a vision. It was a supernal vision, all right, filled with light—not one, but many lights, coming from above, and the sound of celestial trumpets. Yes, a vision of the circus spotlights and the band held her enthralled, and she could see the smiling faces of thousands of humans in a pitch of awe and wonder at the three rings in the sawdust below. And it was she, 21

(cont'd. next page)

none other than she, who pranced in a pair of black sequin tights in the center ring!

Like Saul on the road to Damascus, she was instantly converted. Ever since she'd seen "The Turning Point" and "Fame" she'd wanted to be a dancer, and here was her chance.

"AWGH!" she called out to the men, opening her mouth like a chasm about to swallow them whole.

They paused, uncertain of the meaning of her body language ("I'm okay, but are you?" they wondered)—then grinned a satisfied grin. For their guide translated from hippopotamian to English, and they understood perfectly.

"By George!" the one with the handlebar moustache cried out. "She's a grand dame, all right. Hip-hip," he said, stuttering. "Hip-hip—"

"Horray!" Helene answered, for she knew she'd discovered her Niche, her Fate, her Ultimate Destiny. Orville hopped up and down like a jumping jack, adding his own hurrahs and huzzahs to the chorus of hallelujahs that rang out from every jungle friend.

Yes, for once beauty is the beast!

## OBVIOUS ILLUSION

by Mary Ann Henn

Falling thru space and time  
I wake up and wonder  
In my childhood dreams  
A window  
filled with moonlight  
One last long night  
One last short day

For now the days  
will lengthen  
Restlessness in the deep  
It can't be explained  
but it's there  
Auto headlights swing  
up the wall  
Will I have a body  
again

# The Presence of Absence

## PART TWO

by Rodney Dioxin

No words came out of Cathy's mouth. She was glad to see, however, that no teeth came out either. She spit slush twice and thought of just the right stream of vile obscenities for the half-smashed suit no doubt standing over her at the phone trying to get directions to Sugar Reef.

"It's only so close you could piss on it, you pus-filled sac of..."

"Oh jeez I'm so sorry it really was an accident you know but I've been looking for a phone for just blocks and blocks and I really don't even know exactly where I am but I told the guy at the Y I'd call by 8 and I don't want 'em to throw all my stuff into the street and then I knocked you down and all and I don't blame you for being mad but it was an accident y'know and I sound like a total moron I know but don't like call the cops, okay?"

Cathy had dragged herself up so she was sitting under the phone, where it was relatively dry and there she remained, with no idea at all what to say. This was definitely not the asshole she'd been expecting. The kid was dressed way tough. Bondage trou, leather jacket, Doc Marten's, spiky black hair. The total cool/dangerous effect. Except it didn't work. Not at all. The face was 100 proof innocent, straight from some midwest farm where they grew punk pixies. Minus five-foot-nothing of would-be hardcore venom stood in front of her somewhere between "about-to-cry" and a nervous breakdown.

"C'mon kid, don't go mental on me now. 'Sokay, really." Cathy had to push down an urge to give her a big hug. None of this Waltons shit here. Or whatever kind of shit this was. She felt like her life had suddenly gotten much weirder. This was not a comforting thought and she grasped for something soft to land on.

"Coffee. Yeah, how 'bout some coffee?"

Back into the Kiev, back to the same table. The coffee cup was still there, butts soaking up the remaining slime.

"You are from outta town," said Cathy, lighting up and dumping milk into her coffee in a smooth move worked out after much practice, many soggy napkins and more than one singed eyelash. "Lemme just take a guess on that one."

"Yeah. Cleveland. Usual stuff. Sorry about freaking on you. This is not one of my better days. I can be quite normal, or at least whatever passes for normal in my life and thank you very much I don't want to talk about that."

"Which? Normalcy, your life, or passing?"

"All of the above?"

"Well, we could get all 'nad-mad and talk about the Browns."

That got a laugh. Cathy figured it was something at least. What did she know, anyway. "Look, I can't tell you what to do. I can't even tell myself what to do. I can't even tell the band we got no job tonight. I don't know you, you don't know me. Fine. We'll drink some coffee, talk about why coreboys are such fucked-up dweebs then you can slope on back to the Y and continue yer vacation in hell."

"Hope."

"Vacation in hope. I don't get it. Bob Hope?"

"No. My name's Hope. Hope Bates."

"Oh that's too cool. I'm Cathy Epicurian except nobody gets it now that the restaurant closed down. What did your folks say when you changed it? I thought my mom'd have an aneurism but she was ever cool about it all."

"I didn't change it. My folks had a 'sense of humor.' Y'know, 60s and all that crap."

"Oh def. You were just born to be a punk. I love yer hair."

"Yeah?" Hope smiled, brushed her hand through it. "I dunno. I'm getting kinda bored with it. I just did it like this 'cause it was a really easy way to piss people off. Guess that doesn't happen much in New York."

"Depends on who you wanna piss off. It does take more effort, though."

"Oh. Life is such an effort. She moans existentially to herself. It just gives me an ontological migraine."

"Ooh. Ten-dollar words. No fair. You're supposed to be the naive kid from the midwest. I should have all the bigword lines."

"What can I say? Being smart is another good way to piss people off. A friend of mine told me that."

"She was right."

"Sometimes."

"That's enough." Cathy looked down at the check on the table. "Umm, do you have any cash on you?"

Hope burst out laughing. "Oh fine. Nice way to treat a guest. Yeah, I can cover a buck, I think. No problem."

"I didn't mean to stick you, really. It's just that I was planning on getting paid after the gig which we no longer have and sometimes the 'be nice to people' section of my brain doesn't get in touch with the 'can we afford it' section. If ya wanna come back to the Casa, I'm sure someone can slip you the buck."

"Give it a rest. Besides, I've really got to get uptown and rescue my stuff from the Y. Your scumhole away from home."

So it was out the door and up the street and into, of all things, a cab for the ride up to 23rd St., to a YMCA whose only positive feature was a view of the Chelsea Hotel. With a short stop across the street at a liquor store to blow off more of Hope's traveller's checks on a bottle of Absolut. It was living in style, vacation-wise, except Hope wasn't on vacation.

"I got nothing to go back to."

"Nowhere to go, you say?" After a couple of drinks, Cathy got to feeling like she was the bald guy that did the TV spots for Apex Tech. "No future for you? Well, why not come down to the Casa de Comida. A big apartment filled with lotsa neat people barely making enough money to pay the rent, all working for various totally yecch food-type establishments and all stealing said food with total abandon. Discover the joys of pizza topped with Szechuan dumplings. But remember, I can't call you because I don't have a quarter, so just gimme another drink and shut up."

"I'll do it," Hope decided but Cathy had crashed out on the floor. But it wasn't time to sleep. "I'm wired. This is exciting. I feel like I'm home." Hope went on babbling to her luggage for a while, then decided that something had to be done. She went down to the desk and paid up for the night, came back, got her stuff together, went through Cathy's coat and found her wallet with the address of the Casa and took off.

The light was rather grey and fuzzy. So was her tongue, and, thought Cathy, several less important sections of her brain. It took her awhile to realize where she was. In Hope's room at the Y. No Hope, though. "Oh gods, I can just hear Billy, king of stupid puns, now. Aackk." A quick check of the place turned up nothing until the bathroom. On the mirror, written in black eyeliner:

"CATH! I'm home—thanx for all—see you at la Casa Hope"

This was cool. Life, if it was going to be weird (and Cathy knew it would be ever that), could at least have the decency to be cool. As she wrapped herself up in the big old black coat of unknown origins and snuck down the back stairs of the Y, Cathy could hear several fights, one entertainingly obscene, what sounded like a couple junkies going detox or some similar cookie-tossing activity, some snoring, some fucking but mainly silence. Nothing going on and out to the street and walking down 6th Ave, the wind blowing her hair in her eyes and yesterday's paper up around her legs, and broken glass cracking under her feet and she realized that it was actually snowing. In big white flakes. Snowing.





# The Poet's Diet Book

by Tamarina Dwyer

(In the first chapter of this story, Janet, the poet, is busy writing poems about flowers or creating theories about food. She works in a diner, where she meets Fred.)

Lansing Street was long and narrow and the room was dark and hot. There was one dirty window with a ripped, worn shade and a tan bureau which had broken knobs and marred wood. A cot was the only other furnishing and there were no sheets, blankets, or pillows.

Janet unplugged the hotplate and stepped up to the window. A towering, broad locust tree blocked a view of the city street. Janet set her cup on the windowsill and got on the cot, where her evening's work lay in a disarrangement of automatic thought and impulsive scribbles. Leaning over the edges of the cot, she pulled a blue felt pen from a glass mug that contained the other colorful stimuli—green, red, and orange felt-tip pens. She continued a pattern of eight-syllable meter by completing a line about an African violet.

'Ti ny vel vet pet al deep shade.'

Two hours passed. Three a.m. The poet's felt-tip pen dropped to the floor, and the sight of its puny shape on the unpainted, untiled floor told her that she must start getting ready for bed.

She drew back the threadbare spread, pulled down the dark green shade, and took off her clothes. Then the poet got under the spread and drifted off quickly.

The alarm woke Janet at five-fifteen a.m. Shade up, bed made, coffee drunk, the poet unlocked her door and walked out into the cool morning.

On her way to work, the young poet liked to study the bright green leaves of trees along the street and the vibrant petals of tiny flowers in the front yards of the residential area.

An inner feeling kept the poet walking to the Toddle House. This walk took only fifteen minutes and Janet, on time as always, hung her denim bag on a hook behind the kitchen door and poured herself another cup of coffee.

Poet eyes avoided those of truck driver and salesman as she served them breakfast, but she watched them from her station on a stool next to the kitchen door.

After the first group of characters had left, Janet had another cup of coffee. The second group of customers, the mid-morning stragglers, and a drifty lunch crew filled another day and, work completed, Janet grabbed her denim bag and sauntered out of the diner to meet the blinding glare of afternoon sun on Genesee Street. Now she was indifferent to the natural scenery of the city and, as Janet strolled back to her room, she was wondering if she could finish another verse that day.

The poet settled on the cot with another felt-tip pen held in the air. 'Stiff like torn, trimmed shrubs.' Janet read the words to herself, crossed out the alliterative and unnecessary 'torn' and thought about her simile. 'Maybe plastic would be better,' she thought, but her eyes drifted further down the page. 'Flower and Weed.' 'Tiny, white, budded flowers lazily floating upon quiet, green leaves.' 'White is a trite word,' she critically thought, 'and leaves are always quiet.'

Janet picked up another paper. It was a plan sheet.

Mon.

- 1) pentameter on Jug of Water
- 2) do laundry
- 3) read two-hundred pages of Rhyme & Meter

Tues.

- 1) Sonnet on Lily of the Valley
- 2) read fifty pgs. R&M

Wed.

- 1) read 50 pgs. Yeats
- 2) look up new vocab wds. at library

Thurs.

- 1) read poetry book
- 2) study vocab. lists

Fri.

- 1) tetrameter on Bluebell
- 2) study vocab. lists

Janet studied her vocabulary lists twice a week for an hour. She put the new words in sentences and tried to use them in her poetry. 'Insouciance' was her current favorite, but the poet couldn't use it in 'Flower and Weed.'

Days passed, and the night heat meant drinking lots of water and sticky hands on yellow notebook paper.

Janet was relaxing on her cot as she listened to the radio. Instrumentals and the rhythm in any music took her mind of dissected words. Considering a cup of coffee or a glass of water, the poet's listening ear drifted away from an old song.

This poet had been drinking lots of water for a long time, but fatigue was leading to a coffee diet. However, she was too hungry to write all the time and, as a result, she had had to spend a whole week on her sky poem. Still, Janet continued drinking coffee despite the hot weather and relied on coffee's caffeine power to confront the other, cheaper power of water.

'Coffee is a stimulant. It's my weapon of survival,' Janet reasoned the next morning and stuck the sky poem in her denim bag to work on at the Toddle House. Fifteen minutes of leaf and petal study helped the poet on her way to work.

Janet unlocked the diner's front door, snapped on the lights, made a fresh pot of coffee, turned on the grill fan, and started

the eggs for her usual first customer, Mr. Beckett. Then the poet set a plate on the counter and reached in the tray for the silver. There wasn't any there so she looked in the kitchen, but it was gone.

'Sir, I'm sorry, but the silverware seems to be missing,' Janet apologized. Mr. Beckett commented and laughed, 'You aren't paying the dishwasher enough?'

'I'll look again if you don't mind waiting,' Janet said.

'No, don't worry about it. I'll just eat the toast,' Mr. Beckett said, and he ate his toast and left shortly for his construction job. Since no one else was in the diner, Janet pulled out the poem. A list of descriptive words were listed at the top of the page. She tried several adverbs, but Janet couldn't make a rhyme with her eight-syllable meter. Aside from that difficulty was a bit of truth that kept erupting.

Silver and shiver rhymed and both the noun and the verb conformed to the four-like-letter rule that she was trying to follow. Still, the poet longed for more appetizing writing.

Physical nature, expressed in all Janet's poems by descriptive phrase and an occasional biology term, had led to a theory about coffee. 'For instance, the black sediment in polluted waters, responsible for disease, is too much like the dark grains I put in my cup every day. And, maybe I'm just too lazy or somethin'. I have enough money for food and I really do have enough time. I'm not going to let coffee eat up my brain cells any longer!' Only, Janet's coffee theory died quickly and she poured herself another cup. But when the poet had drunk that, she reconsidered her coffee theory and drank two glasses of water.

Seated on the stool again, Janet went back to the sky poem. She was periodically interrupted by customers, but the poet managed to get five lines done before she was through work. Grey sweater, denim bag, and sky poem at her side, the poet collected subjective whims, let them out with a sigh, and reached Lansing Street without too much leaf and petal study. Doodles and illegible lines from dubious concentration and red marks on her skin from frequent heat scratches kept Janet occupied after lunch, but Janet's battle for the right words was victorious.

The sky poem was finished and Janet put the previous night's papers and the sky poem in an orderly pile. It had taken her forty-five minutes to get just one line in correct perspective, but 'The Grey Shadow in the Sky' was finally done. Janet plugged in the hotplate and set a pan of water on the burner. While the water was heating, the poet skimmed over some hazy notes.

Physical Nature of Poem #1

The deep dark sea—No, alliteration.

Black pond, calm and still—No, a pond isn't all black.

Calm and still are too close in meaning.

Beneath the surface of liquidlike syrup—Alliteration again.

SYRUP! 'I must be hungry again.'

Theory #1: Drinking a dark liquid without balancing it with a light liquid leads to unhappiness. The dark beverage drinker is generally a pessimistic personality who is attracted by death and wants to hide from reality. He is the type of person who doesn't socialize much because he is too busy fighting the ill effects of too much black and too much darkness without balance.

Human Nature of Poem #2

A chipped cup handpainted with blue flowers and leaves—No, alliteration again.

handpainted—describes instead of expresses

Who is going to believe blue flowers and leaves?

A chipped cup with a rim of brown stains—Doesn't present clear picture.

Theory #2: Poets feed on depression. 1) The process of writing interesting, original, and realistic poetry by rhyme and meter leads to more coffee. Poets like to fight depression with depression which expresses both the beauty and the ugliness of human nature.

This preservation of instability is even more apparent with food. The weather was still unbearably hot and Janet's hunger for poetic character begged for the half gallon of ice cream on sale for sixty-nine cents at Brigano's. Janet needed a change and, between work in the diner and work in the room, Janet lived on ice cream. A half gallon a day. 79¢. 7 = \$5.53. The poet even had menus for ice cream consumption.

Sample Menu for Monday, June 23, 1975

Break. 2c choc. ice cream 5:00a.m.

Lunch 1c van. ice cream 2:30p.m.

Dinner 2c straw. ice cream 7:00p.m.

Snack 1c van. ice cream 11:00p.m.

Soon, Janet couldn't stand looking at the food in the diner and, subsequently, the poet spent every free minute with a felt-tip pen and a napkin. 'Trees and Flowers' was a new poem that she had started while on her ice cream diet, but the poem had led to theories about ice cream.

Ice cream is really for aloof individuals. Cold, icy and frosty, but soft and melting slowly. French Vanilla, of course, is for more sophisticated eaters. It doesn't compete with the cheaper, less flavorful brands which are chosen by individuals without discriminating sense.

Janet let the pen fall out of her fingers as a blond-haired man entered the diner. With his hands in his pockets and lips twisted in pose of bored reflection, he was the embodiment of the poet's favorite vocabulary word—insouciant. Janet went up to the counter.

'Yes, what would you like, sir?' she asked, immediately attracted to his soft blue eyes. (go to p. 24)

"I'd like to know why experienced women work as waitresses," divulged the curly-haired man as he took the menu from its rack. Janet was taken aback, but she retorted, "I don't like sleeping in the street." She was annoyed with the man's direct though efficacious approach, but the man introduced himself anyway.

Fred ordered breakfast and watched Janet as she moved systematically from grill to toaster and refrigerator. Her long blonde hair was pulled back neatly with a barrette and her smile was warm. The white uniform was a little too tight across her chest, but it wasn't that short. There were only two other people in the diner and Fred was suddenly conscious of his stare. He picked up the menu again.

After a couple minutes' indecision, Fred let the menu fall to the countertop and, despite an astute warning from the back of his head, asked in an even tone, "Would you like to exchange past history in a local bar over a couple of drinks when you're through feeding Utica transients?"

Janet smiled and returned with, "And serve you the last of my fudge swirl ice cream?"

"For breakfast?" Fred asked, encouraged though uncertain of his conclusion.

"No, for lunch or dinner," Janet corrected him. "There's no fudge swirl here; it's in my ice chest on Lansing Street. I'll even show you my menus."

Assignment was planned and Fred paid his bill and left the diner. The poet finished another work day with the usual coffee drinkers and coke guzzlers.

(Continued next issue)

# ANIMATION

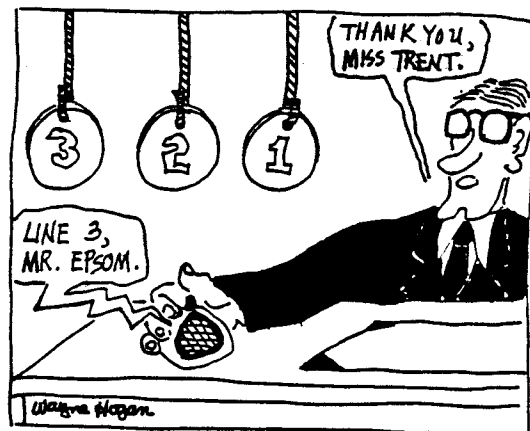
## UPDATE

by Jed Martinez

FILM REVIEW: By the time you read this review, you will probably be among the millions of folks

who have seen WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?, a collaborative effort of Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment, the Disney Studio's Touchstone Pictures division and George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic. And if you think that this live action/animated feature is just a children's movie, all I can say is, "Silly rabbit, this flick's not just for kids!" The screenplay (co-written by Jeffrey Price and Peter Seaman) is appealing to all ages. As the song "A Day In The Life" goes, "I just had to look, having read the book" (in this case, a very loose adaptation of Gary K. Wolf's original story), and the only similarities between book and film are four principle characters: Roger, his wife Jessica, Baby Herman, and Eddie Valiant. The latter individual is human; in this case, a semi-soused private eye (portrayed with some aplomb by British actor Bob Hoskins). The others are "toons," a euphemism for animated characters. Roger is the co-star of the "Baby Herman" cartoon series, which means that he's the fallguy—er, rabbit. In the opening few minutes of the film, Roger goes through every single violent pace in an attempt to rescue a seemingly innocent baby set loose in a kitchen (if Walt knew that his studio was producing a cartoon in the styles of Tex Avery and Bob Clampett, he'd turn in his grave, or freezer, or wherever he's kept). At the height of this totally manic cartoon, a human director steps into the set and stops the show...but this is where the real fun begins, as live actors and animated performers seemingly coexist on the screen. The human world is under the direction of Robert ("Back to the Future") Zemeckis, while the toons' world is in the capable hands of Richard Williams (who won an Oscar for his animated version of "A Christmas Carol" and an Emmy for "Ziggy's Gift," among other achievements). When a human prop-master for cartoons is found dead after a tryst with Jessica, the finger of guilt is immediately pointed at Roger. The harried hare enlists the services of Valiant to help prove his innocence. Hot on their heels is the Toon Patrol, which consists of a band of weasels under the leadership of Judge Doom (played with delicious malice by Christopher Lloyd). This series of misadventures hops, skips and jumps to various locales in 1947 Hollywood, eventually leading to the major attraction, a visit to Toontown—a cartoon metropolis not unlike that of "Porky in Wackyland" (it can happen here!)...This film gives trivia buffs an opportunity to play "Name That Toon," as a variety of well-known animated characters make cameo appearances (co-producer Frank Marshall confessed that the only characters to which he was unable to obtain rights were Popeye and Felix). The surprise appearances are too numerous to mention, but that's one of the reasons you should go see this film. Another reason to see it is the cast of voice actors who breathe life into many of the cameo stars. These actors include veterans Mel Blanc, June Foray, Mae Questel, and newcomer Charles Fleischer (remember him from "Welcome Back, Kotter"?), who does the voice of the title character, among others. Uncredited vocals are Kathleen Turner and Amy Irving, who provide (respectively) the speaking and singing voices of Jessica Rabbit. Even animation director Williams does a bit as the voice of Droopy! The motto of the toons is "Anything for a laugh"—if that be the case, ...ROGER RABBIT is the best laughfest around, with fully animated subjects enveloped in a film noir setting. Far superior to other live action/animated features, this film is a lasting tribute to the world of animation and its countless contributors, past and present. See *Newsweek's* 6/27 cover

THOSE THINGS ARE WORTH FIGHTING AND DYING FOR - Reason at Omaha Beach - That goes for both sexes but in non-soldier national defense force. Send SAGE to (men, women) leaders, winners (chance-selected) war-waging strategy or simply WINNERS - Box 2243 YOUNGSTOWN - OHIO, 44504



story for a six-page look behind the scenes of this movie.

MAGAZINE UPDATE: Spotlight Comics, in a mutual agreement with Jim Korkis and John Cawley, has withdrawn issue #1 of *Cartoon Quarterly*, which was overdue by three months. Korkis and Cawley will be submitting the material to other publishers, in the hopes that CQ will be seen before year's end (for more info, write to P.O. Box 1643, Burbank, CA 91507)...

MIS'CEL'LANEOUS: During mid-May I attended the Student Animation Film Festival, held at NYU's Loeb Student Center. Most of the projects looked like they were made by beginners, but there were some exceptions, three clay-animated works which got big laughs. First there was Dave McKenna's sci-fi parody "B," which poked fun at every outer space film imaginable. Next, Dave Emmerichs looked at the private screening of a proposed 3D flicker in his truly hilarious takeoff "Dailies." Finally, little clay gremlins showed why things go wrong for all of us in Aaron Emke's "Now You Know." These three filmmakers have the potential to become the next Will Vinton or Jimmy Picker...Mel Blanc, the voice of Bugs Bunny and countless other characters, received an unusual 80th birthday present—direct from the 1950's, an Edsel automobile! It was given to him at a party thrown by Warner Brothers to commemorate his 50 years of service as a voice actor...That Whoopi Goldberg/Hanna-Barbera series-in-the-works I mentioned last issue involves Whoopi's "little girl" character from her Broadway show. It's not scheduled for this fall's lineup, but it could be a replacement series during the winter of '89...Speaking of the fall schedule, here's a small sample of what to expect: ABC's newest cartoon shows are "Beany and Cecil" (based on Bob Clampett's characters), "The Slimer Show" (a spinoff from "The Real Ghostbusters"), and "A Pup Named Scooby Doo" ('nuff said?); NBC's output includes "ALF Tales" (a spinoff of you-know-what) and "The Misadventures of Ed Grimley" (based on the Martin Short character from "SCTV" and "Saturday Night Live"); on the CBS roster are "Raggedy Ann & Andy," "Garfield & Friends," and new episodes of "Superman."

ERRATA: Omitted from last issue's review of the "Bugs Bunny Superstar" home video was one of the main reasons to obtain it—between the classic cartoons are interviews with Warner Bros. animation directors Tex Avery, Bob Clampett and Friz Freleng. "BBS" is currently on the Top Ten list of best-selling children's videos!

OBITS: Famed voice actor Daws Butler, best known as the voice behind Huckleberry Hound, Yogi Bear, Quick Draw McGraw and other Hanna-Barbera characters, died of cardiac arrest on May 18, at the age of 71 (in a sad irony, one of his last projects for TV, "The Good, The Bad, and Huckleberry Hound," was airing across the country during the week of his untimely passing). Among other H-B characters in Butler's repertoire were Wally Gator, Elroy Jetson, Dixie (of Pixie & Dixie), Mr. Jinks, Snooper and Blabbermouse, Baba Looey, and Peter Potamus. He also worked for Warner Brothers (Rawlph and Morton in "The Honeybushers" and Sam the Cat opposite Mel Blanc's Sylvester in the Oscar-nominated short "Moue and Garden"), MGM (as a laid-back wolf in the "Droopy" cartoons of the 1950's, the one that whistled "Jubilo"), Walter Lantz Productions (Smedley in the "Chilly Willy" series), Jay Ward Productions (in "Fractured Fairy Tales" and "Aesop & Son") and De-Patie/Freleng (in "The Dogfather" shorts and the "Super Six" TV series). His first claim to fame was back in the late 1940's when he starred in "Time for Beany," featuring Bob Clampett's famed puppet stars (later to be animated) Beany & Cecil. During the 1950's, when not providing cartoon voices, he performed in a number of satirical recordings with Stan Freberg (the most famous being "St. George and the Dragonet" and "Green Christmas"). His voice was also heard in many TV commercials, most notably as Cap'n Crunch and Prof. Goody for Quaker Oats, and as Snap (of Rice Krispies fame) for Kellogg's. He was a trouper all the way to the end...Animator Lloyd Vaughan died on May 19 at age 79. Hired by Leon Schlesinger in 1935, he spent the next quarter of the century working at Warner Bros. in Chuck Jones' department. He occasionally lent his services to Jones later on, in many of Chuck's TV specials of the 1970's. Among his credits are cartoon classics "Duck Dodgers of the 24th Century," "Fast and Furryous" (the first Roadrunner short) and "For Scent-imental Reasons" (the Pepe LePew Oscar-winner)...Irish tenor/actor Dennis Day, who was a regular staple of Jack Benny's radio and TV shows, died on June 22 of "Lou Gehrig's Disease" (ALS). He was 71. He had provided some vocal talents to some animated works for movies and television, the most notable performance of which was that of Johnny Appleseed from Walt Disney's musical cartoon anthology "Melody Time."

I went to a shopping mall in search of contact with anything that would help pass an afternoon. I went looking for people to look at. I went to see people looking at me while appearing not to notice; looking with real interest at a few people who were not looking at me. I saw and was seen, wandering into the video store across the street, searching for something to see that would be seen alone.

Music. Colour. There on the next shelf—music videos.

Well, I've seen this and that, with those hooligan stage shows. One tape grabbed my eye, but the shades on my face prevented it from falling out entirely. Scratching the general area and restoring my eyeball to its rightful place, I and another peruser fought off the eye-grabbing tape and stuck it back on the shelf.

A blank box with tiny blue writing jumped off the same shelf into my hand. This is the liveliest department in the video store. The comedy section was outright danger, red dye squirting in your face, video jackets that buzzed your hand, a few equipped with pie-launching catapults. But this simply packaged video sleeve liked me, and that's good enough to take it back to my place after dinner and a soft drink.

I approached the counter to make my request, then waited as the sun went down for an attendant to serve the people ahead of me. I think I could identify the people who were in front of me in any line so long as it would take to see the back of their heads. Finally all of them either left or shot themselves in frustration, putting me first in line. Excited sweat beaded on my brow. Now I would discover what this curious tape was. With the wide-eyed wonder of a politician on a crowded street, I looked up at the attendants, three of them grouped behind the counter, eyes glued to a computer terminal. So that was why it took so long to get to the front of the line, these six eyeballs stuck for hours on end to an exhausting monitor.

Still, I posed my question, shyly pushing my request across the countertop: "What tape is this?"

"Get lost and die," an empty-socketed girl said, and returned her attention to the monitor. I took the terminal, ripping it away from them, and heaved it through the window, metaphorically speaking; really I just pulled the plug.

"May I help you?" That's more like it, I thought, one slap across the chops later.

"I would like to rent this video—what is it?"

"Get Lost And Die, a Martin and the E-Chords concert, wild and crazy, a feast for the eyes, a sonnet for your ears."

Gazing deep into her eye sockets, in a smooth cool tone, I asked her to give it to me, and dug my fingers into my hip pocket, producing my member card. She flushed in a friendly fashion, fumbling around, finding my choice after a couple of hours.

"That'll be fifty dollars, and you have to return it before sunrise or we take possession of your car."

"When did the rental rates go up?"

"Half an hour ago. We also need a blood sample and a list of your best friends and where they live, just in case you don't live very long and can't return our tape."

"Oh, all right."

I flashed across the floor, dashed through the door, crashed into my car and in moments made it in front of my television.

In their primal glory, the E-Chords stormed the screen, throwing donuts into the crowd, and there, whirling his arms as if he were really playing a guitar, Martin, strutting, stocking, posing and rocking. He pursed his lips, spewing and spitting, spinning the microphone on its orbital path around his body, filling the stage with his gyrating action and his audience with vertigo. Every once in a while his mike brushed close to another band member, the camera following. It was Gary Pig, trying to place harmony over Marvelous Marv's riveting, gut-wrenching rapture.

Somehow from the dark of the audience a figure climbed onto the stage. He seemed familiar but, clawing at Martin's grasp on the microphone, his fat face was hard to make out. The bass and drums pushed on. They turned, the two of them, struggling. I saw the face of the stage pirate, and knew him. It was that round-headed kid, Charlie Brown.

His face loaded with hate, he pulled up Martin's underpants from behind and grabbed the microphone. Gary Pig came over, feet flying, landing a blow in Charlie Brown's stomach as Martin, scratching his own stubbly chin, grabbed for the microphone. Still the percussion beat on, smoke bombs exploding, lasers blasting.

Pushing, pulling, scratching, clawing, Martin had wrapped the cord 'round the face of the kid, and while still pulling, tore the mask off his face. The globe head was unmasked!

I fell off my sofa in shock. Charlie Brown, once a cartoon, was not a seven-necked serpent, writhing and spitting, each neck with the shrunken heads of dead rock stars. What a great stage show!

I looked at the beast, trying to make out who the heads were. For a moment a few of them were singing in harmony; another kept saying "dig;" yet another giggled in a scratchy female voice. I'd swear one of them was Elvis but Martin was running around the stage too fast, trying to keep the microphone long enough to finish the chorus; it was a blur of musical mayhem.

Gary rammed his guitar into the pudgy Charlie Brown body, straight in the groin, and a head very much like Jim Morrison cried out.

The smoke and fire gave the show a hellish look, and I began to wonder if this was actually staged or real. END PART I. "End part one?"

Just then the credits rolled quickly by and the FBI warning came on. Throwing on some clothes I ran around the block to the video store. By now there were bodies piled waist-high in front of the counter. The same curly-haired attendant and her two partners in crime, eyes still affixed to the computer monitor, looked up. I was the only person standing on this side of the counter, startled to be acknowledged at all.

"Closing."

"Can I just get the second part to this video?"

"Get Lost and Die, Again."

"What?"

"That's the second part. Sorry, we're closing, computer's off."

"I've really got to see it, I know these guys!"

The other attendants were turning off the lights, and I looked pleading deep into her sunglasses, seeing my own face reflected.

She stood there, maybe looking at me, maybe asleep, a long moment. Whipping her head around long curly hair trailing she shuffled across the floor, slid back, saying, "It's out."

I almost cried out, but quietly cursed, head bent, instead.

"What's the problem here?" The manager. "The alarm is ready to be set, you'll have to leave, sir."

I pleaded my story, this time into his sunglasses, plastic face, yellow teeth.

BLAHHHHHHHHH! The killer alarm was blasting in my ear. Someone, please, stop choking the duck!

I awoke on the bookcase, stiff-legged, eyes bugged out, fell and landed on the floor.

A stack of PIG PAPERS dislodged, fell in my lap. There's no telling how long I'll have to wait for that sequel.

- Daza

## LET'S MOVE THE BODY AND THE FEET IN RHYTHM, ORDINARILY TO MUSIC

by Don Wagberg

So there the person speaking or writing was, resting the reflexive form of HE upon the buttocks, as on a chair, apart from anything or anyone else at this piece of furniture having a flat top set on legs while the Reaper, despite not having knowledge of any person, marched or walked ostentatiously around the interior space enclosed or set apart by walls, touching or caressing with the lips as an act of affection, greeting, and clasping closely and fondly in the arms every person and requesting ballads or lyrics set to the art of combining tones to form expressive compositions the group of people united for some purpose obviously could not perform on musical instruments. And just when the person speaking or writing was in the first part or early stages of feeling free from fear, care, never so fleshy and plumpy in his property (ending at death) which makes it possible for the objective case of HE to take in food, get energy from it, grow, etc., just making a conscious effort to hear the group of people united for some purpose and forming or having in mind sweet things that do not exist or are considered of little or no importance, this firm and unyielding-farthest from the middle, merely theoretical looking female child comes out of the shades cast by bodies intercepting light rays to ask earnestly, "Do you wanna dance?"

"I can't. I'm sorry," the person speaking or writing flat-out expresses in words, and the person speaking or writing can touch, examine by handling, her perfect, complete filling with great surprise or wonder making, or bursting with, a pop out all over the region. The woman, girl, or female animal previously mentioned waits for the objective case of I to express in words a greater amount or degree, to develop in great detail the intensive or reflexive form of I.

"That's how I am. I don't mean nothin'. I never dance. I never will."

"C'mon," the woman, girl, or female animal previously mentioned jabs at with a pointed stick, "just do what I do."

The person speaking or writing can touch or examine by handling the objective case of SHE's mental or nervous strain at being turned to a low or lower condition, amount, increasing in amount extending upward a specific distance and upward a specific distance toward a releasing-emotion point that the person speaking or writing is not in the particular state of mind or feeling to reach, attain, shelter or protection from.

"Oh, I know, I know, that's not the problem. I just don't dance. All right? That's how I am. I don't mean nothin'."

"C'mon."

The person speaking or writing moves quickly up and down, back and forth, the part of his body containing the brain, and the jaws, eyes, ears, nose and mouth like a small in size child with a utensil consisting of a handle attached to a small shallow bowl containing waste matter in front of the front part of the part of his body containing the brain, and the jaws, eyes, ears, nose and mouth.

"I don't believe this," the woman, girl, or female animal previously mentioned expresses in words. "I've never had this happen to me before."

"I'm weird. You just asked a weird person," the person speaking or writing expresses in words.

"I guess!" the woman, girl, or female animal previously mentioned cries out suddenly and fully of intense feeling or strong passion. The woman, girl, or female animal previously mentioned gazes steadily and intently at the objective case of I for nearly either of the two equal parts of one of the twenty-four parts of a day and finally goes at a pace within reasonable limits to another region. The group of people united for some purpose did not stimulate the auditory nerves by vibrations in the air too enjoyably after the thing mentioned.

# Another Damn Space Opera

## FROM THE MEMOIRS OF VIVILAN SUPERNOVITCH: INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR

by James MacDougall

### LOG ENTRY #1—THE CONTRACT

"Before I go on," I told the Krumloid I held pinned to the wall by his left larynx, "I want you to know that I'm not just one of those xenophobic Earthlings who just hate all Krumloids." At this point the Krumloid tried to interrupt, but a sharp punch in the right larynx silenced that. I hate to be interrupted.

"So please understand," I continued, "that any feelings of contempt or loathing I demonstrate in no way reflect on my feelings for your species in general, and are completely personal."

The client with whom I had just completed business was a notoriously irritating creature who loved to send flunkies to deliver my final payments, knowing how much I hated this. On this occasion the task of delivery boy had fallen to a junior accountant who thought I wouldn't miss a few bills, more or less. He didn't know me very well.

I hate accountants; they don't think anyone else can count.

"I want the rest of my money," I told the Krumloid, "and since I find searching the pockets of corpses distasteful I'll give you an opportunity to just hand the money to me." Since his feet dangled a foot from the floor and he was having trouble breathing, the Krumloid must have known he could take me seriously. He turned over the money. I released him.

And I'd just have let him leave if he hadn't started to apologize, but grovelling is a tradition among Krumloids and I hate grovelling so I drop-kicked him through the bar's swinging doors. I hate Krumloids.

"My, what an interesting life you have, Captain Supernovitch."

I was being addressed by the most beautiful woman I had ever seen: Please note that I do not habitually check other women out, but the woman's looks could not escape even my attention, much as I'd have preferred it otherwise. She was everything I wasn't. I resolved to hate her.

"If you know me and I don't know you then this must be business," I said. Figures, I thought. Every time I wrap up a contract I can't get through a whole page before I'm in trouble again. "If you want to discuss business you'll have to pay for my time. This round's on you."

She had no trouble getting the busy bartender's attention, and I knew it wasn't because of me that he had to wipe his chip as he served us. I hate men.

"My name is H.F. Jones. My friends call me Hotwater," she said.

Right, I thought, and the "F" stands for "Faucet." But since she was buying, I didn't say anything.

"I need a rescue mission and I need you to do it. I think you'll find the work very interesting."

Oh ill fate! I thought. When a client says that it means it'll be dangerous.

"I've done some checking," she continued, "and I wouldn't want anyone but you to do this job."

Damn! I thought. "Interesting" means trouble. "I wouldn't want anyone but you" means suicide.

"I'll need time and money to find and outfit a crew," I told her.

"Time I cannot give you; ready or not you must leave by dawn. But money is not a problem."

The hell with this, I decided. When a client says "money is not a problem" it's worse than suicide. It means money is a problem.

Hotwater slid a platinum credit down the bar to me. It had my name on the back. The name on the front was Dorian Hotz.

"Mr. Hotz grants you carte blanche," said Hotwater.

Oh, I thought, money isn't a problem. With a heroic effort I didn't faint, and I'm proud to say I only drooled on the card a little bit. I had just been hired by the richest man in the explored universe.

It was becoming difficult to hate Hotwater Jones.

I coolly slipped the card into my brassier and eyed Ms. Jones over the rim of my glass. "Details?"

"You don't need them yet. I'll tell you everything once we're safely underway."

There you go, Jones, I thought, making it easy again. I hate clients who want to go along on jobs. Clients who take that for granted I loathe. But Ms. Jones could play this any way she wanted now that we had a deal. She'd get her credit card back when she pried it from my cold dead fingers.

"I'll meet you at your ship in two standard hours. Berth 14, correct?"

I nodded and she left without saying goodbye, all eyes in the bar following her out. I finished my drink, looking forward to calling my partner aboard the Lucky and telling him his vacation was being cut short by a couple of weeks.

But as I left the bar I wasn't thinking about that, or about how I was going to find a sober crew at this hour of the night, or even about all the money I was about to make.

I was thinking about how I was going to deal with the assassin who had followed me out of the bar.

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## JUST ANOTHER PAYDAY

by Richard M. Millard

"Mr. Blasky, I'm here to drive you to the voting center," the figure in the blue uniform stated.

Thomas D. Blasky scratched at his t-shirt. "Already? Seems like I just voted..."

"Four years ago," the uniformed figure interrupted with a smile. "Well, it's that time again."

Blasky shrugged. "Okay. But I gotta be back in a half-hour."

"No problem," the figure in blue beamed. "Have you there and back in no time. By the way, my name's Calvin."

"Okay Calvin. Let's get it over with."

Calvin maneuvered the black limosine through the mid-day traffic with the greatest of ease.

"Pretty busy," Blasky muttered.

"Sure," Calvin nodded. "Ever since they started paying people to vote."

Blasky leaned back in his seat. "Yeah. You know, it kind of bothered me at first. Seemed like they were trying to buy votes."

"Not at all," Calvin stated. "It's just the American way to pay people. And since voter turnout was getting so bad, well, some of our legislators finally quite sitting on their brains and started using them. And they came up with the Pay-to-Vote plan. After all, no one is telling you how to vote. The government just wants you to come out and vote."

"Yeah, I guess you're right."

"And it was the logical step," Calvin continued as he flashed Blasky a quick grin. "It all started out by paying farmers not to plant crops. And then paying people who couldn't find work."

Blasky shook his head in agreement. "And that included a lot of people who just didn't want to work."

"Then there was that plan that paid high school students for getting good grades," Calvin stated. "The Board of Education said that the money came from private industry, but we know differently, don't we?"

"Yeah. But I was sorry I missed out on that one," Blasky replied. "I could've cleaned up."

"Seems like we always miss out. Right?"

"You bet!" Blasky exclaimed.

"But at least we're not too late to get in on this voting plan."

"Right," Blasky smiled.

"Of course, some purists still claim that voting is a right that you shouldn't have to be paid to exercise," Calvin said as he pulled the limosine into the parking lot. "But then, isn't it your right to be paid?"

"Absolutely!" Blasky agreed. "I mean, it's usually raining or something. So why should we come out in bad weather for nothing?"

Calvin winked. "Absolutely." And Blasky nodded.

Calvin then backed the limosine into a parking space. He started to turn off the ignition, but Blasky protested.

"Keep the motor running," Blasky said as he opened the door and jumped out. "I have to be back to watch 'Bowling Spectacular.' The network paid me to be part of the viewing audi—Say, is that a government-sponsored show? I mean, is TV run by, well..."

"What do you think?"

Blasky smiled to himself. "By the way, who are the candidates this year?"

"Albert Q. Tanshoff, and some other guy," Calvin replied.

"Right. This won't take long," Blasky said as he slammed the limosine door and hurried into the voting center.

# Thanksgiving

by Catherine Jackson

Mama says she always dreads going to Aunt Maybel's for dinner. Aunt Maybel isn't found of housecleaning. Mama says she doesn't trust anything that comes out of Aunt Maybel's kitchen. But as far as I know, nobody's ever gotten sick from Aunt Maybel's cooking. I always like Aunt Maybel's potato salad better than Mama's, myself.

One thing about Aunt Maybel, she doesn't pretend by cleaning the house before company comes. (Mama does, sometimes, 'specially if it's Grandma that's coming over.) Aunt Maybel doesn't treat her family any differently than she treats company. Although, now that I think of it, I guess we're family, too; just not as close relation to her as Uncle Ralph and my cousins Betsy and Roy.

Anyhow, it was Aunt Maybel's turn to have Thanksgiving, so we went.

When we got there, everybody else was already there—Aunt Margaret and Uncle Tom, with Susie and Bob; Aunt Lizzie and Uncle Will, with Ken and Kevin and Keith; and Grandma and Grandpa.

Uncle Ralph opened the door to the living room. It was pretty dark in there—not very many lamps on, and not much light from the windows, either. Piles of newspapers and books were everywhere. Near the middle of the room was a basket of clothes sitting on the edge of a wobbly ironing board. We followed a narrow path, like one of the mazes in the coloring books for little kids, through the living room. Uncle Ralph moved a couple of stacks of papers so Mama and Daddy could sit down.

"Janie, Mike, the other kids are upstairs," Uncle Ralph said. Mike and I picked our way through the living room, then through the dining room, then up rickety stairs. (Aunt Maybel and Uncle Ralph live in an old house, and Uncle Ralph isn't much better at doing repairs than Aunt Maybel is at housekeeping.)

The girls were in Betsy's room, and all the boys in Roy's room. We're all pretty much of an age, so we all enjoy getting together for these family things.

I went into Betsy's room, where Susie and Betsy were sitting on Betsy's bed whispering and giggling. The bed looked like it usually did—no sheets, just a bare mattress. I don't know if they sleep on sheets or not; Mama would never let me ask Betsy.

I sat down too, and we started talking about school, and boys, and cheerleading tryouts, and so on.

I looked around the room. A broom was propped in the corner. A cobweb was built on the broom, so I guess it had been there for awhile. Susie, who's not afraid of spiders, noticed the broom about the same time I did. "Okay if I sweep your floor, Betsy?" (Susie's a very tidy girl.)

"Sure, go ahead if you want to. I wouldn't bother, myself, but it's fine if you'd like to."

Susie got off the bed and began energetically sweeping. She accumulated quite a bit of dust in the corner of the room. Some of the dust disappeared down the metal heat vent in the floor. It was the old kind, with those great big squares. "I think I sent some of this dust down into your furnace, Betsy. I'm sorry."

"I don't suppose it matters."

"Time for dinner, kids!" Uncle Ralph called up the stairs.

We all gathered at the dining room table. The table was loaded with food: turkey, dressing, cranberries, jello, salad, mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans. Grandma said grace, and then we all dug in. Thanksgiving food isn't my favorite, but it was okay.

"Time for the pumpkin pie!" Aunt Maybel trilled when we'd all finished our turkey. She went out in the kitchen to get the pies from the counter where they'd been cooling.

"Oh, my God!" we heard from the kitchen.

Mama leaped up. "What's the matter, Maybel?"

"Just look at these pies!" We all got up and crowded

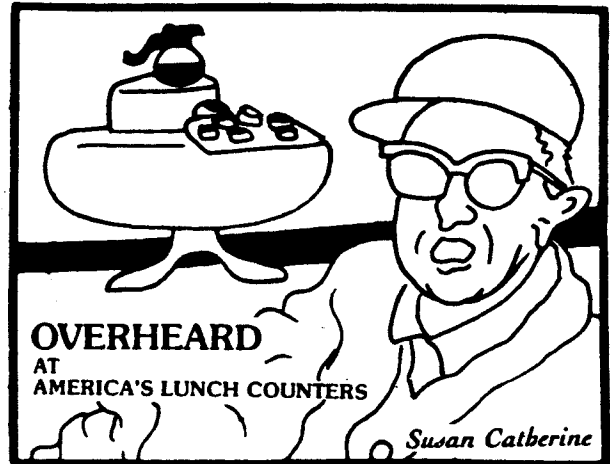
## *The Cat's Pajamas & Other Mansupial Techniques*

by Roldo

"Some of us," he stated schizophrenically, "come here to enjoy ourselves."

"You could have done that anywhere," guileless Jack replied.

I decided I must have slipped into one of those defensive trances that happen to me when I feel bored or threatened. Nothing else could account for my presence at this soiree. Holy howling dogs of dementia! How did this critical a malfunction occur unnoticed? None of my usual aberrations would account for my allowing myself to regain consciousness in a room full of terrifyingly normal strangers in the company of the Spooky Crew. Yet here we are. I must think and act fast. Luckily, I seem to have ingested something, or some number of things that facilitate both. I shall take out my note pad, retire to a corner and tell any invaders that I'm a reporter. Best take supplies. This bottle. Tequila. Excellent. Perhaps there's a beer-filled refrigerator around. Ah—there's Oberon. He'll know. Keep scribbling as I walk. Look around, pretend to notice things, make notes. Oberon chatting to some junior exec. types. Married couple? Looks like. Best if I slip away, find the others. This is such sleep as dreams refrain from.



**"It's a messy world and it ain't getting' any better. They should be makin' coffee and jelly doughnuts instead of missiles."**

into the kitchen. The pies were covered with dust. We looked up; right above the pies was the heat vent that went into Betsy's room.

"I'm so sorry, Aunt Maybel," said Susie in a small voice. She sounded near tears. "I was sweeping the floor in Betsy's room. I didn't know the dust would come down onto the pies."

"That's okay, child," Grandma said. "We've all had more than sufficient to eat today, anyhow. It's too bad about the pies, but nobody will starve without dessert."

"Speak for yourself, woman," boomed Grandpa. "Maybel, is there whipped cream for these pies in the refrigerator?"

"Why, yes, I whipped some before dinner."

Grandpa sliced into one of the pies, took a piece on a spatula, and calmly brushed off as much of the dust as he could into Aunt Maybel's kitchen wastebasket. He slid the pie onto one of those little pie plates nobody ever uses except at holidays.

"You're not going to eat that, George!" Grandma sounded shocked, but a little questioning, too.

"Hell, yes, I'm going to eat it. Why, I'd eat a cow pie if it had enough whipped cream on it!" He reached into the refrigerator, glopped a big helping of whipped cream on the pie, and calmly began to eat.



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# MasterMath Explains... The L.A. Freeway System PART TWO

by William G. Raley

**THE STORY SO FAR:** We've discussed in detail the origin of the name "Los Angeles," explained why Californians who visit Alabama are rarely seen again, and extolled some really neat people born in the latter state. We went over the logical order in which the L.A. freeways were constructed (alphabetically), and lamented the demise of the Biff, Suzie, and Spike freeways. And I gave you a little more background information on myself, including some highlights of the fun times I spent living in Nashville (yawn!).

I'm still sitting here on I-5 (the Santa Ana Freeway), about four feet further north than at the end of my last article. Ah, some movement at last! Turns out it was just an overturned shipment of avocados blocking the road. Now, hold on to your hat for a whirlwind tour of the L.A. freeway system. **DISCLAIMER:** I, MasterMath, will not be responsible for readers who spontaneously lunge!

—GET YOUR MASTERMATH T-SHIRTS! ONLY A FEW LEFT! SEND \$10 CASH TO: THE BIG ROCK OFFSHORE WITH THE BIRDS ON IT, LAGUNA BEACH, CA 92651—

First I come to the interchange known as the El Toro "Y," which is a strange name since it's located in Irvine. I take the left fork onto I-405, the San Diego Freeway. Suddenly, an ominous yet familiar voice comes on the radio. It's Oo, from whom I haven't heard in months (my mentor, the Oriel Orator, for you first-timers).

"MasterMath, your life is in danger!"

"Eh?"

"Years ago, the last MasterMath was banished from the universe for the disgusting things he did to certain rock formations on the planet Losithar. Not only that, he embezzled a fortune from CHUD coffers to pay for home appliances and jewelry bought via CVN.

"Anyway, he's trying to raise an army by broadcasting secret messages on the subfrequencies of Southern California talk radio stations, like the one you're listening to now. Change the station, MasterMath!"

I could've sworn I was listening to the rock and roll sounds of KLOS, but I was wrong. In horror, I reach for the tuning knob, but it comes off in my hand! "I've got a slight problem here, Oo, but don't worry, I'll take care of it. So who is this guy, anyway, and where can I find him?"

"His name's Chip, and he's right behind you!"

I turn, and sitting in a royal blue '71 Nova is the ugliest computer chip I've ever seen. He resembles closely the Intel 80386 microprocessor, only much smarter. He's a 32-pin chip, only I can't tell how many pins are arms, and how many are legs. At first glance, he appears faceless; then the copyright notice winks at me, and a sneer forms on one of the data paths. The race is on!

I kick it up to 70, and speed past South Coast Plaza, the ritziest mall in the county (they've having a sale on attitudes). We're in the fast lane, so I cut across three lanes of traffic and just barely make the on-ramp to the northbound Newport Freeway. I laugh as Chip makes an obscene gesture with his pins.

I'm coming up on the Mall of Orange (yes, there really is such a place) when traffic comes to a dead stop—they're filming an episode of "Hunter." I chat briefly with Stefanie Kramer; she

**Most thinking scientists think that the universe is, was, and always will be swarming with worlds such as ours. Let's consider one of them that lost its sun a billion years ago more or less. Couldn't that have been this world and weren't we lucky to have been gifted with eternal life? As you may have been doing in previous herenows send S.A.S.E. to:**

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doesn't look well, but I can tell it's only ketchup on her blouse. She directs me to take the westbound Garden Grove Freeway. After a few miles, I realize I've been set up. This freeway merges with the San Diego!

—OKAY, I WAS ONLY KIDDING ABOUT THE T-SHIRTS. BUT FOR ONLY \$1 YOU CAN GET A GENUINE, AUTOGRAPHED MASTERMATH FLOPPY DISK. SOMEWHERE IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS, CA 91606—

Chip is only inches behind me now, and I can feel his hot silicon breath on my neck. Cal Worthington and his dog Spot wave to us as we pass Worthington Dodge in Long Beach. I cheer up briefly when I pass the radio tower for the hard rock station, KNAC-FM ("they're in a rut, but we're kicking butt!").

We're driving on the shoulder of the freeway at close to 80 m.p.h. I thought there was a CHiPs officer after us for a while, but it was just Erik Estrada on his way to an audition. We're nearing Century Boulevard, which is close to both LAX and the fabulous Forum. Uh-oh. A basketball speeding through the air narrowly misses a landing 747. Must've been an errant Kareem sky hook.

Between the Marina and Santa Monica Freeways now. I look to my left, and I can just make out Randy Newman on Venice Beach, still singing "I Love L.A." I take a chance and look back at Chip. He's still right behind me, but there's smoke in the car. Either he's so relaxed he's taking a toke, or he's overheating (it's over 100 degrees today). I hope for the latter.

As I veer right onto the Ventura Freeway, some Valley Girls entering the Sherman Oaks Galleria catch my eye. "Go, MasterMath, go!" they shout. It's good to be a celebrity. After they think I'm out of earshot they add, "He's so bitchin'!" The ultimate compliment. However, my life is still in danger, so I must press on.

When I exit onto the Hollywood Freeway, the ground begins to rumble. Perhaps I should've mentioned this before, but today is May 10, 1988. Unfortunately, all my earthquake supplies (bottled water, contact solution, Vienna sausage, and Skor bars) are at home. Nostradamus was right!

I pass a sign which reads, "Infinity Freeway—1 Mile." Not only that, several nearby freeways have taken the liberty of re-routing themselves by a mile or two. Thus, I look up ahead and see traffic from the Hollywood, Golden State, Glendale, San Bernardino, and Harbor Freeways converging into a mass melee of twisted metal and angry motorists (not to mention insurance reps pulling their hair out). I swerve left to avoid a skateboarder, and close my eyes just before crashing through the guard rail.

When I regain consciousness, there are no cars in sight. The sky is amber, and a blue sun is burning brightly. The Infinity Freeway. Without warning, I'm rear-ended; it's Chip. We get out of our cars, knowing only one of us will walk away alive. We stare each other down for several minutes, readying our weapons.

He starts off with advanced algebra: Galois theory and the like, rambling on interminably about groups, rings, and automorphisms. I dust myself off, and counter with complex analysis, waxing eloquent on rectifiable arcs and removable singularities.

Both of us are soon exhausted. The next round of debate will determine the winner; the loser will be transported to a black hole, or worse. I cringe as he chooses topology, my weakest subject.

Chip jabs toyingly with simple remarks concerning set theory and elementary logic. Then he hits me with the full force of... Urysohn's Lemma:

Let  $F_1$  and  $F_2$  be disjoint closed subsets of a normal space  $X$ . Then there exists a continuous function  $f: X \rightarrow [0,1]$  such that  $f[F_1] = \{0\}$  and  $f[F_2] = \{1\}$ .

I fall to my knees, then slump to the ground, the hot asphalt searing my cheek. Then, from somewhere, a voice: "It's just a lemma!"

How careless of me. I'd forgotten that a lemma is merely a basic statement proven in order to prove a much more important (and powerful) theorem. I rise to my feet and resound with Urysohn's Metrization Theorem:

Every second countable normal  $T_1$ -space is metrizable.

Chip falls over backwards, his gold-plated pins fusing into the surface of the Infinity Freeway. His instruction set crunches horribly under my Nikes as I return to my car. I'm not normally a vindictive person, but I turn and add, "Not only that, but every second countable normal  $T_1$ -space is homeomorphic but a subset of the Hilbert cube in  $\mathbb{R}^{\infty}$ ."

There are no signs on the Infinity Freeway to guide me, so I drive until I fall asleep.

—ALL I REALLY WANT IS SOMEONE TO TALK TO. MASTERMATH SAYS I'M ONLY A FIGMENT OF HIS IMAGINATION. HIS OTHER PERSONALITIES WON'T TALK TO ME EITHER. FORGET THE MONEY. JUST SEND A CARD, A LETTER, OR SOME NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS TO: WASTING AWAY IN THE DESERT, CA 92225—

I'm awakened the next morning (in my own bed) by a knock at the door. When I step outside, no one's there, but I find an IBM 3090 mainframe on my front porch, along with a note from Oo thanking me for my assistance, and wishing me happy computing.

Only one problem remains. Despite the media coverage, the big earthquake really did hit downtown Los Angeles, and I'm running low on Vienna sausage. Any donations from LJ readers would be much appreciated.

**NEXT TIME:** MasterMath visits New York, and scarfs down pizza with our beloved editrix in Greenwich Village. Until then, remember: if the entire greater Los Angeles area were a freeway, and there were no people or objects to get in your way, it wouldn't matter if you closed your eyes.



# The Great Ashtray Caper

by Rodney Lynch

The Theater has never been a big interest of mine. I prefer to sit on the couch, a bowl of popcorn on my lap, and wonder why the Beaver never gave Eddie Haskell a good, swift kick in the yahoos. That being said, it's kind of odd that I allowed myself to be hornswoggled into thievery on behalf of the stage. In my defense I can only say that I was temporarily dazzled by the gorgeous blue orbs set back seductively into the face of one Martini Krackatoa, actress. After a semi-date in which I accedently chewed off one of her earrings, I casually promised to do anything for her. So when she called me during the climax of a Huntz Hall film festival I was obligated to comply with her demands.

Martini's latest role, a mart in the musical remake of FAIL-SAFE, had her cast as a waitress in a sleazy waterfront bar where the Secretary of Defense (played by Jack Paar) took his meals in the evenings. Martini's mind, twisted forever by the bright lights and applause, decided everything in the bar should be authentic—right down to the ashtrays on the table. Needing a large, unintelligent gnome for drudge work, she naturally chose me.

We began our search through real waterfront bars teeming with ship captains, wooden legs and other sea life. Martini was frantic.

"This could be my big chance. Critics have eyes like hawks. The right ashtrays could make or break me!" she said. I listened carefully and kept a close watch for pirates.

Inside Seaman Bob's Chantey House we came within inches of our objective. As we entered Martini grabbed my arm. "Look," she whispered. Through the foggy smoke of the oyster joint I saw them: two near-mint Bicentennial Commemorative metal ashtrays. Amid my squeals of protest the Amazon actress dragged us toward the bar for a closer look. The bar was filled with rough, Captain Ahab types and smelled of rum and Old Spice. The glint of Swiss Army knives flashed with each step we took. I made it my concern to keep a path open toward the door just in case we were forced to make a hasty retreat.

Several of my chins began to waggle back and forth when I saw that the ashtrays resided on hooks dangling from Bob the bartender's earlobes.

"Say, those are very interesting earrings you have there," I said, trying not to look too much like a startled marmoset.

"Yeah, that they are, bub. What'll you and the lady have?"

"Well, I, er, that is..."

"Look, how much do you want for them?" Martini broke in. "And if we want anything to drink it'll be in a clean glass. Now, how much?"

Suddenly Bob was in tears. His sobs came like the echoes of a trash compactor. "Sell these? Don't you know my sister gave these to me right before she set off to start an armadillo ranch in Mongolia? How dare you!"

Someone let out a yell. "Hey, everybody! They've made Bob cry." An angry mob gathered around us. Luckily they accepted MasterCard and we escaped.

The night wore on slowly. We drove away from the umpteenth Mermaid Tavern, sailors jeering at us. Martini threw her hands into the air. "I can't believe this. There are four hundred thousand people in this frigging city, hundreds of bars, countless restaurants and taverns, and we can't find a couple of lousy ashtrays."

Martini's big brown eyes began tearing up like a sprinkler factory at inspection time. My brain, having an unending capacity for stupid ideas, tricked me into saying that Dresky's Burger Barn carried metal ashtrays of the variety that are usually found hanging from the ears of bartenders named Bob. I immediately regretted my indiscretion as the car careened wildly around a corner and flattened several spinsters waiting at a bus stop. Martini wiped away a pool of drool from the corner of her mouth and cackled insanely.

Dresky's Burger Barn, a small greasy spoon, stood on the outskirts of town. Customers were greeted by a plastic laughing cow as they entered the barn. We wheeled into the parking lot, the engine belching fire.

Martini jumped out of the car, her forehead wet with ashtray fever. I gripped her arm. "What are you planning on doing?"

"What do you think?" she said. "I'm going to steal some ashtrays."

My two hundred pounds of flab quivered. How naive could I have been? Well, I would have no more part of this. Throwing out my chest and sucking in my stomach I stammered a protest. "W-we could get caught. It's illegal."

"It isn't illegal until we get caught. Besides, what can they give us for stealing ashtrays?"

Before I could protest further Martini strongarmed me into burger Hell.

The interior was decorated the same as the outside—with plastic cows. Some of them were even sitting at the tables eating hamburgers. I scanned the area for cameras and hidden microphones.

"We'll have to order something," Martini said, mumbling something about a diversion. I was too nervous to eat but ordered a Super Dreadnought Killer Cow Burger just to throw the waitress off our trail. The breeze stirred up by her skirt had barely died down when Martini slipped out of our booth and began gathering up ashtrays, a malicious glint in her eye.

"Here, told these," she whispered and pushed several of the me-

nacing pieces of metal to me.

I pushed them back. "No thanks. I, uh, don't smoke."

"You smoke a pack a day."

"Oh. Well, I'm trying to quit. Having an ashtray in my pocket would just be too much of a temptation." She shrugged and went back to her work.

Having collected all she needed Martini sat down to finish her meal. Slowly. Each bite lasted at least twelve and a half seconds during which several thousand strands of my hair gave up the ghost and turned an unflattering gray. When she was finally done we got up and moved to the door, ashtrays clinking in her pockets. I suspected the whole place was already crawling with federal agents. Probably the whole block was cordoned off.

As I stepped up to pay the bill I prayed the hostess wouldn't notice the beads of sweat standing on my upper lip. Her eyes met mine. She knew!

"I don't have any ashtrays. I swear!" I yelled.

"There's a hardware store right down the block, sir," she said with a smile. Blood began pumping again. I thanked her and pressed twenty dollars hush money into her hand.

Try to slink out as quietly as possible. I casually strolled away so swiftly that several Olympic scouts demanded to know why I had been hiding my athletic skills to letting the U.S. take a back seat to the Russkies in underwater pole vaulting and imaginary shuffleboard.

Martini was in the car counting her precious ashtrays. I wiped sweat from my palms as we tore through the parking lot, sucking several gulls into our intake valve. The car reached a comfortable cruising speed after very few minutes and so did I.

That wasn't so bad, was it? Really nothing at all.

I was wiping away fingerprints with Diet Coke when I saw the lights flashing in the rearview mirror. "The police!" I shrieked. Behind us loomed a large tank-like vehicle. On top blinked several lights the color of blood. In the front seat sat two policemen, both of whom appeared to be escapees from the KGB. I figured they were already unholstering their .357 Magnums and sanding down their billy clubs.

GOVERNOR VOWS TO GET ASHTRAY THIEVES would read the headlines. TWO GET CHAIR FOR ASHTRAYS.

"We're dead," I yelled, trying feverishly to get the car door open. When it did creak open I grabbed ashtray after ashtray and began tossing them onto the breakdown lane.

"Are you crazy?" Martini yelled. "You're throwing my career right out the window!" She pulled over to the side and hopped out to quickly gather the precious metals.

Think. You have to think. I was kidnapped. Yes, this deranged actress with the ashtray fetish conked me on the head and forced me to be a part of her fiendish plan to deprive the world's restaurants of ashtrays. Having carried out the plot she would then hold them for ransom. Or a walk-on part on Broadway. Yes. Surely the police would believe that. Wouldn't they?

"They're not looking for us," Martini said as the police car glided past. I didn't care. I sailed past her making good my escape and promising to call the next time I needed reminding that actors should be kept on leashes.

I haven't heard much from Martini since then. But I never really liked her anyway. There was a small article in the paper about her, though. It seems she's come into considerable success on Broadway in COALMINING TENDERFOOTS. At least that's what I think it says. The variety section isn't too thorough on the theater and my Portuguese isn't up to snuff. But at least Brazil doesn't have extradition.

## I WANT YOU TO STAY

by Edward Mycue

Don't go away.  
Listen, come back.  
I take back that crack.  
Come on. Take a joke.  
You don't have to  
go for broke every time.  
Hey, a bit of fun's  
no crime...great balls  
of fire! It can't be  
so. Stay. Don't go.  
I want you to stay.  
You will if I go away?  
Big deal. I can't win.  
I guess I should go.  
If there's no other way.  
But I wish you'd stay.  
This has been a real bad day.

## READING BOOKS

by Al ?

I read a book  
To learn intelligence:  
It taught me  
The meaning  
Of intelligence  
  
I read a book  
To learn knowledge:  
It taught me  
The meaning  
Of knowledge  
  
I read a book  
To learn wisdom:  
It taught me  
The meaning  
Of wisdom  
  
OH BROTHER  
HAVE I  
GOT A  
HEADACHE

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# SECOND DRAFT

## PART ONE by Sergio Taubmann

Martin's first blackout totally surprised him. In all fairness, Martin assumed everyone's first blackout took them by surprise.

It happened while he was reading in his favorite chair. He did not take many pleasures in life. After all, that was the price you paid for being fairly unexciting. He got up, went to work as Assistant Sales Manager of Vanguard Publishing ("Publishing The Vanguard Of Popular Fiction For The Popular Pasttime"), went home and read. Before he went to bed he would call up Ellen. Every once awhile they would go out and occasionally they'd spend the night at one of their apartments. But his biggest leisure activity was reading. Lord knows he wasn't at a loss for books, working as he did for a publisher.

Tonight, his company asked Martin to read the first work of this hot new mystery writer they had just signed. He brought the manuscript and headed straight for his chair to see if he could sell this product. The chair was an old upholstered thing he bought from a thrift shop downtown. A long scratch on the right chair leg and an unidentified spot allowed him to argue the price down considerably. He had sat in this chair so often that its stuffing had conformed to his own body shape.

After forty-five minutes of reading the novel, Martin could tell it was a waste of his time. The author obviously loved Mickey Spillaine, taking pages from his metaphysical book. Unfortunately, they were all the wrong pages. It was an overtly serious, blood-drenched story of corruption and sex that made him queasy. He was up to the chapter when the improbably named Michael Dagger guns down two thugs in the employ of the corporate villain. Martin already knew how things were going to end up. In four chapters, the heroine would betray him to the villain who, if things ran true to form, would be a homosexual fascist with some form of perversity imposed upon his one-dimensional soul.

Martin debated going to bed early when his vision began to blur. Black dots crawled along the perimeters of his sight as he felt increasingly faint. He put the book down and rubbed his temples. The black dots merged and, after a moment of darkness, flew apart.

Martin took a breath. He shook the muzziness from his head before reaching down to gather up the manuscript. It had scattered when he dropped it, various loose pages spread out haphazardly across the floor.

As he bent down, he noticed something odd. The chair in which he was sitting was a black leatherette recliner.

Martin looked around in alarm. Everything else in his living room was the same as before. He slapped himself hard. He knew he wasn't dreaming. He was only looking at a strange chair.

Martin gathered up the manuscript, one eye on the chair. He spent the rest of the night on the living room floor staring at furniture anomaly. Despite his hope, the recliner did not turn back into its original, unupholstered form. It instead sat in the middle of the room, its shiny material catching highlights from the bright moon.

Martin did not look good the next morning. He had a drawn, worn look on his face accentuated by bags under his eyes. More than a few of his co-workers inquired about his health. Martin didn't answer them.

There was a message on his desk to call Ellen. In all the excitement of the Great Chair Switch (as he came to call it), Martin forgot to call her before going to bed last night. It was understandable, for he didn't exactly go to bed. Not surprisingly, she was as worried as the others were about his well-being.

"Are you all right, Marty?" she asked in that formal tone with just a hint of a Queens accent.

"I-I'm fine, honey. Do you remember that chair I got at Goodwill?"

"What chair?"

His friend Dave came over with two cups of coffee and Martin nodded his thanks. "The one in the living room. You know, with the scratch."

"Don't tell me you've replaced the recliner. It's still good. Just needs some oil."

Martin went silent. He knew she was fond of that old chair. On a few occasions they had sat there and kissed, she balanced on his lap. Why didn't she remember it now?

Her voice came over the line. "Marty? Marty?"

"Sorry, darling. I better get to work. I'll call you tonight, okay?" He hung up.

Dave leaned against the wall of his cubicle. He cradled his mug in one large hand. Dave was smiling, which unnerved Martin. That smile was too wide, as if he were hiding something. "Something wrong?" Martin asked pleasantly.

"I was about to ask you that."

Martin took a sip of coffee. It scalded his tongue. "You remember that chair I had in the living room?"

"That Laz-E-Boy?"

Martin was scared. Dave was his oldest friend here at Vanguard. He had made several comments in the past urging Martin to replace that chair. He covered up his disquiet by saying, "I was just thinking about replacing it, that's all." To emphasize his ease, Martin smiled wanly.

"What should you do that for? You only got it a few months ago."

How weird, Martin thought. Not only was that recliner his, but he bought it fairly recently. Martin wondered why Dave didn't remember the events surrounding the upholstered chair from Goodwill. It was a favorite story of his for months afterwards. Dave's altered memory prompted Martin to spend ninety minutes trying to find somebody who didn't think he always had a black leatherette recliner. He would have spent longer on the search if responsibility didn't obligate him to eventually start working.

He returned to his office and began cross-checking sales figures from Vanguard's romance line (Raven Romances—vapid, but Ellen liked them and she was the target audience, not him). As he furiously consulted reports from the various outlets, his vision began to blur. The black dots began their march to the center of his sight. Martin got off a feeble "Oh no" before losing consciousness.

When he came to, he was looking at account statements from his office's biggest client. Martin was now in the banking industry.

"Are you all right, Marty?" Ellen asked over dinner. They were at what was presently a Japanese restaurant. Before last week's blackouts it was Martin's favorite Italian bistro. Martin never liked sushi—uncooked foods unnerved him. After a recent blackout, Ellen adored unagi.

"I'm fine," Martin replied. He could tell that this was leading into a major discussion of the blackout problem. Ellen had gotten that concerned, brow-knitted look she had whenever she thought something was important. Usually, that something important was marriage, for which Ellen still didn't feel quite ready. She felt a need to continue building a career before thinking about making their arrangement more formal. How one could build a career at the Tourist Board puzzled Martin.

She looked over the top of her horn-rimmed (previously rimless, pre-blackout) glasses and ran a hand through her straight brown hair. This was not a good sign. A lecture was coming.

"Are you sure? You've been acting strangely lately."

"I'm fine," he repeated, picking at a shrimp wrapped in bacon.

"You have to admit that your behavior is odd lately. Take tonight—you practically had to be dragged into this place, and last night with those stories about Vanguard and ratty armchairs and my boss not always being Arabic and how every time you black out things change. You're scaring me, Marty."

"But they do change, Ellen. Just the other day, Dave disappeared. I don't know where he is."

"Dave?"

"You met him. Remember? At the Vanguard Christmas party."

"But you never worked at Vanguard Press, dear."

"I did so! But the blackout changed things. Just like the restaurant changed last—"

"God, we're not getting into that again. Do you want me to ask the waiter how long they've been here?"

"No!" Martin said, unintentionally raising his voice. Before he could explain what was going on, he felt the familiar faintness that preceded a blackout. The dots converged on his field of view. Martin went limp and fell back in his chair, barely noticing Ellen calling out his name. The plate before him tipped over and crashed to the floor.

When he came to, Ellen was offering him a glass of water. He accepted it and prepared to drink it down but stopped. He slowly looked around his new landscape. On the plus side, the restaurant had once again become an Italian one with different decor.

On the minus side, Ellen had become a redhead.

After the incident at the restaurant, Martin began to seriously address the blackout problem. For the time being, there was no benefit to fussing over them. No one else would remember a change, anyway. He tried to formulate the rules that governed these blackouts. For one thing, the more inconsequential a change, the more likely it would be to happen. That explained why furniture, amounts on bills and colors changed almost hourly. People and their relationships seemed the most immutable. Dave's disappearance and Eileen (her name after a recent blackout)'s boss' nationality transformation were freak occurrences at best. Generally, the only change pertaining to people involved appearance.

The restaurant incident brought home the fact that these blackouts weren't petty annoyances. Reflecting on this, Martin tried to anticipate these blackouts. When he felt one coming on, he would quickly try to fix a picture of his surroundings in his mind, remarking upon the changes when he came to. At first he did so with a tape recorder but that became a calculator after a few days. Martin then used a procession of spiral-bound notebooks which invariably became some sort of flat and useless object when Martin got a sufficient amount of material stored within.

He was finding himself becoming more insular. He saw less of Eileen for fear that some blackout would change her into a man or something odd like that. He gave up reading in frustration for his library kept changing its content. Besides, he wouldn't sit in that recliner to read. Deep inside of him, Martin blamed that cold, shiny chair for ushering all of this weirdness into his life. One thing was for sure: that recliner was not his. His only hope was to outride this catastrophe until the blackouts stopped.

But that was all before he woke up on the other side of town. (To be continued)

# the alphabet

by Andrew Roberts

Thompson wiped the wine from his face with a napkin. He decided to get drunk; he would do it right. He got up from his table, now empty since Eileen had left in a huff, neatly pushed in his chair, laid down a three-dollar tip and walked slowly across the crowded dining room floor to the bar at the rear of the restaurant. Thompson walked slowly and evenly with his head held high, smiling mechanically at the inquiring faces, operating smoothly and under great control. The bar was three steps down. Thompson took a seat. "What drinks do you have that start with the letter A?" he asked.

"Excuse me, señor?" said the bartender. He was Mexican, a thin man with a moustache.

"A," said Thompson, "the letter A." He spoke clearly and distinctly with great care and precision as though repeating himself to a four-year-old. "The letter A." Thompson spit his words at the bartender.

"A, señor?"

"A...and then B and then C and so on. Understand? I'm going to work my way through the alphabet. One drink each letter. Twenty-six drinks." Thompson riveted the bartender to the floor with his eyes, who from behind the thin protection of his bar glanced nervously about at the half-filled bottles of liquor and the floor and the bold staring face of the man before him. The man was big and the face as large and the bartender could tell that the nose had been broken many times.

"Very good, señor," said the bartender, wetting his teeth with his tongue. "Very good."

Thompson laid a twenty on the bar. "Now, what do you have with A?"

"You want me to name them, señor?"

"Only the ones with A." Thompson spoke slowly and the muscles along the side of his jaw twitched with the effort of containing his temper.

"All, señor?"

"All."

The bartender pulled at his moustache. He looked at the bar behind him. "We have apricot brandy, señor, anisette, apple schnapps. I can make you the Alexander, or the Apricot Fizz, or the Apricot Cooler..."

"Go on," said Thompson impatiently.

"The Adonis Cocktail, the Affinity Cocktail, the Absinthe Special, the Angel's Tip, the American Beauty."

"All right. Anisette."

The bartender filled a small glass.

Thompson drank it. "Mark it down."

"Yes, señor. One anisette."

"What's next?"

"Of course Bacardi, señor, the Banana Daquiri, the Black Russian. We have brandy, señor, bitters, Bloody Mary, bourbon..."

"Bloody Mary." Thompson adjusted himself on his stool. He relaxed his jaws, felt for his cigarette pack. The little Mexican mixed his drink.

"Next."

"Canadian Club, Calvert Extra, Cherry Flip, Cherry Fizz..."

By "E" Thompson talked freely and the little bartender had become his friend. "What's next, Paco?" he asked. He had just had an eggnog.

"A Fifty-fifty, señor, a Fifth Avenue..."

"Fifty-fifty, what's that?"

The bartender smiled. "Half gin, half vermouth."

"All right."

"Perhaps you would like french fries, señor," said the bartender, handing Thompson his drink. "I can give you something to eat. You must have something, señor."

"No thanks, Paco, they bind me up...Is that your name, Paco?"

"No señor, is Johnny."

"Had a friend once, Mexican guy, called him Paco. For years. No problem. Then one day he blows up. 'My name is Mark!' he screams. 'Mark Meyers! Don't you ever call me Paco again!' Never seen him again after that. But he had the right idea—you fellas ought to stick up for yourselves, your name's not Paco say so."

"Johnny, señor."

"All right, Johnny, here's to you." Thompson tossed back his Fifty-fifty. "Don't put up with no shit. Next, Johnny!"

The bartender read from his list. We watched the big, thick-fingered man with quick glances of his peripheral vision, the big man with the rings on his fingers and the smell of cologne and the too-tight suit. "Next, Johnny!" called the big man.

"We have the Gibson, señor, the Gimlet, the Gilroy. We have grenadine, Grasshopper, gin, George Dickel. I can make you a Gin Fizz, a Gin Fix, a Gin Sour, a Gin Cooler..."

"No gin, Pedro."

"I can give you Old Granddad."

"Okay, Pedro. You know what a G reminds me of? Great Holy Buckets of Shit. Don't ask, Pedro. Read on."

"Heaven Hill, señor, hot buttered rum..."

"Hell, that's what, a living hell since the minute I married her." Thompson swayed on his stool as he struggled to light a cigarette. The bartender was quick with his lighter and snapped the lid shut as Thompson puffed on his Lucky Strike. "You might

wonder why I'm doing this," said Thompson, riveting the bartender to the floor again with his eyes. "I like to test things, you see. I got to try it for myself. I don't believe nothing unless I can do it myself. That way I'm sure of things, see. I think I can drink twenty-six drinks. What do you think, Paco?"

"I think you can do it, señor."

"That's why I'm doing this, see. It's got nothing to do with anything. I'm doing it to see if I can."

"I believe you can, señor."

"What's next?"

"I."

"Read 'em to me, Taco."

The bartender poured.

Thompson drank and held his seat. "Next, Paco."

"Excuse me, Johnny, señor."

"What?...Johnny! Johnny! I'm sorry, Johnny. Johnny Rodriguez, eh?"

"No, señor, Johnny Johnson."

"Johnny Johnson, that's a Polack name."

"I don't know, señor, it's my name."

"Well, all right, Johnny Johnson, here's to you."

Thompson's eyes floated three feet above his shoulders, his head swayed slowly as though encased in a liquid and the words rolled out of his mouth with no volition, as if they had minds of their own and Thompson, like a sheepdog, hurried to corral them in their pens and herd them on their way as they jumped to the whistles and calls of their master some several hundred yards away. "Which way to the little boys room?" he asked.

"That way, señor," said the bartender, and watched as Thompson rose from his stool and negotiated the barroom floor as though balancing a five-gallon water jug on his head.

"Where are we?" asked Thompson when he came back.

"M, señor."

"I'll have the eggnog, Johnny."

"No, señor, we are on M."

"I know it, Johnny. You know what E reminds me of?"

"No, señor."

"E means Eileen, Johnny. Now we must go backwards: D is for nothing; C, I won't say; B, the same; A—you know what A reminds me of, Johnny?"

"No, señor."

"April 6, 1980. Day I met her. That's why I'm here, Johnny—April 6, 1980." Thompson smacked the bar hard with his hand and Johnny winced. "April 6, 1980...Now where were we, John?"

"M, señor."

"Margarita! In honor of you, John."

I don't think you want the Old-Fashioned, señor. Am I right? Very good, señor. No Old-Fashioned today."

Thompson held his chin in his hands and closed his eyes. He was very tired. His cigarette ashes grew long and he was quiet for a long time.

"Señor?" asked the bartender.

"I'm thinking, John." Thompson opened his eyes.

"Yes? Of what, señor?" asked the bartender.

"My wife, John."

"You are lucky, señor, you think of your wife."

"No, John."

"Yes, señor."

"You married, John?" Thompson asked.

"Yes, señor, but I cannot think of my wife, it doesn't come."

"What do you mean?"

"Your wife, is she pretty, señor?"

Thompson hesitated. "Yes, she is. Very pretty."

"You are lucky, señor. My wife is not. She doesn't like me and I don't like her."

"But you are married."

"Yes, señor."

"How long?" Thompson asked.

"Too long, señor, over seventeen years."

"My wife left me, Johnny. It was my fault. I got bored with her, John, and now she's gone."

"I am sorry, señor."

"I oughta be boiled in oil, John. Can you do that, Johnny? Can you fix me up some oil?"

"No, señor."

"Can you do the next best thing, John?"

"What is that, señor?"

"Can you read from your list?"

"Very good, señor, I can make you an excellent pina colada... You must have tequila, señor, in honor of me...Ah, the Wallbanger, señor...the..."

Thompson was surprised to wake up and find himself flat on his back on the barroom floor. He got to his feet and the hard floor swung slowly and threw him down again. Thompson sat up and his head spun. He lay back down and looked up at the red-tiled ceiling. He could work his mouth, but only with great difficulty did he manage the next question: "What's next, Johnny?"

"Only the Zombie, señor," said the bartender proudly.

Thompson tried, but he could not sit up. He breathed heavily and looked up at the ceiling. With a flourish the bartender placed the drink on the floor beside Thompson's head. "Congratulations, señor," he said. "You have made it."

# Sayz-U!(Letters)

Dear Elayne:

Okay, here I am. This is gonna be quick because I am (as always) trying to beat the deadline. I have to get this letter for the Sayz-U done regarding #s 59 and 60...I heard from Dr. Fuquod recently and he's doing a new story for a different magazine (it's published by the World Harrassment Organization, Committee Against Really Evil Sinners [W.H.O. C.A.R.E.S.]). His latest venture deals with Operation Zero Tolerance, which, of course, goes hand in hand with Nan's "Just Say No." As soon as it's in print, I'll pass it on.

Had to go answer the door—ahh, summer. Sweet, blessed summer. The birds are singing, the sun is shining, the children play happily in the grass...and the religious peddlers are out in full force. Rather fittingly, I am today wearing my favorite t-shirt, which is black with white letters which read:

JESUS LOVES YOU

BUT I THINK

YOU SUCK

They (the religious peddlers, that is) weren't too impressed.

The baby is fine. Thank you each and everyone who inquired about her. She's now 10+ pounds and she's grown about 2 inches. She is, at the moment, sleeping, which is, of course, the only reason I am able to do this!

The other two kids are fine, too. So far, they love the baby. (Wait till she starts crawling around and getting their toys and stuff. Things may change rather abruptly!)

Bob (God of Ohio) is fine, and none the worse for wear despite my trying to unobtrusively strangle him during delivery. (The midwife thought I was merely trying to get leverage to push—hah!)

Now that the baby is 7 weeks old I shall once again perform my sacred duty as I vowed ever so faithfully upon that solemn occasion when I donned the emerald-laden IJ crown of stafforddom which was bestowed upon me. (Okay, fine, it's a green baseball cap—you people are SO picky!) (Say, does this mean I'm "one of the team"?) I wear my IJ cap as I type IJ stuff. Gives me inspiration.

Before I comment on anyone else's stories, I feel the need to defend my little doggie tale. I, personally, did not find it trite, nor overly predictable. However, to each his own. Even if they ARE wrong. (But I still love ya Rodny!) (A sequel of sorts to "The Man In The Purple Maverick" will appear in IJ #62.)

I wasn't too sure if "The Truth About Rock Music..." would be taken properly or if it was a bit too facetious. However, thanks to Tom Deja's comments (which I'm thinking on framing and saving forever!) I think it may have been received the way I'd hoped. Err, I mean, the way Dr. Fuquod hoped. No, not the way HE hoped, since He meant it seriously, but the way I'd hoped when I sent in HIS article.

And finally, before I get to those comments, I want to get a word in to Roldo:

C'mon! Grow the fuck up!

If everyone agreed and saw eye to eye all the time, it'd be a pretty damn boring world. And if the whole issue stemmed from a misunderstanding of someone's words (which is what appears to have happened—Tom made a comment, Roldo commented on that, Tom rebutted and Roldo basically said get fucked) then mayhaps we're all better off if he does "take his toys and go home." Jesus Howard Christ, if he was that upset, why not try to explain himself, rather than writing such a nasty, vicious, uncalled-for letter? Seems to me it was a case of over-reaction in a major fashion.

Anyhow, that's just my crummy little opinion, which I don't expect anyone to necessarily agree with. (To those of you who disagree: you may now leave the room and go get fucked.) Nah, just kidding.

I'd like a color copy (8x10) of the "SPUDS WHO?" cartoon from #59, by the way. I hate that frigging dog. (Too bad he wasn't the dog that met up with the purple Maverick...hmm, not a bad idea, eh? Nah, I was too sympathetic to the dog for it to have been Spuds. I'd have left him there to die in agony...talk about vicious! I can't believe I said that!)

So, as for the best of #59...

Anni was, as usual, right up to snuff. I'd never quite considered all the writers who have written really bad books who should receive eternal praise and my undying gratitude (such as Jackie Collins). I just wonder how many writers out there are thanking me...

Also worthy of praise: THE PURGATORY PAPERS, THE CONTINUING SAGA OF DR. IGUANA, THE JELLO WARS, THE PICKUP, TELE-EROTICISM, OUT ON A LIMN AND STUPID ANIMALS.

All in all, a quite satisfying issue with a light and fruity bouquet (not "BOKAY" goddammit!) and just a hint of dryness.

Now, for #60:

THE JELLO WARS, THE PURGATORY PAPERS, JUST SAY NO TO IGLOOS, THE LATEST FINDINGS ON JOGGING, THE PASSION OF JIMMY SWAGGART, THE CONTINUING SAGA OF THE IRVING THUGLEENS AND ADVICE FROM A PORNO-GRAPHER TO A PRESIDENT.

Finally, in reference to #60's column on Racism by Ace Backwords and the letter of "defense" in the Sayz-U: At the risk of joining Ace in the room marked "racists," I agree, in large part, with what's being said. I've learned, though, that trying to explain—or defend—your views on prejudice usually causes you to be

labelled even more of a racist than you would've been if you'd just kept quiet.

So I shall.

More often than not,

KATHY STADALSKY

860 Hollywood Ave.

Sheffield Lake, OH 44054-2204

June 2, 1988

Dear Elayne,

I have just finished reading IJ #60, and I feel compelled to write to you in regard to Ace Backwords' article on racism. I do not know if any of your writers are from the south or not, but I make my home in Texas, so I thought you might like to hear from the supposed racist capitol of the USA, the south.

Before I make any comments on Ace's article, I would like to tell you that the southern people are racist to a certain extent—on both sides. Many white southerners are anti-black, and many blacks are anti-white, but many of us are not racist, or try not to be. Elayne, I really do not know how things are in New York, but I grew up in a place where as many or more black children live in a community as white children. We grew up together. But I believe Ace's article is correct. To say that all races are alike with no differences than the color of skin is like saying that the only difference between a German Shepherd and a poodle is the size. (You mean that's not the only difference?) I believe all men should have equal opportunities, but all men are not "equal." (Not to even mention women, I guess.) After living around blacks for all of my life, I am simply persuaded that white people as well as the Japanese are able to better succeed in the business world of America. I realize that those may be fighting words, but please understand that one of my best friends is black. (Wow, I thought that line went out with "She's got a nice personality"...!) But I can beat him at any business problem (we work together in a major store chain), and he can beat me without any effort at any sport. Does this make me better than him? No, of course not, but I think it is time that we trash this liberal view that all races of people are the same, because they simply are not, nor will they ever be.

As far as black opportunity goes, they have a better advantage than white people, in the south at least. A black university student in the south has a much greater chance of receiving financial aid for education than a white student does (I've seen the books on that one, Elayne). (I don't doubt it; it's called affirmative action, and it's supposed to make up for hundreds of years of denial of those same opportunities.) I know that in my area, a black wishing to get a business loan has a greater chance of getting one than a white businessman. Ace says that the common myth is that blacks are not given equal opportunities, and he is right—it is a myth.

Out of all of this, though, I would like to leave you with one thought. It has been over one hundred years since the blacks were freed from slavery in America, and anti-white/anti-black racism is still a major problem in this country. My question is, were we all really made to mix together as one group and live happily ever after? America prides itself on being a "melting pot" of people, but is this something to take pride in, or will it eventually be the downfall of this country?

At any rate, I commend Ace, and you, Elayne, for being brave enough to put this touchy subject to print.

Best,

CURT SIMMONS

Route 2, Box 1540

Henderson, TX 75652

(Brave? Frankly, Curt, I'm scared shitless by your last paragraph—at its best, it's apartheid, and at its worst, it's neo-Nazism. But as there's no reasoning with people who seem set in certain ways, I'll just offer an analogy and a question of my own. The analogy: There is still violence between the sexes, mostly by men against women, after all this time of living together. Maybe we should consider living apart? And the question: Can you explain how you could recommend race separation given that this friend of yours to whom you're presumably close is black and that you grew up with him? Does this not in some way negate your own life and friendships? Perhaps, Curt, the problem lies more in the hateful thoughts of separatists, who have never disappeared in all the time "slavery" has been outlawed, and not in people who want to make this country—and world—better for everyone, no matter what their skin color, eye color, weight, height, etc. etc.)

Dear Inside Jokers and Fellow Outpatients,

It's been a LONG time since you all heard from me, Mildred Neptune, Super Cosmic Hausfrau of the Universe and that does include space-time and the Magellanic Clouds, big and little. I just have a couple of short messages regarding the recent and past IJ stuff.

1. To all of you who do not use drugs, whether it's 'cause you disapprove of them theoretically or pragmatically: THANK YOU! By "saying no" and choosing to not use drugs, you are leaving more for me. I cannot express my gratitude for your kindness and consideration. The act of charity implicit in your choice is a great one and I acknowledge and appreciate it with the depth of the Banda Sea.
2. The cover of IJ 60 was superb; every bit as fabulous as the cover of IJ 50. Nothing is sacred and there is a whole bunch of nothing around these days so the opportunities for sacrilege have never been greater. Let us all be thankful for such abundance and riches.
3. Regarding any and all feuds and criticisms, judgements and so forth—there are two ways to slide easily through this life: to believe everything and to doubt everything. Either method insures

the clogging up of one's metaphysical pores and what you gotta do is find the right brand of astringent to clean things up again. My advice: Maintain radio silence and let the messages come in as pure information sans personal interpretation. Nobody can ever know 'actly what the other person really means anyway. The proper place for supposition is in a suppository and you all know where that goes, yes?

4. In order to make the "Sayz-U" section more fun and interesting, I am gonna say a lot of shit that is guaranteed to piss somebody off. This being so, I suggest a "FEUD OF THE MONTH CLUB." Include me out. I may be a cannibal, but I don't kill for my food—I just pick up and barbie what the others leave behind. I have given this much thought. I have weighed my options and the scale broke. So, Some Advice and Aphorisms:

- If you see blood on the gates of the Emerald City, don't run away in terror. Get some water and rags and clean it off.
- If you can create fabulous realities on a daily basis, you needn't worry about the real world. That belongs to other people.
- Things have never been easy—and now they are even more so!
- Sometimes our freedom to say anything becomes a compulsion to say nothing.
- A Physics Fact: Light creates the very shadow that rejects it.
- Hi! I'm a secret message written in code.
- You are under my control because you will read until you have reached the end of what I write.
- All invalid syllogisms break at least one rule. This syllogism breaks at least one rule. Therefore, this syllogism is invalid.
- Where the hell am I going to put this sentence?
- If I were you, who would be reading this sentence?
- If you were me, would you have ever written any of this?
- What would life be without you?
- Human beings use infinity mainly as a place to throw things away.
- If the end is bitter, don't chew on it.
- The competition among people complaining about their pain is fierce, try and stay numb.
- The eschewal of elitism is a form of elitism.
- It's not whether you win or lose, it's whether your opponent wins or loses.
- The only people allowed to read what I have written are the people who are allowed to read what I have written.
- The best defense is to be unavailable for combat.
- The only things that really matter are charity and the expatiation of virtue. Everything else is a contrivance for individual comfort and convenience.
- Talent is a frill.
- Why is no one ever paged on a black discourtesy telephone?
- Hymn #23: WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN ARISTOTLE.
- I've heard that everything I've written and everything you've read is a rumor.
- When the going gets tough, the tough get going and invariably find themselves in a place where things are even tougher because they didn't learn how to mitigate the damages of the former tough place.
- When the going gets tough, hold your ground and pretend you're tougher.
- If your fear is greater than your love, then you are betraying the universe. An emotional zombie has no entelechy and gives nothing to the energy of the wheel.
- The best way to get rid of fear is to pretend you are fearless.
- The best way to get rid of love is to pretend you are loveless.
- What you pretend to be becomes real when it is perceived as real by another.
- Only obsessive personalities worry about obsession.
- Many people believe that if you ignore something it will go away—but this is obviously disproved by the phenomenon of cockroaches.
- The preachers say GOD HAS A PLAN FOR YOU and this is true. He does. It's called DEATH.
- If you think life is tough now, wait until you get to the next line.
- When you are not reading it, this sentence is in Swahili.
- I have nothing to say and I have said it. I have nothing to finish and I have finished it.

My gratitude and appreciation go out to Douglass, de Spookeroo, Stanley Cassel, Hoffman-LaRoche Pharmaceuticals, Uncle Bill, Martin Gardner, Joseph Shambalala and friends, Stephen Hawking, John Wheeler, John Waters, The Chicago Cubs, Big Steve, Little Steve, and the science of Mathematics.

May the Creator of the Universe bless you all with the wisdom of knowing we are not capable of believing we are worth being blessed.

May the Gods protect all of you from being interviewed by Geraldo Rivera!

I am, and will remain as I am, an invisible being on the map of Existentialism,  
MILDRED NEPTUNE

#### RACISM—BIGGER THIGHS OR BULLSHIT?

Ace Backwords in his "Racism" column in a recent INSIDE JOKE is certainly backwards on this "issue"—though he's got a lot of courage to raise it!

Ace wonders "whether the black mentality is inherently at odds with the white European mentality that dominates American life?" Then a little further on he sez: "If what I suspect is true—that the black mentality inherently limits their ability to get ahead in the American system—then we need a whole new approach to solving the problem of the impoverished black underclass."

Definitely, we need a new approach. But first let's dismiss the notions that blacks are better athletes, or Jews more verbal, or Japanese more corporate-minded because it's inherent in their genes. Statements like this are the results of truncated analysis.

Let's look at some of the comparisons that Ace makes in his column:

First, that between white and black athletes. Second, that between black violence in Africa and black violence in America. Third, that between Vietnamese entrepreneurship and black entrepreneurship:

Okay. The case of the supposed distinction between black and white athletic ability can be simply explained without recourse to naturally bigger thighs: In the United States blacks are a minority within the dominant white society. In the white society social status is based on a hierarchy of values which give to the rich the highest status; to the accredited intellectual secondary status; and to the athlete or artist tertiary status.

It is the condition of blacks in America that the majority of them are poor. Hand in hand with this poverty goes lack of educational opportunity. And so the two highest rungs of the status ladder are automatically out of reach for blacks. That leaves sport and entertainment—the lowest status level of the three major nodes of the social hierarchy.

Realising their situation, the poor blacks look around in their limited environment and see Walter Payton and Aretha Franklin on the TV—athletes and entertainers. And wishing to achieve the highest status within the dominant society (blacks want to be rich and famous too), blacks concentrate on these two avenues to success. The two avenues, whether they realise it or not, that are sanctioned by the dominant white society.

This is part of the explanation for why blacks seem overrepresented in sports and entertainment. Another part has to do with concentration: if you don't have to worry about studying books and you got no money to hang around the mall, you can spend all your time practicing your sport. And, finally, the stereotype of the Black Athlete feeds on itself in the minds of whites and blacks alike—blacks are better at sports than whites because everyone thinks they are.

So much for inherent athletic ability. But why is there so much black violence in the United States as compared to Africa?

Blacks in America have low social status; have had for hundreds of years. Even the greatest black athletes are looked down upon by the top level of the white social hierarchy. These people look down on everyone, even the ordinary rich. The common black person knows this instinctively; knows he can never attain the heights of social status, can never possess a sense of personal dignity that will make him an equal to the elite of the white society—in their eyes. His only recourse is to turn inward to the society of his peers.

But black society, imprisoned as it is in the white society and barred from any real participation in its status striving, is left with only the taboos of the dominant society to work with: drugs, prostitution, gambling, violence. And as these taboos are defined as criminal activities by the larger society, the blacks, who have little choice but to involve themselves in them, are called "criminals" and opposed to the values of the larger society.

It's all bullshit. In Africa where dignity is not decided by a white majority, blacks live responsibly within the mores of their particular subculture. It's only in America (or any white-ruled society) that blacks are made the scapegoats for the schizophrenic ideology of a larger society.

To repeat: Their role is thrust upon the blacks. Because they occupy the lowest level of the white social hierarchy, their sub-society, in the eyes of whites, must logically and naturally be the place for all the things that white society considers "low-class." If drug use, indiscriminate sexuality, laziness and ignorance are the taboos of the dominant society—the lowest form of behaviour to that society—and if blacks occupy the lowest positions in the social hierarchy, then, "naturally," blacks are lazy, ignorant, libidinous drug addicts. And so another scapegoat vicious cycle perpetuates.

But what of the Vietnamese? Surely they're more despised than the blacks? How come they're so successful in America?

Sheesh! The Vietnamese in their natural habitat of Vietnam are even more oppressed than American blacks. When they come to America they come fresh, full of hope. They have not yet learned that they cannot realize equal status with anyone. They think they can do it—all that bullshit about the "land of opportunity." The mere fact of moving to America is an incredible jump in status for any poor immigrant (I know, I was one). The heights suddenly seem attainable... But give the Vietnamese 300 years of bullshit status and then look at how "entrepreneurial" they are in comparison to blacks.

But Ace Backwords does put his finger on the solution to "racism" in America, except he gets it backwards, as befits his name. He sez: "If the black mentality inherently limits their ability to get ahead in the American system, then we need a whole new approach to solving the problem of the impoverished black underclass."

Slap yourself viciously, Ace, and turn it around: It's not the "inherent black mentality" that's the problem but, rather, it's the inherent white mentality that limits blacks' ability to get ahead. And the problem is not one of racism—"racism" is bullshit—it is whatever the "ism" is that organizes society on the lines of status according to how much "wealth" a person has.

Racism is the result of this "ism." It is a rationalisation 33

that the high status people use to justify their exalted status and which they have foisted onto the blacks by dint of constant reiteration. Until even the blacks themselves, after generations of repetition, take up the cry of Racism! and thus perpetuate the very vicious circle that has them trapped.

To abolish all this nonsense about inherent genetic differences between the races I'd like to counter Ace's assertions with one of my own. How comfortable would you feel, Ace, making a statement like this: WHITES ARE INHERENTLY RICHER THAN BLACKS.

Study that awhile and maybe we can cut out this perpetual bullshit about "racism" and face the real problem.

DAVE HYDE  
NO BULLSHIT - G.S.M.  
Box 1095  
Kokomo, IN 46903

(Well, as one who believes there is such a thing as "racism," and that whether or not it's the direct result of classism or not is rather irrelevant as both "isms" do exist, I have a few major problems with your neoliberal kind of essay. First off, neither of us, I'm sure, has a summer home in the heads of blacks or Vietnamese to assert with such presumption that we know how they must think—let alone the fact that, if you're going to ascribe equal existence to all races in the first place, you must assume that the thought processes of blacks and Orientals differ from individual to individual same as they do for whites. To admit less is, in itself, a form of racism. There's a couple good thoughts in your essay, Dave, but I don't know that you tied them together all that coherently, or that you definitively proved anything to counter racists' arguments with your own, also based mostly on opinion. But hell, maybe it's me; I have trouble with phrases like "the common black person knows" or Vietnamese "have not yet learned" or anything else that infers whites have cornered the market on intellect. Frankly, I'm disappointed we haven't yet heard [as far as I know] from any of our black readers on this issue. As for me, I just don't think we're socially evolved enough yet to eliminate racism or sexism, and it's not going to happen overnight [even supposed liberals still don't use the female pronoun in their essays, Dave], but it has to start, as with all evolutions, with a few people and their children and their children's children and so forth. All I can do is try to give my kids the same sense of everyone having worth that I believe.)  
Dear Elayne W-C (Oh no!), May 26, 1988

I immensely enjoyed "Diary of a Rock Fiend" and hope the writers' strike continues indefinitely. I mean, Anni, if you want the \$75 I get per story, you gotta earn it, you know? Anyway, it was a funny piece, and THIS IS A HUMOR PUBLICATION. I think some of us have forgotten that. (Thank goodness some IJ contributors still remember that, Susan—I knew I could count on you, our resident Art Buchwald, to remind us of that; thanks!)

Will the Pink Bunny saga someday appear in book form? With illustrations, of course. It's marvelously visual. (As Pru has written in past issues, she is planning at least one video, with illos by Phil Tontorici and J.P. Morgan, among others, and yes, all her Pru & Bunny stories from IJ will be a book someday; in case newer readers haven't noticed, the tales are chronological to Prudence's life.)

Tom—what are "domestic chores?" Many years ago, a lady tried to sell me something called a "vacuum cleaner," and I told her to, uh, insert it. I didn't know fabrics that required ironing were still being made. Will wonders never cease! I LOVED your letter to the editrix, but you're going to have to get out of my bathroom. I'm perfectly aware of what's growing in the toilet bowl.

Gary—thanks for plugging my natal village in New Jersey—Maplewood! Forget about driving there—the parking places are all reserved months in advance.

Fericano and Ligi—truth has no place in INSIDE JOKE. Next time, make up your material. I read it with delight.

Kiss-and-tell Todd better watch his step, or Ronald will get him. Oh, why bother? The old f--- can't read, anyway.

More Hogan cartoons! Or am I unbalanced?

As a jogger, I can confirm everything Glen wrote about us suicides. Many suicidal joggers compound the tendency by gorging on "health food," converting to vegetarianism, a religion that deifies raw asparagus, and reading humor publications. It's that primeval death wish! Normal people eat Big Macs, worship the Almighty Dollar, and read TV Guide. Normal people actually aim at the joggers who have the audacity to take up precious road space. But what do I know about normal people? I'm a jogger!

I know I'm contradicting what I wrote in paragraph one, but I liked A.T. Hunn's "Gone." I read it about six times. I don't answer my phone, either. Same reasons. And, after all, I do jog.

Another excellent cover by DeeBee. I would buy the publication for that alone.

Those of you not covered in this piece will be hit when you least expect it...

SUSAN PACKIE  
Ladies' Room - Stall One  
Port Authority Bus Terminal  
New York, New York 10036

Dear Elayne,

In fear that I would miss the deadline for IJ #61, I've whipped out this letter lickety-split (a horrible concept when you think of it), so that I could comment on #60. Eventually, there may actually be something of substance in one of these letters, like a submission. (I do consider letters of as much substance as submissions, by the way, folks; I just don't credit them in the edit-

box. Do y'all think I should start?)

Anyway, congratulations on the impending nuptials. It must be the season, as the sedding between Janet Johnston (aka Janet Kanas) and myself will take place on July 3, coincidentally the same day as Franz Kafka's birthday. Hmm. I told a coworker this astonishing fact, and she asked, "Who's he?" Aaaauuggh. It wasn't like she was a teen either with the burden of a slipshod education. I mean, you have to have at least heard of Kafka. Oh well. ...The guest columnist writing in place of Anni Ackner was pretty good, and I'm sure there's plenty of us who would like to visit Popovac. It reminds me of the beautiful floating island from Doctor Doolittle where both the man from the 7-Up cola nut commercials [Geoffrey Holder] and the Giant Pink Sea Snail lived. Except they at least had vegetation (and soft drinks).

Prudence Gaelor's piece is charming and fun as always.

Ace Backwards' views on race are literally dynamite (no Jimmy Walker jokes, please) and this writer for one will abstain from the doubtlessly ensuing controversy.

G.M. Dobbs is getting better and better, and this one was a beaut. I was brought up by a father who believed intensely in the truth of professional wrestling (he is a wonderful man), and we thrilled to the exploits of the Unpredictable Johnny Rodz, Greg "The Hammer" Valentine, Gorilla Monsoon, Ivan Putski, etc. In fact, if you ever let it slip to Dad that you think pro wrestling is all a fake, he will tell you (in gory detail) of the time he was in Erie, PA and saw Yukon Eric get his ear bit right off. (I have now heard the Yukon Eric story 356 times.)

The TV reviews are much appreciated; now I feel justified in not watching any of the shows. I'm afraid I'm one of those sports freaks (people who actually follow the College World Series, root frantically at the NFL Draft [Go Browns!]) and have cousins who do tractor pulling. However, after a particularly exciting installment of IRHA drag racing, I flipped through the channels and accidentally caught the stand-up "routine" of, as you say, "wacky Latino" Paul Rodriguez. This guy is a token Hispanic, but he's not even close to being a token comedian. Unfunny. Yeesh, whatever happened to Rod Hall and his Giant Emu?

Michael Lenetsky's "Signs O' The Times" is chilling. It reminds me of my own favorite sign, once viewed at an Acme supermarket meat department: "Knife Will CUT!", complete with visuals depicting what to do if you get icky blood all over someone's lunch meat.

Yoicks! to the letters page with the fiery exchange between Tom Deja and Roldo. I believe you have taken the proper path here, Elayne, even though I'm not totally familiar with what started all this foofaraw (too new to these pages). But if Roldo wants to take his ball and go home, and feels that bitter and nasty, better out than in and let it stop there.

Anyway, missed "Kid" Sieve and hope "Clue-In" is back in #61. You like Michelob Dark, huh "Kid"? Hmm, well I suppose it's not bad, but y'all come out here 'n try some of Janet's home brew, a wallop'n' good mass of beer. The batch fermenting in the kitchen now will be a special Marriage Brew, label and all. In fact, I suppose I should stop watching Secret Agent and design that very label. Oh, wait a sec, Cal State Fullerton is playing Miami in the college baseball World Series. Gotta go.

Sincerely,  
MARK ROSE  
9037 Palatine Ave. N.  
Seattle, WA 98103

Dear Elayne,

I have decided to withdraw the "Just Say No To Igloos" series because I feel I was not allotted the adequate amount of artistic control necessary to make my point. Before you call "sour grapes" let me say a few things:

1. "Igloos" was a piece about control—or lack of it. The lead character, Nora, is so burdened down with the mundane that she cannot see her own identity. The story progresses to the point where Nora sees something she can take control of, and she goes overboard. She becomes obsessed, on a complete mental and physical rampage. In essence, Nora is my metaphor for all human beings who are controlled or obsessed with an idea or ideal. Whether it is drugs, religion, TV or the PTA-mother's mentality, it is a cultural ideology that operates a person's inner psychology in every aspect of their lives.
2. One of the methods I had in showing Nora's lack of control in order to later contrast it with her obsession with control was to have her in conversation with her friend Judy. Judy is a bitchy, materialistic divorcee who has probably been through a few assertiveness training programs, and is convinced that she has to always be in control. Of course, for Judy this means total control/power/dominance in the bedroom. This is a situation that illuminates both characters, and the theme of control—if lovemaking is supposed to be a mutual, shared experience, we have Judy, who talks about depriving her husband of sex in order to gain control, and Nora, who not only is completely passive but doesn't want to talk about it because she is so fragile. Thus, these scene was my way of showing Nora's lack of presence altogether—she can't talk about love or sex even with her best friend, and even when she intimates about it (rarely), it's "I dunno" and "I guess so."
3. Our disagreement over this scene is obviously not philosophical. I'm sure you would agree that the world is made up of easily-influenced and easily-controlled individuals who jump, somersault and consume with every whack of the Media Whip or the Religion Whip or whatever. "Commercial McClue-In" is, of course, a celebration of this idea. Some of the language I used in demonstrating Nora's lack of control and bitchy Judy's obsession with



it was graphic, or risqué, or whatever you want to call it. I feel that it needed to be said—like that, anyway—for two reasons:

a) As stated before, it cued in the psychology of my characters, and it would also set up the shock of the plot in parts 3 & 4, which we will now never get to see; and  
b) In all modesty, I think their conversation did have validity and an element of bare honesty. The old question, "Do women like being submissive, and do men like being dominant?" is still an active one. To disregard it and sweep it under the carpet is cowardly. It is also the best way to express the idea of control in a relationship. When love or sex is reduced to employer/employee status—with one person manipulating the other, emotionally, sexually, etc.—than that is a serious misconception of a potentially beautiful thing. Judy is, of course, a manipulative woman who likes men wrapped around her finger. She tempts them with sex to get what she wants. Now, I'm not saying all women are one way (like Judy), or men are, or they're neither. But you must admit they exist. And they are integral to a story in which this point is trying to be made. If you thought I was glorifying Judy, or her mindset, than nothing could be farther from the truth. As Emily Dickinson said, "Tell all the truth, but tell it slant." "Just Say No To Igloos" was my way of telling my piece of truth—that control over others—be it materially, politically, emotionally, and even sexually—is an obsession that stands in the way of unifying human beings with their potential for better things.

So, Elayne, I hope you now understand that I was not testing the borders of MTINTK with that piece. It had a distinct purpose. But it's okay; I would rather write essays for awhile. I have a lot of ideas. Anyway, see you soon.

DAVID SERLIN  
7824 Kismet Street  
Miramar, FL 33023

[I have no argument with the points you were trying to make, David—only with the way you made them. I resent your implication that I am being cowardly by sweeping graphic language under the carpet. I have always stated from the outset—and YOU KNEW THIS GOING IN, when you asked to be a staffer—that no matter how good the piece, no matter how well-written or well-intentioned, I was going to draw the line on graphically sexual or violent stuff, period. I say again, this is no reflection on the quality or purpose of "Igloos," which I still think has a place in some zine and which I think you should certainly submit to any number of other zines which would be thrilled to print it. But to disregard the one hard and fast limit IJ has had for a few years now, that of "More Than I Need To Know"—whether or not you agree the rule is justified—is just plain rude. You don't tease the readership with a seemingly innocuous story that you know very well is going to get too graphic for me to want to type into IJ later on. I would suggest readers who want to see the rest of "Igloos" write to David, and I'm sure David will in turn make enough copies for interested parties. But don't pin the "bad guy" label on me because you decided to write a character who delights in describing her sexual exploits to her friends. I've nothing against Judy, either—I have a couple friends like her, and if they start getting graphic in their conversations to me, I tell them the same thing I told you when I sent back part 2 of "Igloos"—it's MTINTK, and I don't want to hear about it. Keep it private; I don't want to eavesdrop on a conversation like that. And I disagree; I think you're a talented enough writer that you could've found a way to get your points across without using language that makes ye editrix uncomfortable. I wish you success in submitting "Igloos" elsewhere.]

Dear Person Whose Name I Can't Say: 22 June 1988

About this prejudice business, I think you guys are going about it all wrong. Sure, we've got prejudice in Popovac—everybody's got prejudice. I think it was on sale somewhere or something—but we handle it a lot better. See, what we do is, once a month we draw straws, see, and the guy with the short straw gets to be prejudiced against for that month, okay? Like, everybody makes remarks behind his back (her back, too, if it turns out he's a girl) and T.P.'s his house, and if it turns out there's a picnic or something and you end up taking a picture with him, then you make donkey ears. It's pretty fun.

After the month is over, the guy that's been prejudiced against throws a big party at his house and everyone brings him presents and then we start all over again, so everybody gets a turn. I think you guys ought to give it a try—some of those parties are pretty good.

By the way, we have two black guys on Popovac. They both make pretty good spaghetti, but you should see the goyim.

See ya.

LOU  
President of the Republic  
of Popovac

Dear Elayne,

I've tried to summarize and explain a bit about THE POET'S DIET BOOK, the way it is written and why...THE POET'S DIET BOOK is about a dedicated artist. Janet does and will sacrifice a great many ideals, values and things to be true to herself as a poet. She can accept her worth as a learning, growing writer, but she has problems relating to her peer group and other responsibilities. She does not cop out. She relates the most fully with the spirit of the self-surviving idealist—I do what I want; I live for myself; I can and shall act and react as a self-sustaining individual in a complex world of motion and change...I think this story expresses one of the few alternatives that a person may seize—the freedom to rebel against whatever could or may be

harming them. Janet's stubborn insistence on poetry, if even about a dandelion, is courageous and honorable. Her refusal to give up or ignore financial demands is realistic. Janet is a "lucky unlucky woman." She is not going to destroy herself entirely...This story is an "inside joke." The dialogue is exaggerated to counterbalance the simplistic character of Janet, who writes about bluebells and Queen Anne's lace as if they were ways of eliminating nuclear warfare. Janet is impressed with the world as it is, and even sees poetry in the food she eats. Her emotional swings and self-involvement are a product of her need to earn money (and she earns very little)...Janet fails...but she lives as a human still interested in the world around her.

I wish myself luck—  
Sincerely,

TAMARINA DWYER  
1402 Ave. K, Apt. 11  
Brooklyn, NY 11230

(ED. NOTE: Tamarina's letter was excerpted because the parts I left out give too much of the story away, including its ending.)

Dear 'Layne,

Loved last ish.

Just a few things I want to say in response to a letter in the letters column. I won't mention names, since this is common enough, and Rodney and I are flattered by compliments on our characters, but I think I speak for him as well as myself when I mention how tired I am of people confusing his characters for mine, my characters for his, or something we both wrote being given credit to one of us:

- Prudence and Pink Bunny were originally characters by Rodney; I just continued on with their development.
- Kermit the Marine and Officer Friendly were my characters. Rodney and I wrote "Bad Clams in Bondage" TOGETHER. Thus it is "Prudence and Rodney's Kermit the Marine"...However, if he wishes to continue using them (K the M & OF) then that is fine too, and then in reference to those stories they are his, but in reference to "BCinB" they are ours. This is the same arrangement we have with Pru & Pink Bunny.
- Zog is my character in our story "Satan's Brain Surgeon."
- Holly Calliostro et alia were originally conceived by Rodney. Like "Bad Clams in Bondage," we wrote the story together.
- SPONTANEOUS HUMAN COMBUSTION QUARTERLY (SHCQ) is our zine. Not his, not mine. Ours. We alternate in actual production, but content is decided by us.

So there. Is that clear to everyone? (Don't worry folks, it's still confusing to me too, and I not only know Pru and Rodney but their various "alter egos" too, so I would hope the two of them, or the four of them, or however many of them there are, understand that this sort of confusion is bound to arise when one not only uses pseudonyms but puts another's pseudonym on one's work...not to mention when two pseudonyms collaborate...)

Also, Phil—Sent postcard to Rodney. You can draw Pru anytime, but you knew that already. Also welcome J.P. Morgan into the "Pru Does Her Laundry" video project. I need at least eight to ten more artists; anyone interested?

And lastly to Tom Deja—Read your stuff over; it makes much more sense now! Also, per your recommendation, I have been watching Beverly Hills Teens. What started out as research has become an obsession. I record it every morning. My favorite character is Bianca. Joe [Pru's fiance] says that's because she's like me; she has long black hair and is a bitch!...

PRUDENCE GAELOR  
Box 1529  
Columbia, MD 21044

Dear Elayne:

Well, where to start? Perhaps at the beginning. I look back over the last few months and realize I've become addicted to IJ. I, who am primarily interested in writing and reading horror and dark fantasy fiction. My "Explains..." series began the night of January 2 with the penning of "...The Three Aural Planes"—in which I forgot to mention that "aural" meant "having to do with auras," not the more common "having to do with ears." Anyway, it grew out of years of indoctrination with "Monty Python's Flying Circus" and Woody Allen books, and that certain quiescent madness only a Master's in math can bring...

By the way, my favourite IJ columns are Prudence's (where does she get her ideas?), "Diary of the Rock Fiend," "The Purgatory Papers" (I think the same people that secretly inject things—LIKE THIS—into my articles do Tom's footnotes), and "Dr. Iguana." People at work say I'm psychotic to read (and write for) IJ, but most of my personalities don't care.

Sincerely,

MasterMath (WILLIAM G. RALEY)  
21541 Oakbrook  
Mission Viejo, CA 92692

ED. ADDENDUM: Much as I love doing IJ, I can't afford 36 pages again (or even this time)! PLEASE make your submissions shorter, folks; otherwise, I'll start sending your work to other zines 'cause we just WON'T HAVE THE ROOM ANY MORE! See you in six weeks...

