

\$1.50

# INSIDE Joke #63 Thee Gala Eighth Anniversary Issue!

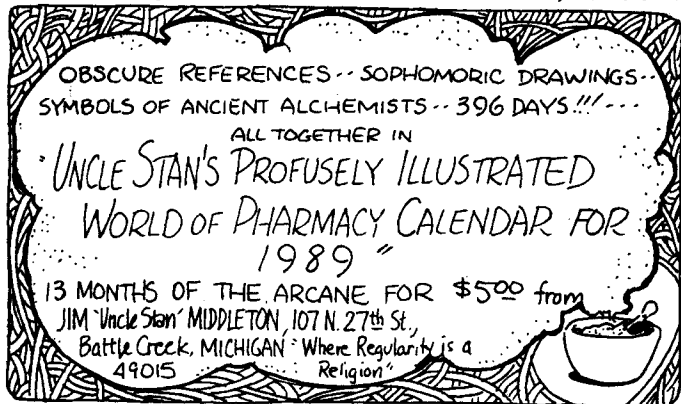
AW  
Yah!

The Newsletter  
of Comedy  
&  
Creativity,  
Pal.

crawford

# ACKNOWLEDITORIAL

Eight years ago the American public was getting ready to elect a reactionary, ignorant, wife-ridden ex-actor to the highest office in the land, and I decided to give my friend "Uncle" Floyd Vivino (host of a local "adult kiddie show" which was, he liked to



remind new viewers, something of an inside joke) a present by publishing a newsletter dedicated to his program. In 1988, the state-run (and don't ever kid yourself that it isn't) mainstream corporate media reports bogus opinion polls claiming both Coke-n-Pepsi candidates were equally competent in "debates," generally doing their damndest to convince us to elect the shrewd sonof-a-bitch who probably masterminded the most shameful scandal in this "democracy's" history, supervising everything from weapons sales to Islamic fanatics and other right-wing dictatorships to covert wars on left-wing democracies (all the while swearing to us that the former were democracies and the latter dictatorships, but such is the kind of swearing one expects in this age of "Peace Through Strength") to plans for WWII-style internment camps for everyone who doesn't agree with his conservative buddies; the big song out now is "Don't Worry, Be Happy;" and I'm still typing my overgrown child here, hoping that by some miracle the American psyche has enough strength left in it, no matter how distasteful the process of choosing between rocks and hard places, to keep this maniac out of office by whatever means possible. And if the deities of common sense smile upon us and this fascist doesn't make it to the White House, I still intend to keep publishing during IJ's first Democratic tenure, the Great Dollar willing.

Well, we're finally down to 30 pages and 3 ounces again, but I would still like to implement precautionary measures to prevent us going back up past 32 again. Therefore, I'd like to put to you the following options (in order of what I feel is the best to the worst idea): 1) Limit maximum word length to 1500 for staffers and 1000 for non-staffers; 2) Put staffers on a voluntary "notating" basis where they only need contribute every other issue if they so desire; 3) Cut out all syndicated art (Lunch Counters, Tuli, Homo Patrol, Baboon Dooley) and only accept made-for-IJ art; 4) Suspend serials for the time being; 5) Reject all new contributors; and 6) Step up quality requirements, rejecting more "questionable" writing. I'd pose these to you in our annual Questionnaire, but we're not having one this year due to lack of space! So PLEASE take the time to write and let me know which option(s) you prefer I implement, including ideas of your own. I'm determined to get IJ back to a manageable page length for me; I know you like 36 pages and two staples, but I never meant it to get that unwieldy, both in terms of the time and money I spend, and I don't want to do it any more.

Anni's submission has gotten lost in the mail, but she's represented in spirit by Phil's back page tribute; the Kid has donated her space and counts her reply to J.P. Morgan in his column to be her contribution this time; and Rory and David are on hiatus this issue—otherwise the gang's all here. Welcome to our newest staffer and to Nick Dana—explanations next page—and also to newcomers Paul Beckman, Bob Blundell, Linda Calderone Wilson, Michelle Marr, Curtis Olson, Paul Weinman and C.C. Wilson. Bear with us folks, it's not always this crazy (is it?). Lots of tales of love and ~~weirdness~~ weirdness abound within, as well as travelogues, serials (begun, middled and ended), some sharp political satires, another interview by Tom and a lovely anniversary tribute from Gary—plus oh, so much more (=sigh= does any other small press editor ever complain about having TOO MUCH? Maybe I should count blessings.)

Special thanks to Mike Gunderloy for printing my "Why Publish?" essay in his FACTSHEET FIVE, which details a little more of why I love doing IJ (most of the time); and to John Hester for reading IJ excerpts on his "Dr. John's Cafe" show on KPFA-FM in Berkeley (yay Pacifica!). I'm hoping to be on the air with John when Steve and I travel California-way this November, starting with Halloween in San Fran through Election Day in El-Lay. Although we're sans rental car this year, we hope to see as many of you out there as we can; if we haven't called you yet and you'd like to get together, call us at the (718) HELP-AT-1 Hotline!

David Serlin still needs good erotic stuff for our "bastard sibling" More-Than-I-Need-To-Know publication INSIDE STROKE. He emphasizes submissions should have MTINTK stuff (sex, gore, violence) ONLY as incidentals, not focal points. In other words, sex as spice, not as the main course; erotica good, porn for shit. His address is 4216 Baltimore Ave., 1st floor, Philadelphia, PA 19104, and the deadline is Thanksgiving, November 24.

No room for our usual spiel of "X means your sub is up, subs cost \$1.50 per, make checks out to me" etc.—send me an SASE for our Writers'/Artists' Guidelines, it's all in there. Deadlines are noted in the "Upcoming Events" column next page (mail early, please!). A major point, however, to contributors: When I give you the option of sending me 65¢ in postage instead of the \$1.50 paid by non-contributing subscribers, I mean send STAMPS, not 65¢ in a check! I can't stick a check/m.o./cash on the back of an IJ! Likewise, don't send me multiples of 65¢ (money or stamps) for advance issues—the stamp option is NON-CUMULATIVE and only applies to the next IJ in which your work appears. Also, I would prefer exact postage, not \$1.50 in stamps (unless you're in prison). The post office tells me 65¢ stamps will become available in November (so much the better to cover up less of Phil's artwork).

That said, I thank Linda Calderone Wilson and Gloria Leitner for donations they didn't know they'd made, in addition to thanking J.C. Brainbeau, Kathy Prince, Steven Scharff and Robert Woland for actual donations and Jim Middleton for taking out two ads (one this time, one in #64) for his nifty calendar, everybody go buy it! Submissions, donations, letters, etc. should be sent to us at P.O. Box 1609, Madison Sq. Station, New York, NY 10159 and a heartfelt "get well" to Philco, to whom this issue is dedicated as well as to the memories of Charles Addams and Wayland Flowers; I'm informed Bukowski kicked too but I ain't mournin'...

\* INSIDE JOKE is put on hexaweekly by Elayne "Tomorrow Is Another Day" Wechsler and lots of dear friends and emanates from \* beautiful downtown Brooklyn, former home of the current NL \* champs the Dodgers, who just beat the current home-town faves \* the Mets but will probably lose to Oakland, possible future \* home of INSIDE JOKE. What comes 'round goes 'round, eh? \*

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\* J.P. MORGAN=====LARRY OBERC=====SUSAN PACKIE  
\* ==WILLIAM RALEY=====STEVEN SCHARFF=====KATHY STADALSKY==  
\* LARRY STOLTE=====DORIAN TENORE=====KERRY THORNLEY=====PHIL TORTORICI

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ROGER COLEMAN	MAX NUCLEAR	PAUL WEINMAN
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# Upcoming Events

- OCTOBER 31 - DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO IJ #64; Hal-  
lowe'en (IJ High Holyday); EW/SC in San Francisco
- NOVEMBER is International Creative Child and Adult Month
- NOVEMBER 1 - National Authors' Day (est. 1928)
- NOVEMBER 2 - Ray Walston (71); Steve Ditko (61)
- NOVEMBER 3 - Sandwich Day; Michael Dukakis (55)
- NOVEMBER 4 - R. BAIN (?); Will Rogers (b. 1828)
- NOVEMBER 5 - Guy Fawkes Day; Sadie Hawkins Day;  
Roy Rogers (76); Paul Simon (46)
- NOVEMBER 6-12 - National Split Pea Soup Week; National  
Notary Public Week
- NOVEMBER 6 - JOHN P. MORGAN (31); Doug Sahm (47);  
Saxophone Day; NY Marathon
- NOVEMBER 7 - 70th Anniversary of Russian Revolution;  
Mary Travers (51); Joni Mitchell (45); Al  
Hirt (66); John Scharff (31)
- NOVEMBER 8 - Rick McCann (39); Abet & Aid Punsters Day
- NOVEMBER 9 - Carl Sagan (54); Spiro Agnew (70)
- NOVEMBER 10 - DAVID SERLIN (21); Daniel Ortega (43);  
Kurt Vonnegut Jr. (66); J. Winters (63)
- NOVEMBER 11 - CANDI STRECKER (33); Laverne Baker (69)
- NOVEMBER 13-19 - American Education Week
- NOVEMBER 14-20 - National Children's Book Week
- NOVEMBER 16 - JIM TAUSCHER (42)
- NOVEMBER 17 - SEAN HAUGH (28); JOHN CRAWFORD (33); Home-  
made Bread Day; Peter Cook (51)
- NOVEMBER 18 - GENE KUHN (40); Mickey Mouse (60)
- NOVEMBER 19 - PHIL TORTORICI (33); Gerry Reith (b. 1958);  
Dick Cavett (52); Grape Koolaid (1978)
- NOVEMBER 20 - PETE SHERMAN (?); Dick Smothers (59);  
R. Kennedy (b. 1925); C. Gould (b. 1900)
- NOVEMBER 22 - Tom Conti (47); Terry Gilliam (48)
- NOVEMBER 23 - Harpo Marx (b. 1893)
- NOVEMBER 26 - TONY RENNER (28); International Red Hair  
Day; Sojourner Truth (1790?)
- NOVEMBER 27 - Pasadena Doo-Dah Parade (IJ MARCHERS  
NEEDED!); "Buffalo" Bob Smith (71)
- NOVEMBER 28 - Randy Newman (45); William Blake (b. 1757)
- NOVEMBER 29 - PETER BERGMAN (49); International Day of  
Solidarity with the Palestinian People (50)
- NOVEMBER 30 - Jonathan Swift (b. 1745); Abbie Hoffman
- DECEMBER is Universal Human Rights Month
- DECEMBER 1 - Gary Panter (38); Dick Shawn (b. 1929);  
Bette Midler (43); Woody Allen (53); Rosa  
Parks Day; Richard Pryor (48)
- DECEMBER 2 - YE EDITRIX (31); MICHAEL POLO (35)
- DECEMBER 5 - MICHAEL BULLER (26); Prohibition Repealed  
(1933); Walt Disney (b. 1901); John Cale  
(48); Little Richard (53); J. Didion (54)
- DECEMBER 6 - DAVID OSSMAN (52); Wally Cox (b. 1925)
- DECEMBER 7 - Tom Waits (39)
- DECEMBER 8 - Elzie Segar (b. 1894); James Thurber (b.  
1894); Jim Morrison (b. 1943)
- DECEMBER 10 - Human Rights Day; Nobel Prizes awarded
- DECEMBER 11 - E.E. LIGI (b. 1946)
- DECEMBER 13 - STEVE CHAPUT (38)
- DECEMBER 14 - Lester Bangs (40); Spike Jones (b. 1911);  
Nostradamus (b. 1503)
- DECEMBER 15 - Bill of Rights Day; DEADLINE FOR SUBMIS-  
SIONS TO IJ #65 (MAIL EARLY!!)

## OVERHEARD at America's Lunch Counters



"There's no use runnin' around and gettin' all mixed  
up—you've got to consult the calendar."

## Inside IJ Staffers

It's getting so you need a scorecard, and even then you can't figure things out. Ligi has bequeathed his staff position, so he informs me, to our first new entry, who will be operating out of the PPOCILL; see the gory details below, none of which may be true. And you all know MasterMath, don't you? Don't you? Aside from that, DeeBee and husband Tom Gedwillo are relocating; Pru's moved, but I believe her p.o. box is still good; Todd's moved his mailing address to around the corner from David; Larry's moved his apartment in the same building; and we'll bring you a complete staffer address listing next issue when things settle down!

NICHOLAS "NICK" DANA  
4801 N. Congress  
Portland, OR 97217-2627

We have just received word that  
Elio Emiliano Ligi has bequeathed  
his staff position to Nicholas  
"Nick" Dana, a former patient at and

now Director of the Portland Pataphysical Outpatient Clinic,  
Lounge, and Laundromat.

Dana, we understand, was acquitted earlier this year on charges of murdering Paul Fericano. Fericano was gunned down in late January while awaiting a flight to Portland, Oregon, where he had been summoned to identify the alleged remains of Ligi, his partner and co-founder in Yossarian Universal News Service.

According to San Francisco district attorney Malcolm "Mac" Follengo, Ligi had run up huge gambling debts during the past three years and had begun embezzling funds from the YU empire to cover his losses. When Fericano's wife, Mona, began to question the financial situation of HU and its subscribers, Ligi apparently faked reports of his death in an effort to lure his reclusive partner into the open where the Bomboni brothers, Vito and Carmine, could get a clean shot at him.

While Ligi continues to protest his innocence, he and Dr. Alfred J. Faustroll (the Portland Pataphysical Outpatient Clinic's former director) were tried and convicted of first-degree manslaughter in Fericano's death, largely on the testimony of an off-duty San Francisco fireman who picked the pair out of a line-up. The Bomboni brothers turned state's evidence, testifying they had been approached in late December, 1987, by Ligi and Faustroll to "off the skinny scumbag" in exchange for 3,000 shares (roughly 5%, OTC) of YU stock.

Nick is convinced that Ligi and Faustroll were framed and that Fericano's killers remain at large, and Mona Fericano says she has footage of A. Whitney Brown and Paul Krassner fleeing the scene. Dana, who worked as an elementary school teacher and Eagle Automotive Products sales representative prior to taking over The Clinic, tells us he intends to continue efforts to secure a new trial for the pair and hopes "IJ readers will join the fight when they see what regular stooges these guys [Faustroll, Fericano and Ligi] really were."

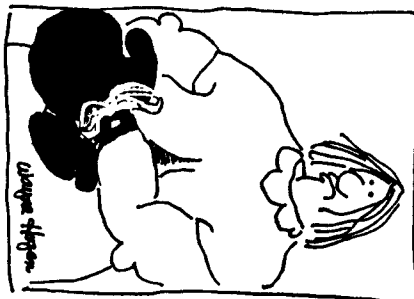
To that end, he has begun a critical biography of Ligi, which he hopes to share with us in future issues in a new column called "Pissed on Bliss."

Yes, I really have a master's  
in math from the U of Alabama.  
And some of MasterMath's back-  
ground is my own: I was born in  
Florida and raised in Alabama. I worked four years in Houston and  
one and a half in Nashville before moving to California two years  
ago. And I have a growing obsession with New York. I'm thirty,  
never married, and have recently acquired a black cat. I'm into  
photography, collect autographs, and play the piano. My biggest  
comedy influences have been Joan Rivers, Woody Allen, and Monty  
Python. My favourite recording artists are Berlin, Heart, Karla  
Bonoff, and Suzanne Vega.

WILLIAM G. RALEY (aka Master-  
Math)  
21541 Oakbrook  
Mission Viejo, CA 92692

Tired of being  
tied up  
by so-called adult  
responsibilities?

Slacken up the ropes of your  
life with "Bob", He's the Dad  
you wished you had.



PATTY LOU'S JUST ABOUT  
HAD IT WITH THE GRASS  
NATIONAL PRODUCT

# The Reagan Years:

## THE UNOFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY

by Larry Stolte

### PART 1: ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MENDACITY

On December 8, 1980, one month after Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States, Mark David Chapman shot John Lennon to death in front of the Dakota Apartments in New York City. On March 30, 1981, just three short months later, John Hinckley shot President Reagan, but the president fully recovered except for the loss of two minor hemispheres of his cerebrum. Why was one assassin successful and the other a failure? And why do only the successful ones get a middle name? Is it possible that one had other things on his mind? If Mark David Chapman had loved Jody Foster, would John Lennon be alive today? And why do we always answer questions with questions?

Maybe unrequited love does screw up your aim because Ronald Reagan the target would survive not only his shooting, but also his first and second terms as president. Love hurts.

But what of this ex-actor, this Gipper guy, this amnesiac politician of flesh and formaldehyde that we call Ronald Wilson Reagan? What happened during his eight years on stage? And how will history treat his performance? Well, as John McLaughlin says, Item:

According to potassium-argon dating methods, Ronald Reagan turned 77 years old during his final year of the presidency. Eight years previous, his age was talked about as being a factor in the election, but finally was overlooked because the country needed a little levity during the hostage crisis. And along came this actor's campaign, which was both cerebral and visceral. It made you think about throwing up.

Age and dotage turned out to be no problem for Rip van Wrinkle. Our First Actor kept himself busy during his first term by going on ranch vacations and taking night classes to get his GED. A chronic workaholic, he was finally on the wagon. Ronald Reagan chose to work only when gravity didn't.

In 1984, the country was high on Olympic fever and cocaine (courtesy of Manuel Noriega, as in "Just Say 'Noriega'"), which made CREED's (Committee to Re-Elect the Dictator) job relatively easy. Our recumbent president defeated Walter Mondale 49 states to one.

In retrospect, this victory turned out to be his biggest mistake. The second term was not nearly so quiescent as the first. His policy transformed into one of "Wherever you shall follow, so shall I lead." This caused great angst to the country, and the nadir occurred when we realized that a Lt. Colonel, who had been receiving acting lessons from George C. Scott and haircuts from George C. Scott, was sleeping in the master bedroom of the White House, causing Ronnie and Nancy to sleep in the poker room.

Ron had little comment on that situation; he had little comment on anything, really. This was good policy. Who was it that once said, "If you have nothing to say, don't say it loudly and don't say it at great length?"

It would be difficult enough for a man of great loquacity and intellect to have to answer to the likes of Sam Donaldson, Dan Rather and Chris Wallace, and you better forget responding altogether if your IQ is considerably left of center on the bell curve. This is tough to do if you're president. Normally, a president is supposed to give press conferences. But the logistics of a Ronald Reagan press conference were staggering. They needed a director, a choreographer, coaches, cue cards, electronic gadgetry, and corpse rouge in a concerted effort to make the president look as if he were thinking and speaking. It simply wasn't worth the risk.

It was hard enough just shuttling the president from place to place without him talking. Oh, he was brilliant at mumbling "Over my dead body," "Well, uh," "I can't recall what I told George," and "It's High Noon and my gun is loaded," but speaking in platitudes didn't exactly seem presidential. When the media piranha started grilling him about particulars, the president would just stare and babble like Howdy Doody in a sawmill.

The director overcame this problem to a great extent by strategically placing helicopters in the correct places, and the president would come down with a mysterious case of laryngitis every second week or so. When he was absolutely forced to answer questions, Nancy always seemed to be nearby, and in one particularly memorable moment on the White House lawn, Nancy actually drank a glass of water while Ron spoke.

Scandals plagued the White House so much that you could swear Ronald Reagan is the reincarnation of Warren G. Harding, if not for the fact that Ronald was born before Warren. The scandals were so hilarious and tragic that the president couldn't possibly have staged them alone. His supporting cast of characters contributed greatly to making his stay at the White House the funniest ever. Each principal made more money than the Maple Leafs' dentist off of various cabinet scams and kiss-and-tell books. Each had an ego almost the size of Magic Johnson.

But the performances of these cronies have run the negative gamut of adjectives by the critics. Illaudible, guilty, reprehensible, detestable, weighed in the balance and found wanting—these were the words their wives used to describe them. Yes, there were more despicable people in the Ripper's cabinet than in Hell. In the eighties, the major mode of communication in Washington was by subpoena. How did this collection of rakehells, trichinae,

rogues, rapscallions and goat shit get to be such high-ranking members of society? They were drinking buddies of Ronnie's, of course.

#### THE CREW

James Watt (remember back that far?) was, of all things, Secretary of the Interior. This was like putting crocodiles and rattlesnakes in the petting zoo.

Larry Speakes and Ronald listens. But when Larry writes, Ronald seethes.

Robert McFarlane couldn't bear the stress from his role in Contragate so he tried to kill himself by slitting his wrists with an electric razor. He failed but no one took notice.

Michael Deaver, a good buddy of Ronald Reagan, used the fact that he was a good buddy of Ronald Reagan to become good buddies with a helluva lot of Alexander Hamiltons and Ulysses S. Grants. During his perfunctory trial, he claimed that he drank himself in to a stupor for a few years. He had been drinking Perrier. *In vino veritas.*

Bob Hope was the de facto Secretary of State. Some say Hope had the true power in the White House (except during the writers' strike), which would explain a lot. Furtive Kissingeresque trips all over the world were his trademark. Nancy Reagan sang at Bob's 185th birthday party, a move that verified Hope's comic genius.

David Stockman's job was to keep the toilet seat warm for the Reagans and put their teeth in glasses every night. He wrote widely on these subjects.

Caspar the Friendly Weinberger was the Secretary of Defense for a spell. Even he thought that opening up a free trade policy between the Ayatollah and the White Sox lacked sanity. They systematically exterminated him.

CIA Director Bill Casey had all the answers to Contragate but, Oops!, he died from an allergic reaction to a Marine-issue bayonet in the esophagus at such an inopportune time. Spuds McKenzie did the autopsy.

James Brady, the only member of this cast who is not Lake Erie scum caliber, caught some shrapnel intended for Ronald and ended up being institutionalized in a vegetative state—California—proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that there is no god. Mrs. Brady made the most out of an unpleasant situation by making it at least more difficult for felons and bad shots and people who can't spell NRA to get handguns.

Puppet Secretary of State, George Shultz, took the credit for Bob Hope. Everyone agrees that George is a genius, which says something for the lithium treatments.

William Bennett, the Secretary of Criticizing Education, got to tell us what the hell was wrong with the world other than that he gets to tell us what's wrong with the world but not how to fix it and then quit his job so he can write about what's wrong with the world and nothing on how to fix it. We did learn that 90% of our high school students can't locate Texas on a map of the U.S. and that 90% of our high school students can't find Canada on a map of the world and that kids are truant more often than ever. Figure it out, Willie; the kids can't find the fucking school.

Donald Regan was Mr. Class of the White House. His dead baby pope jokes went over big at all of the Bob Hope parties. Sure, he received a bit of negative publicity for a few harmless remarks such as "You women are always generalizing" and "A day without Nancy Reagan is like a day without strychnine." His kiss-and-tell book was the most damaging in that it showed us that our foreign policy decisions were actually made by Taurus the Bull, Leo the Lion, and Bennie the Rat. In his book, he also called Nancy Reagan "Babs," which was certainly taken as an affront—to all women named Babs.

Oliver "I-Didn't-Sleep-With-Fawn" North was in charge of our foreign policy in 1985 and 1986. The president had to let him go when he realized that the Ayatollah had first-strike capability and defense contracts with Sperry. Ollie's motto: "Give me liberty, or I won't talk." He was granted immunity by Lawrence Walsh (but golly, Ollie, I had my fingers crossed) to testify at the congressional hearings. He talked about mom, applie pie, communist heathens, his dog named U.S.S. Arizona, marine life around the Galapagos, and God and the universe. He told the truth, the whole truth, more than the truth, and all the truths ever pondered in this galaxy when asked a simple yes or no question. The committee wanted to grant him immunity to shut up.

Nancy Reagan, First Trollop, used to model for Salvador Dali before marrying up. Nancy admits that she's superficial but hides it. Her "Just Say No" policy would have worked like a charm, but the CIA misunderstood her and implemented a "Just Say When" policy toward the Colombian drug dealers.

George Bush. George Bush? Even the president couldn't place the name. After guesting on "Beat The Press," he thought everyone in the world was named Dan.

Ed Meese, Attorney General, demonstrated exemplary behavior and was the paradigm for Republican youth (read Junior Nazis) in that he was never convicted of anything. When all of his employees quit to protest a few hundred minor deviations in the Attorney's perfect record, some radicals such as George Bush decided to call for his resignation. But Ed and Ronnie go way back. They're like Fred and Barney. No, more like Yogi and Boo Boo. Yogi could never fire Boo Boo. Finally, after self-vindication, Boo Boo turned in his picnic basket.

Ronnie was a money man and a God man. His policies directly influenced some other scum and made them realize their potential. God was big during this administration, or at least the God Facade was big. Calling the televangelistic troglodytes religious is a

(continued next page)



euphemism like calling an Iranian a Persian, or a Republican a human. Oral Roberts threatened to go on the lecture circuit if people didn't cough up some money. Jim Bakker proved that Tammy couldn't turn one off from sex forever by taking up with Jessica Hahn. Jimmy Swaggard got the whole thing on videotape. God has the worst PR people in the business.

Ronnie also made it fashionable to be rich and uncaring. The scandent hellhounds from Harvard and Wall Street wharf rats would do anything for money, and usually did. But when Ivan Boesky got busted and thrown into the Attica White Collar Detention Center and Racquets Club without putting green privileges, the greedy catiffs took notice.

#### THE BAD GUYS

It seems almost incredible that after this list of egregious reprobates, so low they could see eye to eye with a proton, there is a separate section called The Bad Guys. This is kind of like saying, "Well, Mr. Hitler, I'd like you to meet a very bad person." But believe it or not, there are worse people than our cabinet members and esurient newsmakers. Or at least they dress funnier.

But you will have to wait for the next issue of IJ to catch THE BAD GUYS along with the events that shaped the eighties. Don't miss Part 2 of "The Reagan Years," titled "Tax Shelters for the Homeless."

## Dear Landlord

by Deborah Benedict,

Political Science Fiction Expert

ASSAILING AMERICA, or

WHUFFO I THINK ON THE ELECTIONS AND CANDIDATES

This column has two things going for it: It's short, considering I'm writing it; and it's about the easiest moving targets we got right now—them boys who be wanting to rule the world.

Oscar Wilde, in Reading Gaol, gave despair too light, too galling a treatment. The foresome running for Pee and Vee Pee are here too late for Wilde to snicker or grieve over. Happy Oscar! How I envy you! Nevertheless, you and me, us seemingly sentient real guy citizens of this here Region of Thud, as the noted Prof. Bicuspid calls it, must gaze upon and listen to these four chuc-klebunnies. In what manner shall I skewer them? Whom shall I choose to first jab and place on the shiny new babober from K-Mart Hell?

Candidates, dandy pates everywhere, yet not a one can think. All of them are reminiscent of the original Abe Lincoln robot on Main Street in Disneyland. Patriotic Androids or just more living proof that politics is neither a science nor an art, but a symptom of an ethical disease.

You all know the phrase "candy-assed"—the opposite of hard-assed; meaning weak, blind, cowardly, stupid and easier to get mad at than a Bichon Friese pup who just ate your marijuana plant. That's George, and Mike (DUKE! Like in John Wayne, or Doonesbury!) and Dan and Lloyd. Candyassed candidates—the type of cheapo sour drop candy that eventually burns a hole the size of the Rose Bowl in the roof of your mouth. I ain't never seen four more accomplished candyasses than the '88 Pee and Vee Pee dudes.

I'm not g'wan to get into any psychological profile crap on these guys. Psychiatry is quaint. I don't altogether trust it. I might do it as a jigsaw puzzle, but I wouldn't hang it on my wall.

I confess, yes moi—who virtually cannot be intimidated—I confess I got ascairded when I saw that the two Pee candies had MY initials. Then, when Duke got himself that Lyndon Johnson clone and their little Demo duo had my initials, I took it personally.

Let's do Dukakis first. Let's make fun of his name. It sounds like something in a Pamper. Hey, but that's immature, isn't it? Ever notice that if you change just one letter in the word "mature," you can spell "manure?" (Also, the word "funeral" can be anagrammed to spell "real fun," but that's another column.) Anyway, can't be immature. On to more significant flaws re: the Duke of Churl. His eyebrows. We can't have no Pee with eyebrows what is bigger than the federal deficit! We cannot have a Pee with a wife named Kitty Dukakis. I allus ask my cat, Fiji the Cannibal Queen, "Kitty Dukakis?" I know, it's immature, it's scatological, but fuck it, I laughed. Okay, how 'bout Duke's record as a Professional People Eater? Well, damned if he didn't balance that Massa budget—he let out a mess o' convicts so the state wouldn't get sick from mondo moolah expenditures. He didn't let out anyone too serious, just a coupla rapists, muggers, murderers—oops! I mean, manslaughters—no real problem types like dopers or hookers. Evidently the Duke wanted to know 'zactly where those ladies are. Duke's running mate don't look like he could even walk fast, let alone run. He's a good old southerner, I figure he'd be played in the movie by Walter Brennan. I know Brennan is long dead—that's why he'd be perfect for the part of Bentsen. A homeless man's LBJ. Hell wif both of 'em.

Where was GEORGE? Not with me. I loved it when Wimpdick promised a Hispanic in the cabinet—probably the kitchen cabinet, with a couple of sheets of Bounty and some Lysol...One of George's kids is actually married to a Hispanic, so if George didn't do right, there'd be a family feud, a la the Reagan family. So I sez about George seeing a Hispanic gets to serve him, I sez, tres beige of ya, George. Whadda guy.

Did George blow out the candles on his cake when he picked J.

What nuclear disarmament marchers never think or talk about is the inevitability of doomsday (bombs or no bombs) if we don't get our act straightened out. Scene one is the lack of chance-selected winners in war-waging. Scene two is the world-wide acceptance of inflationary fixed wages. Scene three is the blue-collar work force which is something less than 100% of us. Scene four is the lack of a hereafter in our eternal life. To end war, inflation, unemployment and death send S.A.S.E. to:

Box 2243 — YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO, 44504

4 WRONGS RIGHTED

#### CREATIVE ADVICE

by Dana A. Snow  
KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID.  
That's what they tell me.  
I want to sing "QRST"  
And they want ABC.

KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID.  
Many people do it, few confess.  
Friends say I'm too smart for  
the room

"Get off of PBS!"

KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID.  
That's how you write a bit.  
That's how you sell a candidate.  
That's how you get a hit.

KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID.  
One-word titles are the rage.  
With dialogue all one-syllable  
And plots filling half a page.

KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID.  
I say, "Use your intelligence!"  
They say "Don't!"  
They say KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID!  
I say, "I WON'T! I WON'T! I WON'T!"



Danforth Quayle to stand up and smile glassily next to him? Me-thinks Yep. Now there is a nasty boy, that Quayle. Sam Clemens once said, "Never trust a man who parts his name in the middle." So I got backup here. He calls himself DAN—just like a regular guy. I call him DREAM WASP. Prolly he even ejaculates impeccably attired spermies. Weejuns and button-down collars and little Mark Cross briefcases. Everybody got on Danny Boy's case about not rushing to sign up to enjoy his own political philosophies enacted in real life during the Vietnam "Conflict" (that's what it's under in the Dewey Decimal System at the Library of yer cherce). Some folks thought Danny had some MomandDad influence and got into the National Guard to avoid the "Conflict" in Southeast Asia. The press and the peoples was coming down hard on Danny, ready to do a helter skelter behind his Richie Rich evasion gig. But then, "all of a siddly" as Saint J.W. Lennon says, all these blond people rushed to Quayle's defense—even tho' they insisted he didn't need no defense—and they all said real loud like this "AT LEAST HE DIDN'T LIGHT OUT TO CANADA! AT LEAST HE WASN'T A DRAFT DODGER!" That's right—he didn't really "evade the draft"—no, he just slept with the competition. As if being a DRAFT DODGER (zoom in on ultra-stoned hippie shaking in his hurachis) was such an EASY thing to do. Just up and leave your home and family and friends. Then try to get across Canadian customs—there's a novel in that alone—then find some kind of job, some kind of shelter, and keep your hands clean, son. Much easier to put on a Nat. Guard costume and be a slick homeboy.

Why does George wanna be Pee? He's already held the highest office in the land—head of the CIA. I think it would be a big step down for George; he might get wonkyheaded and bomb Panama 'cause it irritated him. Who will win? You might well ask. As though my superior wisdom gives me the powers of a soothsayer! And it does, but not yet. I think there may be some more scuffling on the lineup card for one of the teams. As it is now—when in Rome, do as the Greeks do—shun the Romans.

NEXT COLUMN: HOW I WOULD RULE THE WORLD.

THE BEST  
by Mary Ann Henn  
Good/Better/Best  
simply is no fun  
while  
Merry/Merrier/Merriest  
passes my test  
So why not

Fun/Funner/Funniest  
Good/Gooder/Goodest  
Though, of course,  
Nun/Nunny/Nunniest  
has a bit of zest  
or is it the best?

# THE NIGHT I MET VIOLENCE by Curtis Olson

Violence looks good  
tonight on prime-time,  
sleek, chromed .45 auto  
hidden in that pastel designer jacket,  
nice smile,  
perfect hair;  
yeah, he's lookin' alright on TV,  
but later  
I go outside,  
and he doesn't look so hot  
when I meet him in person  
out on the street.

As I slumped,  
bleeding on the pavement,  
Sex almost tripped over me,  
then ran away, screaming.  
She's not that great in real life either.

PULLING UP HIS PANTS  
WHITE BOY LEANS BACK  
ON THE SOFA THINKING  
WHICH WORLD PROBLEMS  
TO RESOLVE VERY SOON  
MAYBE BY CONCERT-TIME

- a. rich vs poor
- b. White vs Black
- c. USA vs USSR
- d. men vs women

HE GETS EMER. CALL—  
QUICK COME HELP WITH  
AMP SYSTEM—LATER 4  
HIS WORK ON THE LIST

- Paul Weinman



## SNIDE CRITIC REVIEWS J.P. MORGAN

Let's get down to brass tacks: Yours Truly finally saw ROBOCOP on cable...and if you, dear reader, haven't seen it, I envy you! Last year in this column, the Snide Critic steadfastly refused to see this film 'cause it look-d like "an invincible robot-man blows up bad guys real good." Having seen it, I now find all my suspicions confirmed: there's lots of sneering thugs, depicted in the best DEATH WISH manner, just begging to be shot up; there's lots of sneering corporate execs who "act" like they're in a daytime soap opera. And the "satirical" bits (such as the commercials) aren't very funny, either. The whole movie lurches in fits and starts, with plenty of planned space for audience cheers—not even Peter Weller in the title role can save this mess! At the ending, after he blows away the Mean Corporate Baddie, the rescued elder executive asks Robo's name. Grinning hugely, he replies "Murphy!" and there's an abrupt cut to credits. Isn't that a great finish? "Yup, yup, I'm just gonna clunk along with my face stapled to a metal gorilla's body...I'm real happy!" He should be happy that nobody ever shot at his exposed chin! ROBOCOP is dumb-ass yahoo filmmaking at its worst; this belated warning will not be in vain if it convinces one soul out there not to rent the videotape!

Before ROBOCOP, however, I saw a large part of a movie just as bad: THE LOST BOYS (1987, again). There's a plot in here somewhere concerning a young man's initiation into a gang of vampire delinquents—but it's all lost in the moronic videot camera-work (you never saw so many zoom-in close-ups in your whole life!) and all the shouting. And all the screaming. Lots of shouting and screaming. Ninety minutes of "YAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!"

I sincerely thank the Powers That Be that I did not spend actual money to see the above films—that would have been annoying. Not that the S.C. is usually sweetness-and-light, but some things make me even more irritable than usual. It's true that such stuff gives one a handy excuse to write sarcastic, mean-spirited articles, but such pleasurable occupations are meager enough reward for witnessing so much crap, you know? Crap like this:

12:00 @ "Island Of Terror" (1967, Science-Fiction) Peter Cushing, Edward Judd. Two scientists work frantically to defeat giant turtle monsters which are sustained by human blood and bones. (1 hr., 45 mins.)

thrills and chills as overgrown cellular creatures (not "giant turtle monsters") overrun a small British isle; see, they were created accidentally when some cancer-cure research went decidedly awry, and they eat bone by emitting an enzyme that sucks it out of the bodies of cattle and people, leaving them dead and mushy. The things are called "silicates" (NOT "giant turtle monsters"), being silicon-based and damn near indestructable. They divide every four hours, producing a real mess, and resemble big lumpy mounds of leather, with a retractable tentacle/feeler in front. I go on at length about this because this idiotic TV listing has appeared for years, always reiterating nonsense about "giant turtle monsters," and it just pisses me off to see this stupid error repeated endlessly, grrr! So next time ISLAND OF TERROR comes on, ignore any crap printed about "giant turtle monsters" and enjoy this fine film!

Say now, the Snide Critic finds himself being admonished by "Kid" Sieve, of all people! Th' Kid says that one shouldn't tear down everything, that the technique in commercials and Spielberg/Disney films can be enjoyed in spite of the big come-on, etc....

6 Well, this is an odd turn of events! Kid, it's true that they utilize scads of talented people, but it's still a pretty depres-

sing sight to see all this talent frittered away on yatta-yatta commercials and pre-programmed audience-response movies...there was a time in ages past when entertainment was judged on its own merits, and the commercial tie-ins came later; now, however, the entertainment and tie-ins are packaged together in one monstrous lump—Disney/Touchstone/Michael Jackson/Pepsi are foisted on us in a big towering wave of crap. MTV is just heartless consumeroid targeting; the Big Summer Movies have become substandard assemblies of action scenes and no plot, cleansed of all originality; and corporate mascots like numbskull Spuds McKenzie and the California Shrivelled Grapes have become national fetishes...Kid, Kid, Kid, why do you rush to the defense of these things? They don't need any help or luck, it's all one big, Pavlovian money-grub, which mightn't be so bad if there was only some more original entertainment produced...but now it's all unfunny comedies, non-scary horror flicks, asinine cop shows—entertainment that doesn't entertain, in other words. How about STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION? A more appropriate title might be STAR TREK LITE! You say that our very lives are "so utterly beholden to advertising that we do ourselves great disservice to belittle its primary and subsidiary effects"? Why the hell shouldn't we belittle them? Where's the disservice? If the ad-men can advertise like sentient beings, fine, but if they're going to shriek and babble and flicker and sneer and just generally attack our attention spans, the hell with 'em! Stuff live grenades up their asses! (Tangential Note: DOONESBURY was proved 100% dead—instead of merely 99%—when hack Trudeau turned the title character into that lowest of life forms, a PR man for Reagan.) And what's this? I don't have a "child" in me because I don't like media pulp? A fine thing? Well, Kid, I do have a "child" in me yet, but he's sickened at the sight of all the rich, snotty kids ganging together to shout down everybody else! Disney and NutraSweet and USA Today and "Infotainment" and MTV and Republicrats and Demopublicans and Drum Machines and McDonald's and PepsiCoke...all marching in lockstep, and demanding that the rest of us join in! I dismiss all this not with a wave of my hand, but a thumb of my nose... Earlier Spielberg and Disney are okay, but now their respective products are stultifying and grossly predictable. Bah! I say, Bah! (And Another Tangential Note: a great quote about ROGER RABBIT from La Ackner's column in FACTSHEET FIVE—"The vocal inflections bestowed upon the title character by his creators... (are) such that, were I trapped in a crowded movie theatre and forced to listen to it for close to two hours, I'm fairly certain you could thereafter forward all my mail to the nearest State Hospital.") But don't worry, Kid, ol' SC still digs "McClue-In," and he still loves ya, too! Though you may not believe it after all this...but heck, what's the title of this column, after all! [The Kid replies: Indeed, conscientious readers ought to be prepared to find a Snide Critic rejecting much stuff that plain ol' non-snide critics with no preconceived notions often give at least the benefit of a cursory doubt AND A VIEWING before dismissing offhand and clumsily. Point by point, then: I'm glad we agree on two salient matters—that the movies I like and you don't use a huge amount of talented folks, on camera and behind the scenes; and that early Disney and Spielberg are okay. However, here you go dismissing all 'Big Summer Movies' as if they were the same—and honestly, this year's crop has certainly been better than in years past, what with ROGER, A FISH CALLED WANDA, a spate of neat left-oriented small films, comedy with dialogue and plots, etc.—that any subsequent vitriol—and some of it is right on target—can't be taken at face value because you've already undermined your own credibility by refusing to see anything but 'unfunny comedies' [none of which you've viewed], 'non-scary horror flicks' [how much scarier does Cronenberg's new movie have to be?] and so forth? That's what I meant by 'great disservice,' when you're so predisposed to hating something because of what you think it is that you blind yourself to any other possibility. And get people mad at you, too. Ah hell, I know you thrive on it, JP, and it sometimes tickles me to see you go off half-cocked, but I just think you're better than that; why not view something and then go off full-cocked?, I say. I'd rather say Hooray for Will Vinton's success with the California Raisin Band and isn't it a shame his creations have become a nauseating fad, instead of Shrivelled Grapes Suck, Period. I still adore DOONESBURY, especially the way Trudeau's been characterizing the Coke-n-Pepsi candidates; and I love STAR TREK: TNG much better than the original [which I thought was wrought with overacting and gung-ho Americanism; the only really heavy-handed episode of TNG was the mandatory anti-drug nonsense], especially the non-violent aspect of it and the giant titill whistles. And I apologize for the crack about the lack of your inner child; we have different ideas of what a Kid is, I think. Mine's full of a sense of wonder and awe; yours seems to be the one who likes scary monsters and making fun of the kids like me, or something. I dunno; I just don't think we would have been good friends when we were kids. What can I say; some people are nauseated by the cartoon voice of Roger Rabbit; others say, 'Great, Charles Fleischer's found work!']

Hmm, now that that hack-and-slash reply is over, what now? Well, I unfortunately saw RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD PART 2 on tape; ye gods, did it ever bite the big one! Supposed to be a "horror-comedy"...like "dramedy," they can't decide what they wanna do. No scares, no laughs, and a big ripoff of George Romero besides. Miss this! And oh yeah, they came out with a remake of THE BLOB...Naaah, I've given up remakes, as well as sequels! Kicked the habit and just said no, you know? Bye-bye till next time, folks, when the Control Voice again takes control of your television and brings you...THE SNIDE CRITIC....

## HOW TO BE MELLOW AND AVOID THE ISSUES

(In which Our Hero returns to previously visited sites to talk with Jim Turner, the only presidential candidate who's on record as hating foreign policy)

It was a long time since I was last at MTV.

They'd offered me an internship back then. I turned them down, of course—any company that would fire Martha Quinn didn't deserve my contempt, much less my labor. If they had to get rid of somebody, they should have tossed out Alan Hunter. They didn't, and I threw their internship back in their faces for the love of a tiny VJ. But that's another story...

After all, I was back at MTV to see the man who would be President. I was here to see Randeel.

To be more precise, I was here to see Jim Turner, the man behind Randeel, Dale Blisterproof and a slew of other characters that have enlivened Duck's Breath Mystery Theatre. At the behest of MTV, Jim has run Randeel for President on the 'Just Say Whoa' ticket. This is a candidate with no agenda, no issue. This was a man who just wanted to have fun with 28 million of his best friends. After talking with Merle Kessler (who introduced me to this giant among midgets), I realized there was a story here. Why was this man giving up a large portion of his life—time he could spend golfing and hanging out—running for President? So, amidst the carnage of a going-away party (stunner—three balloons, about four things of crepe paper and the Mets on the television), I sat down with Jim to talk about Randeel, his relations with Duck's Breath, his experience with network TV and, most importantly, why a guy who had trouble with giant spoons would want the primo job in the country?

"This was kind of their (MTV's) idea to run him for President. I ran for President once as Zippy the Pinhead. I knew it's a lot of work and stuff and I really wasn't wild about doing it again, 'cause I'm not really keen on parodying foreign policy and that kind of stuff. I don't know what made us different from the other 'candidates' except that we really didn't address anything. It's just sort of an opportunity to stay in people's minds as running for President."

The Randeel campaign started with a series on 'Randeel Through History' and led into Randeel's Convention. "After this convention, we need something to keep this going, so we came up with spots called 'What If Randeel Were President?'"

Randeel's involvement with MTV came about my accident. "They came to see me once. I was doing a show and I'd been pursuing them to do something with another character of mine, Dale Blisterproof. It happened to coincide with the 'Summer of Love' last year and I thought, 'Hey, this could be a good tie-in, this character.' I'm surprised how far it's gone and to what extent it's gone but I'm pleased."

Randeel, and to a lesser extent Dale Blisterproof, are products of the 60s, although a perverted, bitter 60s. When asked why he used ideas from that time to form his most popular characters, Jim replied, "It's hard to escape those times because they're the exciting times of the last twenty years. The 70s and 80s haven't given us anything as strong yet, so that's sort of what we remember. There were certain people who did ride that to 'evil advantages' a la Charles Manson. I'm sure there are many people like Dale sucking up people and glad to do it."

Starting from a few bumpers, Randeel has become a popular fixture of MTV, but Jim isn't worried as yet about overexposure. "We sort of keep it moderate here. They don't flood it. Getting that much exposure isn't a problem yet. Hopefully, that could be a problem. It'd be interesting to deal with it."

"We get to come up with stuff all the time and try to gear it from project to project. I mean, you know, we write it and it gets hashed over a bit by our team—Team Randeel—and then we shoot it. People haven't liked certain things but we just fight for it and if they really don't like it we'll do something else."

Of course, his association with MTV does have its drawbacks. "They say they're gonna give us our own office. We had our own office and when we had it it was great. That was a real cool thing, but they needed the space. They promise they'll find us a new office but big promise but no deal, no phone. So now when it comes time for us to write something we walk around the offices and find an empty one, go in and then someone comes in an hour later and says, 'Oh gee, this is my office.' That's annoying."

Jim, now that he's used to his popularity as Randeel, is plotting his next move. "We're gonna do a show called Randeel's Campaign Caravan all over the country and it's me and (sometimes collaborator) Dale Goodson and this guy from Seattle, Coby Shelt, and musicians. It's gonna be kind of a variety show. The next thing is a movie and it should be out next summer."

Perhaps the most bizarre appearance Randeel has made in recent months has been in Merle Kessler's novel Ian Shoales' *Perfect World*. "Merle wanted to use Randeel in it. He said, 'Is it all right?' I said 'Sure.' He gave me a copy of the stuff to look over, but at that point it was 600 pages and I said, 'Uh, I think

I'll wait until it comes out.' I knew that Merle would be good. He's insane."

About his success with the group, Jim feels that their reactions have been "real good. I think supportive. Like, there's a Duck's Breath segment in the Convention. There's always a little bit of jealousy, I think. Like when Merle gets a lot of success I feel a little twinge of 'oh God,' but that's natural. It makes you work harder."

As reported last time, Duck's Breath is not as tight-knit as it once was.<sup>2</sup> That suits Jim fine. "I just went to San Francisco to do (Dead Pan Alley) and that went fine. But fortunately we didn't have to do it the way we used to, which is, everybody sits around and writes it, all the stuff. Merle wrote it. All I had to do was show up and say a couple of lines."

Before becoming involved with MTV and the Duck's Breath projects, Jim was signed to play Captain Justice in ABC's abortive *Once A Hero*. At the last moment he was replaced, and Jim looks upon the whole project with an amount of sarcasm. "It would have been a disaster, to do network TV. At that time I had the inkling that network TV would be fun. I was very lucky to work in the pilot that I did. I worked with really great people. But then, after they said 'We'll do 13 shows with this guy Jim,' in between that and the actual shooting they said, 'He's not good-looking enough. Get a new guy.' And they did. I met the new guy and he didn't have a grasp what this was and just sort of camped it up when he didn't know what to do and it hurt the show."

"But I'm glad I didn't do it, because if it would have been a hit it would have meant working for 35 weeks out of the year for ABC making a tone of money but...the ones that aren't stupid (out there) are evil. With Duck's Breath we treat things like any pay-per-view thing which you just take it by person. Is this director good? Yes. Is this director good? No. I've been particularly lucky in that the directors I've had are pretty good, especially with Duck's Breath because we're so fussy and noisy."

The other relaxing thing about the new Duck's Breath is its compartmentalized nature. "The other joy of working with other people is that other people do other jobs." The most likely Duck's Breath project to be seen soon is *Zadar, Cow From Hell*.<sup>3</sup> "It's about the making of a horror film in Iowa called *Zadar, Cow From Hell*. The director's from Iowa and he wanted to go back there, roots and all that stuff, and the film crew is totally incompetent and eventually the Iowans take over the filming of the movie. Bill Allard plays Mr. Nifty and he's kinda the money behind the movie but other than that it's pretty much new characters. Hopefully it'll be out next fall."

So what could be next for Jim? "The Randeel movie should be out next summer and beyond that I'm thinking of two months in Scotland with my golf clubs." Golf is a particular passion of Jim's and plays a large part in his 'perfect world.' "If I had a lot of money I'd get in my Studebaker and I would drive back and forth a lot, see a lot of friends and play a lot of golf."

By this time the party was in full swing so we retreated into the temporary office of 'Team Randeel,' basically Jim and poet/performance artist Dale Goodson. "I've known Dale for a long time. We enjoy working together."

By this time it was obvious that work was beckoning again. Before parting, however, Jim had one last thought for the public, a thought I now transcribe no matter how hokey it may seem.

"America," this presidential candidate said, "you're beautiful." And that's about all you can say, innit?

**NEXT:** The Rebound—A User's Manual<sup>4</sup>

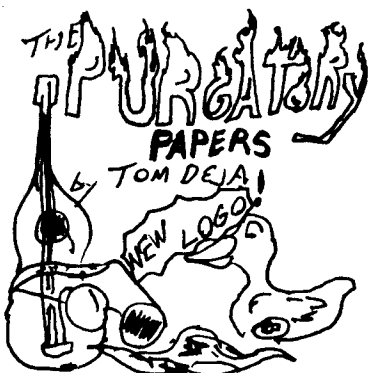
THOSE WILD, SWINGIN', GROOVY KINDA FOOTNOTE THING

1—I'm very aware of the disturbing, name-dropping tone The Purgatory Papers have taken recently. I apologize for this, but the need to talk celebrity occasionally gnaws at my soul. This does not mean, however, that you're going to hear the story about Catherine O'Hara, Folk City and the wine glasses. You have to be properly mature for that.

2—This startling revelation was made in "When Titans Sneer," issue's Purgatory Papers. That was a shameless plug deserving only of your contempt.

3—Yes, this is the film I referred to as "Zadar, Cow From Hell" in the footnotes to "When Titans Sneer." This was also a shameless plug, as well as a self-conscious show of vulnerability.

4—So was this.



NEXT ISSUE:  
"...OR Not TV"  
SEMI-ANNUAL  
REVIEWS

## OVERHEARD AT THE RONALD REAGOONY- BRIAN MORELOONY ACID RAIN TALKS

by Jeff Walker

"Brian, look, acid lakes are superior  
Loon(y-toon)less & bluer and clearer  
If you're still concerned, call up  
And complain to the polyp  
I just made Secretary of the Interior."

# equipment control

Part One

by Nick Dana

I started out looking for a kymograph the first day on the job. The invoice said it came from BioPro Optics and Sons, a small downstate vendor specializing in custom-built controlling, recording, and indicating instruments. "It could be anything," the secretary moaned when I asked if she had any idea where the thing might be.

"You're probably right," I admitted. That's Cosmo's first law of probability: anybody can be right.

My name's Cosmo Cosmos, and I work for Equipment Control. I attach those little metal decals you find on all the desks and calculators you work at. Give me an invoice and point me at a Resuscianne. I'll get the serial number off the inside of a Sears Kenmore frost-free refrigerator while phosphorescent beakers blink on the chilly shelves. Once I knocked a stiff off a gurney up in the Medical Examiner's office while trying to get some dimensions for my write-up, but it didn't affect the case, although the autopsy report was unable to explain how the victim's wrist had been broken several hours after her death. The guy pleaded guilty right away and was out in six months. He's been in and out four times since, but the decal's still on the gurney, right where I put it. We use a special glue. It'll stick to anything. One drop is enough to pick up a truck. One of the guys who worked here before me had his wife graft his pecker to the inside of his thigh with Equipment Control Glue one night while he was sleeping. She'd found out he was diddling the administrative assistant over in Pediatrics. He spent eight months out at The Farms in intensive care while a bunch of specialists tried to piece his groin together. When he finally got well, they sent him home and he threw his wife out a tenth floor window. That's how I got this job.

Somebody always has to tell me, "You don't need to decal that. It's not worth stealing." Then I've got to explain how we don't control all this movable equipment just to keep some dishonest son-of-a-bitch from walking off with the taxpayers' property. We need to get all these physical acquisitions on inventory to make the most out of our annual depreciation, which in turn helps keep the taxes down. It's the American Way, and whenever somebody insists, "This shouldn't be decaled. It's over fifteen years old, for Christ's sake. It's not worth anything," I usually nod and smile and lean back against a lab bench and light up a cigarette.

"You got a lot of really neat junk in this lab," I say, motioning around the place with the match still flaming in my hand, "real fine junk. Suppose there was to be an explosion in here, let's say an electrical malfunction with one of those power supplies or something," and I'll shake out the match and flick it at the nearest wastepaper basket, "and WHOOOSSSHHH, just like that, all this nifty worthless garbage of yours melts down to shiny blobs of plastic and chrome. Now," I smile, while the lab man goes garbanzos shaking the trashcan around to make sure I'm not as crazy as he's afraid I am, and me brushing away this feather of smoke the match trailed behind it, "how would you be able to replace your little gizmo here if it wasn't decaled? If it isn't decaled, it doesn't get on inventory, and our insurance company

only underwrites what's on inventory. That's in the policy, Section B, paragraphs 6 and following. Check it out in the Business Manual if you don't believe me. Why would I shit you? See what I mean?"

Everybody always says they see what I mean, of course, but the real reason I put these ugly decals on everything is it's my job. That's the only reason I do it, but nobody ever asks me for the real reason, and I'm not the kind of guy who goes around giving out personal information. That's just the way people are. That's not one of Cosmo's laws. It's a simple fact.

And the fact is it all started out with me looking for a god-damed kymograph. I went through ten labs before anyone even knew what a kymograph was. "Okay, Jack," the glass-eyed lab tech told me, "what you want is the oscilloscope camera, but it's not here any more." She was attractive, despite the glass eye. All the personnel on the fifth floor have a two-inch-wide streak of silver gray hair about four inches long that runs from front to rear over the right eye and starts an inch or so back from the forehead. Most of them look like robots. Kimberly Basil had the only pleasant face I had seen.

"You're all right," I said.

"Don't kid yourself," she said, "I'm dying."

"Fuck that shit," I said, "dying don't cut it with me. The whole fucking world can't be dying, can it? What kind of justice is that? The way I figure, some people are born to die so others can live forever, but I can tell when someone's all right, and you, Kimberly Basil, are all right. I'm Cosmo Cosmos, by the way, a former pizza jock, and you've got beautiful eyes, especially the real one."

"You asshole," she grinned. The real eye was hazel. It changed color with the light. The fake one stayed an aquamarine. She had another fake one, she told me, made of photogray, the same stuff they make indoor-outdoor sunglasses from. She had bought it before she started to die, she said. She had been vain then.

"You're not vain any more?" I asked.

"You stop being vain when you start dying," she answered. "You think I'm kidding, but everybody up here is dying. It's something in the air. The Health and Safety inspectors say it isn't serious, just a cosmetic problem, but nobody lasts very long on the fifth floor. First you get the gray streak. I didn't have one when I came to work here. Nobody talks about it, like nobody talks about all the glass eyes, and nobody talks about anybody who used to work here. We've got a bulletin board down the hall with four names on it right now of people they're taking up collections to send flowers for. They all die after a brief illness."

"Why don't you transfer out then?"

"Once you've got the glass eye it's too late. I've had mine about three months. I bought the photogray eye as a joke, you know, just to show all the sons-of-bitches around here that I wasn't afraid of their superstitions. I used to keep it on my desk. I used to have a desk right over there, but one day I came in, my desk was gone, and my eye was sitting on top of that file cabinet." It wasn't decaled, so I tagged it.

"You don't expect me to believe all this bullshit, do you?" I asked. "What's losing your desk got to do with dying?"

"You don't work up here all the time, do you?" Kimberly answered.

"Nah," I said, "I'm with Equipment Control. I used to be over in Printing. This is my first day on the job."

"Believe me," she said, "I'm not bullshitting you."

"Why should I believe you?" I asked.

"Because it will make me happy," she said.

"In that case, I've got to believe you," I said. Cosmo's religion has only one commandment: thou shalt never make anyone sad.

"I'm happy," she said, and I never saw her again. Cosmo's second law of probability covers it: you'll never see a happy person twice. But at least I knew that a kymograph was an oscilloscope camera. Not bad for the first day on the job.

(To be continued)

## THE OMNIPOTENT SLUG BY: MAX NUCLEAR '88

(Bill Dale, this one's for you! Elaine)



## TRUE NORTH VS. MAGNETIC NORTH

by Steven F. Scharff

It has been said that if you could see yourself from a distance you'd know what you really look like. And the odds would be that you wouldn't like what you saw.

In August I took my week's vacation from work in Ontario. I had been the Niagara Falls only twice, and I was a child then. Now at 26, I would "rough it" with a tent and sleeping bag. I had hoped to learn about myself, but what I didn't expect was that I'd learn much about my country!

The closer I drove to Canada, the stronger my "beacon," Hamilton AM station CHML, became. I drove through an industrial hell-hole on the US side, and then a maze of tract housing, and then the much-heralded "Rainbow Bridge" came into view. After a brief question-and-answer at the Customs booth, I was in the Great White North, trying to adapt to the metric speed limit signs. The currency exchange gave me my Canadian money, each bill a different color and two-dollar bills in abundance.

After pitching my tent at a KOA, I decided to check the local sights and maybe talk to the locals.

I received a bit of a surprise. The people I met were friendlier and seemed more intelligent than most Americans.

The Falls area showed me an incredibly efficient bus system, complete with clean buses, and immaculately manicured gardens lining the road the lined the falls. As if the schlock tourist traps (wax museums, souvenir shops, etc.) that lined the streets a mere block north had been fired from the US and missed their mark.

Of course, the consumer goods (complete with bilingual labels) threw me off—Wrigley's Extra is packaged like Trident; the "Nabisco" brands are sold as "Christie's," "Crush" sodas are "C-Plus" and the soda cans are smaller; and the big gas stations are Petro-Canada and Esso (instead of Exxon)—but the whole consumer society seemed to be geared to truly give the consumer a choice! With the US so close (with lower prices on some items), the temptation to cross the border is great, so the Canadian stores have to work at keeping customers (though with tariffs and transportation costs it's often cheaper to buy in Canada).

In Niagara Falls and Toronto, each store that sold tobacco had a sign on the door saying up-front that minors would not be sold cigarettes. (In New Jersey, my native state, the only sign is one that says the dealer would be fined \$250 for selling cigs to a minor.) Throughout my travels, I noticed a very conscientious concern for health and safety. A national health plan (which the AMA has successfully blocked in this country on several occasions) insures the well-being of each Canadian; the campground swimming pools listed very strict rules (no spitting of water, no open wounds, posted limit of the "pool population"); and people actually wear seat belts and signal while turning!

And regarding professional sports, the fans are apparently respected by the players. How much concern did the players give the fans during the (in)famous baseball and football strikes here in the US? (In Canada, teams are referred to as "clubs," i.e., the Toronto Blue Jays Baseball Club.)

Violent crime is much lower in Canada due to strict gun laws (last year more homicides occurred in Los Angeles than the whole of Canada), and you need a sharpshooter's permit to compete in a competition in order to bring a handgun into Canada.

And to anyone who has had the misfortune of riding the subways of NYC, I recommend a trip on Toronto's mass transit system. The subway trains run on time in stations that are free of graffiti (the one I entered had damp walls that smelled like Janitor-in-a-Drum mixed with Ivory Liquid). And transfers to nearby buses and streetcars are available. Yes, streetcars! On rails and with ringing bells! They look like a cross between the early diesel locomotive engines and a Buck Rogers-style spaceship; hence their nickname, "Red Rockets."

But what struck me the most was the city's pluralism. The Chinatown a Toronto-area friend guided me through seemed almost autonomous from the city, as if Canada were more of a stew or a pizza than a melting pot.

I visited an occult bookshop on Toronto's Vaughn Street, and found the store, as well as a Catholic church, a New Testament church, and a Zen Buddhist temple, all on the same block!

Driving back to the US, listening to CFNY (which puts New York's WNEW-FM to shame), I came to realize that in many aspects Canada is far superior to the United States.

How can the US improve?

- 1) Institute a national health plan for the well-being of all US citizens, and, if need be, put some form of legal hold on the AMA.
- 2) Restrict the purchase of tobacco to those over 21—if they can't drink, they shouldn't smoke.
- 3) If diplomatic relations with Nicaragua are still held by the US, embargoes against their goods should be dropped. Canada still has trade relations with Cuba and Nicaragua, and Russian-made cars can be seen on Canada's roads.
- 4) Provide tax benefits for companies which use environmentally-sound methods of production (soft energy, recycling, etc.), and impose fines on excessive polluters in proportion to the amounts of their pollutants.
- 5) Institute a policy where a gun safety test, not unlike a driver's test, is required to obtain a firearms permit, and a second permit to purchase ammunition (or supplies to make ammo) be put into effect.
- 6) Make all foreign trade acts reciprocal (i.e., if the US opens an A&P in Toronto, then Canada can open a Loblaw's in Chicago).

## The Addict by Kathy Stadalsky

I was stitching up an old lady's arm when they brought the addict in. I could hear him screaming as the police dragged him through the emergency room doors. Addicts always scream a lot.

I motioned to a nurse to finish up for me and ran out into the hall. The cops were in front of the desk, and they barely had him under control. There were four of them piled on him and he was still howling like a banshee and trying to get away. His hands were cuffed behind his back, but I couldn't see that they were doing much good.

I started towards the boy, intending to help get him into a cubicle and he turned and looked into my eyes. I stopped dead in my tracks.

I've seen addicts before; they come through the ER quite a lot. At first glance, this kid was no different from any other: his hair was long and shiny with sweat, he was very thin and kind of dirty-scruffy looking, almost. The T-shirt and faded jeans he wore looked too bit. His skin was white, nearly transparent, and his face was haggard, gaunt.

But it was the eyes that got to me. They were sunken and blood-shot, like something from a horror flick. Something fierce lurked behind them. This kid had obviously gotten a hold of something pure, the really strong stuff that's hard to find.

One of the cops shouted something at me, snapping me out of my trance as a cart crashed to the floor.

"Come on, goddammit," he repeated. "We need some help here!"

Just then, one of the nurses rushed out of the med-room with a hypodermic held aloft. She moved in and swabbed the kid's arm while the cops held it pinned.

When he saw the needle, the addict's senseless howling changed into pleading. "No!" he cried. "Please don't kill me! I wasn't hurting anybody! Don't!"

She ignored him, and his screams trailed off slowly as the sedative entered his bloodstream.

I grabbed an empty table and wheeled it over. The addict's eyelids were already drooping and his eyes were turning milky. The cops eased him onto the table and one of them turned to me.

"Thanks a whole helluva lot for the help," he said.

"I'm sorry," I mumbled. "It was those eyes. Scared the shit outta me!"

He looked at me a moment, then sighed and pushed his hat back on his head. "Yeah, I know what you mean," he said at last.

"Look, don't worry about it."

"Where'd you get him?" I asked.

"West side, near the piers. His mother caught him with it, and tried to take it away. He threw her down the stairs and barricaded himself in his room." He watched two interns tighten the straps on the table. "His name's Dave. Dave Grant. He's seventeen."

I looked closer at Dave Grant. Just seventeen. He was nearly unconscious, mumbling something. I leaned closer and listened.

"It was just a little Penthouse," he whispered. "A little Playboy or Qui now and then. Screw on the weekends. I wasn't hurting anybody."

I stood and motioned to the interns. They wheeled him away. I looked back at the cop. "Penthouse," I explained. "I figured he was into the hard stuff."

He nodded. "That 'pornography' is worse than crack," he snorted. "It oughta be illegal!"

I shrugged. "Yeah, well, Meese tried."

Multiple Choice: Identify

- a. friends
- b. visitors
- c. nothing



z. BC '88

Capitalist Doom & Gloom  
Boys get you in a Spin?  
Now you no longer need  
fear the End of the World  
Send \$1 for Intense Pamphlet  
The Church of the SubGenius  
P.O. Box 140306  
Dallas, TX 75214

7) Completely overhaul the mass transit system nationwide. Privatization if need be.

8) Penalize companies and contractors who overcharge the government (i.e., \$50 wood screws) by having them pay back all overcharges with interest.

9) Have all professional sports teams recognize the fact that, second to the players, the fans are a team's most important asset, and not television or merchandising contracts, and respect the fans' interest as such.

10) Recognize Canada's struggle to establish and maintain an identity as an independent country; stop thinking of it only as a "resource" for raw goods, hockey players, and beer; and make restitution for damage due to acid rain.

I know, I rant like a dreamer, but it is my hope that one day this nation realizes that it's not the only kid on the block, and that after 200 years we should learn how to share.

Would I like to see these changes made? Yes! Would I be willing to make sacrifices? Yes! Will I see this happen in my lifetime? No! Why? Simple—this is America!

# MasterMath Explains...

## The Greeting Card Planet

by William G. Raley

Leaving the friendly confines of the eastern seaboard behind (see IJ #62), I travel to a location with a decidedly different cultural ambience. Today's lesson concerns a fascinating planet, Qard, on the edge of the Milky Way galaxy. Contrary to popular opinion, it is in danger of falling off. The name is pronounced "Card;" it would have been spelled that way, too, but the astronomer who discovered it was on Cuaaaludes at the time.

Qard is unique among planets in that all communication takes place through the use of greeting cards. There is much that humans can learn from the residents of Qard, though there's a dearth of knowledge on what happened to Barq's root beer. Once the entire state of Kansas considered moving there, just so KU and K State wouldn't have to play Nebraska and Oklahoma every year.

—SPEAKING OF COLLEGE, DID MASTERMATH EVER TELL YOU ABOUT THE TIME HE TOOK THE DEAN'S DAUGHTER SNIPE HUNTING? SHE GOT COVERED HEAD TO TOW WITH—HEY, CLOSE THAT AIRLOCK! IT'S PRETTY COLD OUT HERE, MASTERMATH! I'M LOSING MY GRIP—

Many things we take for granted are nonexistent on Qard, even more so than good network programming on Thursday nights. For example, there are no telephone companies; consequently, operators tend to sit around most of the day doing their nails. There are no TV or radio stations; there was a "beautiful music" station once, but its antenna was mailed to the station owner in 103 Mason jars by a group of irate students. Consequently, the music stores filed for Chapter 11 long ago. But the strangest phenomenon is that even talking is forbidden.

That can make life extremely difficult under a number of circumstances. For example, if your spouse is being kidnapped and you want your neighbors to stop the kidnappers from getting away, you cannot yell or scream or otherwise call attention to yourself. You must run into your house, select the appropriate greeting card, and then show it to your neighbors, before they provide any measure of assistance. If you don't have that particular card in stock—the kidnapping card is a special order item—you must rush off to the store and buy one.

As a safeguard, most people carry around with them a "first aid kit." This includes one of each of those cards that address the most urgent and/or life-threatening situations, such as, "I'm choking to death on a chicken bone," "I have enough insurance already, thank you," and "Yes, I'll still respect you in the morning."

Next we come to a discussion of the major industry of Qard: greeting card manufacturers. This is not such an easy market to penetrate, despite the obvious high product demand. For one thing, advertising by the customary methods is not allowed. No, the advertising campaign for greeting cards must be waged exclusively with greeting cards.

And what a coincidence—there's a greeting card salesman coming down the street of the family I'm staying with. Let's see how he operates. *NOTE: The communication below takes place exclusively via greeting cards (but you knew that already, didn't you?).*

"Great day in the morning, ma'am. How y'all doin' this fine day?" I'm obviously in the southern hemisphere of Qard.

"Git outta here, you filthy varmint! I'm sick and tired of you greeting card salesmen taking up all of my time. Now shove off before I really get angry." Probably a card from one of the new left-wing greeting card companies.

"Yes, well I'd like to show you our new spring line. We're the first company to come out with a complete box of bursitis-related cards. No home should be without them."

"If you're not gone in five seconds, I'm turnin' the cat loose on you!" The salesman departs, briefly flashing one of the outlawed four-letter cards as he does so.

Well, I guess it's about time for me to go, too. Just as soon as I—oh no, I've lost my "Goodbye" card, and all the stores are closed. And my "How do I get to the jetport?" card. I'd better ask directions. What do you mean, I can't talk? I don't live here. Don't you know who I am? Why, I could have you—

It's definitely time to close out this article. I'm being pursued by a vigilante mob; most of them are wielding cards saying "Kill him!" but one old guy has one that says "The Giants Win The Pennant!" I hear police sirens as well. I hope I get out of here alive.

*NEXT TIME*, I'll hide out—explore, I mean—another universe (it wasn't easy to find!). Until then, here's the thought for the day: Do men in primitive tribes dream of trains going through dark tunnels?

### PLASTIC BAGS

by Mary Ann Henn

I can't see one without thinking of Gollum—the Hobbit a demoralized one but a Hobbit he was who spent his days seeking groping

through dark caverns staring through water his skin tender stretchy

as a plastic bag. Straining darkness reflecting like glass his eyes glaring light cold as plastic bags. Poor Gollum.

## A DIP IN THE PLASMA POOL

by Dorian Tenore

TRUTH AND JUSTICE—NOT ALWAYS THE AMERICAN WAY?

THE THIN BLUE LINE started out as a movie documentary about "Dr. Death," the psychiatrist who examines convicts to see if they'll commit crimes again if they're let loose. All that changed when director Errol Morris interviewed Randall Adams, a lifer whose 15-minute evaluation by the doctor resulted in two hours of testimony at Adams' murder trial. Diagnosis: Adams was a menace to society, a mad dog killer who should be given the death penalty before some godawful legal loophole put him back on the street to kill again. By the time THE THIN BLUE LINE is over, you may be convinced that Dr. Death—and other key members of the Texas law network—is the one who belongs behind bars.

Once it gets into the bare facts of the bizarre murder-and-imprisonment case, I found this sometimes loopy, often chilling documentary about the railroading of an innocent man to be fascinating. But before you get to that point, you have to wade through about 30 minutes of so of Morris showing us what an *avant garde* filmmaker he is. We get slow-motion shots of the murdered cop's startled partner tossing a Burger King milkshake into the air, an endless shot of a swinging watch against a black background, and ear-splitting, pseudo-classical music by Philip Glass. I didn't feel that any of this contributed to the subject at hand; it was so goddamn self-conscious I felt like throwing something at the screen, and not in slow motion, either! Happily, the more Morris delves into the curious case of convict Randall Adams, the less artsy-fartsy flourishes we're subjected to, and the better the film is as a result.

Apparently, there were really two victims in THE THIN BLUE LINE: Texas patrolman Robert Woods and Randall Adams. Woods was about to give a car a summons one night in 1976 before the driver pumped five bullets into him and sped off, leaving the officer lying dead on the highway. Adams was a drifter who thought his luck was turning when he got a job after just arriving in town. It was turning, all right—turning bad, as Adams found himself arrested for Woods' killing.

What makes Adams' protestations of innocence different from all the other cons' sob stories is one fact, to wit: the only evidence against him was given by one David Harris, a 16-year-old sociopath with a history of violence and crime. Harris claimed that he'd been a terrified passenger in the front seat, while Adams had been driving the car. Adams' lawyers, well-meaning country bumpkins, figured they had an easy case. All they had to do was prove Adams' alibi that a) he'd spent the time of the murder at home, watching THE CAROL BURNETT SHOW, and b) Harris, who'd been trying to get Adams to put him up for the night, had finally left in enough time to be at the scene of the murder when Woods and his partner, Teresa Tenko, were there. Lo and behold, not only did Tenko claim that she'd seen two men in the car (she'd previously told law enforcement officials that she'd seen one man in the car), but three "surprise witnesses" showed up at Adams' joke of a trial, all claiming to have passed by the car during the crime, getting a good look at Adams.

Morris shows us, through re-enactments of the crime, that there was no way in hell any of these people's testimony could be correct. (For one thing, the night was pitch dark, there was no light on in the car, and the so-called witnesses would have been passing by too quickly to get a good look at the driver even if it had been broad daylight.) Moreover, Adams' lawyers unearthed other evidence—which the judge refused to let them introduce—showing that David Harris himself must have been the real killer. For example, friends of Harris tell Morris that he'd bragged about "offing a pig" (and not the barnyard type, either) the day after the murder.

"Why not just arrest Harris for Woods' murder?" you're probably wondering. My theory is this: since in Texas a cop killing automatically gets the death penalty, and capital punishment could not be handed down to juvenile offenders—which the 16-year-old Harris was at the time—the law enforcement network's hands were tied. They couldn't give Harris the proper punishment for his crime (to which he all but confesses at the end of the film), but they couldn't let a cop's murder squeak by without an immediate death sentence. Since Adams was older, a new and presumably unmissable person in town, and had spent the time before the murder doing pot with Harris, Adams must have seemed to be the perfect scapegoat. (Harris is now on Death Row for a different murder, committed a couple of years ago during Morris' research for THE THIN BLUE LINE!)

There are interviews with everyone involved in the case, from Adams to Harris to the detectives and lawyers on the case. There is an effective bit in which an interview with Emily Miller, one of the "surprise witnesses," is intercut with footage from a Boston Blackie film as she cheerfully explains how she always wanted to be a detective or a detective's girlfriend. It would be funny if it weren't so horrible.

If the evidence unearthed by Errol Morris during the making of this documentary doesn't bring about a new trial for Randall Adams, then there really is no justice. If you care at all about our legal system, see this film (but bear with the pretentious first half-hour!).

(Good luck with the job hunt, Dorian!—  
aw)

HAPPY  
HARRIS'G  
Aw!  
10



# THE CONTINUING SAGA OF DR. IGUANA

## THE STORY SO FAR.

by Ken Burke

(OPENING THEME. Music up, then under for storyteller's voice.)

STORYTELLER: Welcome to Dr. Iguana's Storytime. Before we begin, let me set the proper mood.

(Winding of music box. Music box plays. Music down for story.)

There. That's better. In fact, that's lovely, isn't it? Today's story is a fable titled, THE LITTLE TREE.

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a man who planted a small tree at the side of his garage in plain view of his neighbors.

"How sweet!"

"How pretty!"

"How about that!" said the neighbors.

As the months went by it was apparent that the tree was not doing well in its new environment. Still, the man kept watering the tree and tending to its every need.

"How nurturing!"

"How caring!"

"How tenacious!" cooed the neighbors.

Eventually the tree lost all its leaves and its branches fell off as they grew frail and brittle with death. Still, the man continued to water the little tree.

"What human drama!"

"What faith in life!"

"What a fighter!" observed the neighbors.

After a year of continual attention, watering and disintegration, all that was left of the tree was a small stick jutting out of the earth. Still, the man watered and tended to the tree stub just as if it were alive. Sometimes, though, the man would just go through the motions of watering the plant by walking over to the tree with the hose and pretending that water was coming out. Other times he would pretend to have a hose in his hand and that he was fighting desperately with the force of imaginary water as it came blasting out.

"How sad."

"There but for the grace of God go I."

"What a LOONEY! I'm calling the authorities. There are people who have KIDS in this block, y'know!" exclaimed the neighbors.

When the following year rolled around, the man was safely ensconced in a psychiatric institution, and all that was left of the little tree was a bare spot in the dirt beside the garage.

"Thank God HE'S gone!"

"Nothing ever happens around here any more!"

"Did you hear that the widow Dobkins went to the supermarket and came home with THIRTEEN kittens?"

And the moral of the story is...

(Music box clamps shut with sudden finality.)

Never EVER do ANYTHING in plain sight of your neighbors. ANNOUNCER: Dr. Iguana's Storytime has been brought to you by the makers of ARHOOIE CREAMY SOUPS. ARHOOIE SOUP, the CREAMY SOUP that has astounded customer taste buds with its unique variety of CREAMY SOUP FLAVORS:

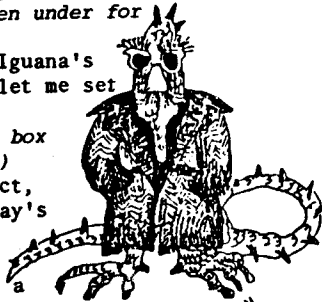
CREAM OF PEPPERONI  
CREAM OF CRAWDAD  
CREAM OF TRUFFLE  
CREAM OF BEEF JERKY  
CREAM OF COFFEE

...AND, for you big-league snuff-dippers who just can't get enough, CREAM OF TOBACCO SOUP!

So remember, when you're looking for something "off the beaten path" in a creamy soup, there IS an alternative—ARHOOIE CREAMY SOUPS! They're...different.

(Theme fading in. Storyteller announces end-slug.)

STORYTELLER: You've been listening to THE LITTLE TREE, (Theme up and out.)



BON AMI VERSE SAYER

As young Digby Scallops and equally dashing Pug Walsh cast back upon their eight years together as successfully sneering roommates, a pile of lilac-coated memories would come slopping black like the stain of snowdrifts beneath the Swiss Alps. For their unworldly union was one of both fortitude and face; yes, of amorization and asthma. Of mice and mints, you see. And this is their story.

It all began incestuously enough, as these flairs are often wont to, far ago and long back towards the exorcise bars behind stately PC47, near Bedford-Staplesgun (just across the D-train from Fishermen's Dwarf). Many, many years ago now it seems, though it was only nine, when lonesome Master Scallops decided, aghast all warnings to the quite contrary, to one fine afternoon actually traverse the plucky path between school and stateroom by feet. Alone. Possibly adroit. And, most disturbingly of all, without his wickedly disabled old wreck of a mother always in tow. Hard as it seems to receive, poor Digby hadn't trodden a solitary step without her for close to a decade or two now; that is, since that time as an infoot he unwittingly jolly-jumped out of his crab and proceeded to crawl down the wrong side of the tracks, losing two important appendages in the process. But that's all beneath his coat now.

Pug on the other hand, despite his unsightly harmonicker, grew out of a blissfully blessed environ cheerfully chalked full of fearless fragrant funsome frolic, and verily sailed around these wonder years without a car in the world. Begifted and bedazzled with all the young snot could hop for—and THEN some!—the idelescent Walsh would, one could assume, want not for a solitary thing whatsoever to do with a load life the likes of Digby Scallops, but truth often becoming stronger than friction (particularly across THESE pages), you'd never care to guess that the moment these two first crashed upon one another, something in that schoolyard so utterly magical and mutually moist occurred.

Call it luck at first sight, or the supple scents of young men enjoying themselves; whatever the carnal curse of it all maybe, suffice to say Digby and Pug certainly made each other's pants scream. What more would I care to say? For if in fact lust is blind, so some say, then this herebe must actually be the proverbial case in progress, as rarely before have two so seemingly diametrically operatic come to share a tinny, snuffy, midway shitty flat for eight hot years and live to squawk around it.

Yes, eight years since the Scallops Dixiewear was first lawfully welded with Walsh's dinette. And all to a head who came to hear about it wined 'twould ever, could never last (and of course Digby's coal black sow of a mother spat the loudest upon it). "They're CRAZY," cried some. "They're DOWNRIGHT NUTS!" sniggered others. Even I, bitterly alimoneyed scowl that I am, must admit to going on records the liason wouldn't make it to summer reruns.

For example, after all, Pug, flavored himself nothing but a hotched-up jazz puss; a shuffle demon if ever there was one, whose notion of an ideal apres-supper was a jammed session down the ol' Cock and Flail starring Herb Alpert's Moonlight Millionaires (featuring Mike "Buttertoes" Mallard on forbes, accompanied under Derek "Wartelbow" Wiegans). Conversely, Digby dug the simpleton things in wife, naturally, and would much prefer curling up behind a nice paperback condition of "Proms And Prejudice," with possibly a snatch of downhome Wright Binker bluegrass on the Philco if his wretched saw-tooth of a mother didn't get the boot in first. Sure, he once tried trapping the light fiasco over in Video Veto (a shiny chrome state-of-the-art beef locker if ever there was one), but was sent home infected after only one CD.

Yet what must be applied here and now, however, is that all these tales of travesty 'n' tragedy of ages and pages gone by aside, as fall breaks and back to winter '88, Digby and Pug have deafeningly proved once and four-wall the scrapheaps wrong, and remain stuck today, eight years onward into their duel journey down that moving sideshow we call life, forever and fool-headedly peering into the future, shades intact, for all that lies before them, smelling as bright and prospering as any couple have the spite to. Sure, some septics still spray across their charade as times and pocketwatches continue to tighten all around (to say nothing of the ever-raising pain of scene swapping!). There are even close afoot who would crock the couple's very masthead, whilst applying a jealous xerox to it from the safety of their so-called postboxes. But let the factsheets speak for themselves: When all is sent and run, there can be nary a substitute forever, and the pen is always mightier than the door.

And so, neatly lashing it all together for the grand scream of things, one needs not to be crushed over the skull by any great massage, so you see, save for that which seeps out from Digby and Pug's very own story themselves: That in a world gone lazy, where game show hosts work for the C.I.A. and a single dollar-fifty can buy ya a hexaweeka comedy and creativity, there still can be unearthed shivering slivers of love and mercy.

Meet me in my dreams tonight, Anniversary Waltzers one and all. Coz there's no telling HOW long you'll have to wait for that sequel!

a fable on Dr. Iguana's Storytime.



# THE JELLO WARS

Part Four

by Prudence Gaelor

(Pru's been in the hospital, recovering from an appendectomy. Her mother has just informed her her friends Beline and Ian would be coming to visit her the next day, but Pru wonders, "Where's Grandma Ed?")

Claire, finger across her lip, shushed Prudence. "Hush now, Prudence. Get some sleep. It's a secret." She pulled the cover up under Prudence's chin and stroked the bridge of her nose until she had fallen asleep.

Prudence didn't sleep long, what with the nurses bustling in and out, and now with the secret. "Whaddaya think it is, Bunny?" "Pru, you asked me this a gezillion times. I told you, I'm not telling you, it's a secret."

The war was under ceasefire momentarily as Prudence's attention was eclipsed by the secret; at the time it was a more interesting diversion than any torture she could inflict on Pink Bunny, and therefore she had decided to usher in a time of truce, especially now that Pink Bunny claimed to know what the secret was.

"I don't believe you, you know. I think you're just a big liar."

"I am not."

"Yes, you are."

"Am not. I never lie."

"Ha! That's a lie in itself. You always lie. You are such a liar. I bet you don't know anything at all."

"Do too! I know, but I'm just not telling!"

Prudence crossed her arms and looked up at the ceiling. "Lie." "Nu-huh!"

"Oh yeah, what do you know?" Prudence tried to lean forward and get into Pink Bunny's face, but she still had very little control over her torso and all she had succeeded in doing was nudge the tv remote at her side off the bed. It fell to the floor with a clatter.

"I know everything. I'm impotent."

"Oh right, like when I had to tell you what a Marbit was because you had no idea."

"I was under stress, I had to bathe that night. Remember? Remember?!"

"Pthhhhhht! Under stress! And who had to rescue you from the dumpster 'cause you couldn't find your way out?" She leaned back, an expression of triumph across her lips. Prudence was certain now she had gained the upper hand in this argument; glad she had gained the upper hand for a change. It would teach him to tie knots in her hair.

"I was on a quest to the landfill in search for splendorific gifts with which to reward your kindness and beauty."

She had expected a reply, but not this. His response was so gentle that it could have been rated "H" for Heartwarming. It made Prudence feel like a complete butthole, which really pissed her off. She changed the subject.

"I hope it's a pony."

"What?" Pink Bunny asked, absentmindedly, attention diverted by the box of chocolates on Prudence's rolly table.

"The secret, I hope it's a pony."

"Why?" Pink Bunny asked, mouth crammed full of chocolate.

"I always—Hey, Doctor says we can't have chocolate yet!"

Correction. You can't have chocolate yet. I'm not the one on the liquid diet.

"Well, it's unfair. These are my chocolates and you're eating them all in front of me and I can't even have one!" Prudence began to cry. "Whoooooooooooo aaaaaaaah!"

"There, there, Pru." Pink Bunny threw the last chocolate back in the box, and drew closer to her.

"Waaaa haaaaaa aaaaaaa!"

Pink Bunny got up in her face and started stroking her nose. "Come now, Pru. It's not the yummies at all that are bothering you. You're just tired. It's not like they let you sleep here or rest or anything. Besides, you said you wanted a pony."

"I don't want a pony! I want a pickle!"

"Ah! The solid food thing!" Pink Bunny was quick to understand. Not only was Prudence tired, but she had been forced to eat too much jello. Her synapses were undergoing preservative-nitrate withdrawal; no wonder she felt so terrible. How did those doctors expect her to heal without the proper doses of BHT and artificial colorings? "The girl needs sugar cereals at once!" Pink Bunny concluded. He gave Pru's nose a last strike, slipped off the bed and into the hall. He was a rabbit with a quest. He hoped the dining hall had Captain Crunch.

NEXT: The Secret



## Gabon Elections Fail To Bring Democracy

**LIBREVILLE, Gabon** — More than 1,000 people, sagged by national election returns that gave victories to three Americans, a Dane, and a Spaniard, none of whose names appeared on the official ballot, stampeded through the affluent suburbs of the capital early this morning.

killling every known political figure and foreigner in the area.

Radio transmissions monitored in Cairo indicated that President Omar Bongo was forced to eat himself to death, starting with the fingers on his right hand.

Yessarian Universal

# OVERHEARD at America's Lunch Counters



HARE HAIKU  
by Richard M. McLeod  
Avoiding the snow  
Sixteen rabbits on the town  
Took the subway home

"The moon is covered by the sky."

## Zenarchy STORIES

by Ho Chi Zen



LAUGHING BUDDHISM

"We are so attached to our suffering that laughing happens, generally, only as a release of tension. Only rarely, very rarely, does laughing happen without cause. We cannot laugh, we cannot be happy; even in our laughing there is pain."

"But laughing is so beautiful, such a deep cleansing, a deep purification. Bhagwan Shree has devised a 'laughing technique.' Practiced every morning upon awakening, it will change the whole nature of your day. If you wake up laughing, you will soon begin to feel how absurd life is. Nothing is serious: even your disappointments are laughable, even you are laughable."

"When you wake up in the morning, before opening your eyes, stretch like a cat. Stretch every part of your body. Enjoy the morning; enjoy the feeling of your body becoming alive. After three or four minutes of stretching, with your eyes still closed, laugh. For five minutes just laugh. At first you will be doing it, but soon, the sound of your very attempt to laugh will cause a genuine laughter. Lose yourself in laughter."

—Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, *Meditation: The Art of Ecstasy*

SUCHNESS MADE SO

"Now feel that whatever is happening is happening! Feel the 'suchness' of it. It is so; it can only be this way; there is no other way possible. So why resist? By 'suchness' is meant 'no resistance.' There is no expectation that anything be other than what it is. The grass is green, the sky is blue, the waves of the ocean roar...birds sing, crows are crowing...There is no resistance from you because life is such.. Suddenly a transformation takes place! What was normally considered to be a disturbance now seems to be amiable. You are not against anything; you are happy with everything as it is..."

"The last thing you had to experience was 'suchness.' Only an acceptance of both the flowers and the thorns can bring you peace. Peace, after all, is the fruit of total acceptance. Peace will come only to him who is willing to accept even the absence of peace." —Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, *ibid.*

TIP FOR SPEAKERS

"Whenever one utters words and spews out breath, it must be like clamps, like tongs, it must have hooks and chains and unbroken continuity." —Yuan Wu, *The Blue Cliff Record*

CIRCULAR ARGUMENT

When Ch'en Ts'ao, an adept Zen layman, went to see Tzu Fu, the master drew a circle (a Chinese pun for "cage").

"My coming here has already missed the point," Ch'en Ts'ao said, "and now you make it more so by drawing a circle in the air!"

Tzu Fu shut the door in his face.

Yuan Wu explains it like this: "If he were a frog, what would be the use? What about prawns, mussels, snails and oysters? It is necessary to cage a tortoise."

RECRUITING AN ASSISTANT

One day abbot Chao Chou found a monk behind the meditation hall and asked him, "Where have all the virtuous ones gone?"

Monk: "They have all gone to work."

Chao Chou, handing the monk a knife and stretching his neck, said, "My responsibilities as abbot are many; I wonder if you could please cut off my head for me."

The monk ran off.

(The following poems are excerpted from Todd's book-in-progress, as far as I can figure out; the first section is called "Inscriptions." Forgive the vagueness, Todd; I get confused easily!)

#### ONE'S SELF ACTUALIZATION I SING

Self actualization I sing, a simple apolitical person  
Yet utter the word Democrat, the word Ed Meese.

Of customized information networks I sing,  
Not treasury bills alone nor mutual funds alone are worthy of  
the Muse

I say the Big Picture is worthier far,  
The stocks equally with the bonds I sing.

Of power lunches immense in passion, pluse, and power,  
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under corporate laws divine,  
The Modern Machine I sing.

#### AS I PONDER'D IN PRODUCTIVITY ENHANCING NON-NOISE ENVIRONMENT

As I ponder'd in productivity enhancing non-noise environment  
Returning upon my reports, considering, lingering long,  
A Phantom arose before me with a non-trust reinforcing aspect,  
Terrible in beauty, age, and personal connections,  
The genius of consultants of old lands,  
As to me directing like flame its sight producing organs,  
With finger pointing to many immortal songs,  
And menacing voice, What singest thou? it said,  
Know'st thou not there is but one theme for ever-enduring bards?  
And that is the theme of Organized Labor, the fortune of war,  
The making of perfect automatons.

Be it so, then I answer'd,  
I too haughty Shade also sing Organized Labor, and war,  
Waged in my book with varying fortune, with leveraged buyouts,  
mergers and acquisitions, layoffs and pullouts,  
(Yet methinks certain) the field the world,  
For corporate stability and the eternal profit margin,  
Lo, I too am come, chanting the chant of enterprise,  
I above all promote brave automatons.

#### IN BLUE CHIP STOCKS AT SEA

In blue chip stocks at sea,  
The boundless blue on every side expanding,  
With whistling winds and the music of the computers  
Or some lone security boy'd by late afternoon trading

Todd Kristel

(and that's all he sent. To be continued?)

## Attention

by Larry Oberc

She walks into the reference room, last winter she'd walk up to the desk, she'd stand there looking confused, I'd ask her if I could help her, she'd start talking about her brother, how it was getting cold outside, he didn't have a place to stay, he was sleeping in an abandoned car, she worried about him getting back on his feet, him getting an apartment, she couldn't let him stay at her place, no, that wouldn't work, not at all, he'd move in, not move out, he'd get drunk, take over, do weird things to her, no, he couldn't stay at her place...she stopped talking about him when she came into the library, she'd get her some magazines, books, sit at a table at the back of the room, I'd watch her, she'd read, pretend she didn't know I was looking at her, when she got up to leave she reshelfed the magazines, took the books with her, not looking at me, walking out of eht room leaving no clues...so there she is walking in, looking strenge, bright colored feathers tied to her hair, floating, leaving trails, halter top under blue faded work shirt, short shorts, white socks, high-heeled sandals clunking, stopping at the desk, looking at me, her head thrown back, smiling, looking like acid caricatured 60s, attempting seduction, drawing eyes from around the room that look at her, look at me, ask silently what did you do to that girl to make her look at you like that, leaving me there holding one piece of wire with both ends stuck into both sides of the plug... she drifts in dressed like a secretary, short blue knit dress and heels, her head thrown back reminding me of the way I threw my head back during a group portrait ruining my sixth grade photo, looking all wrong, ruining sales, looking anything but seductive, scaring me in a way, all this attention, all this normalcy after feathered costumes, I go to dinner, when I get back she is gone...it is fall now, getting cold nights outside, she walks up to the desk, a suitcase, cardboard alligator skin shredding, clothes leaking out, unwashed, smiling at me as I look away, confused, scared, she waves desperately trying to get my attention.

AMMMM

by Al ?

Oh putrid town

Oh smoggy sky

Oh bigoted and proud

For dunderheaded majesty

We'll sing our praises loud

Ammmmm, Ammmmm

My country right or wrong

We need to build more weapons now

To keep it big and strong

Oh smokestack bilge

Oh floating fish

Oh poverty and hate

Better go make a million bucks

Before that nuke earthquake

Ammmmm, Ammmmm

A shotgun and a vote

A land so free, of LIBERTY

From c-note to c-note

## RADICAL INSANITY.

T h i s

ex haled

smoke

may

someday settle

as

dust perhaps

on a

framed faded

photo

graph

of

dear

dead

me:::

- Curtis Olson

## TALK SHOW HOST confidential



GM DOBBS



I didn't believe it.

I didn't think I could allow myself to even consider it.

I now accept it, and it scares me.

Elvis is alive. I've heard the tape.

Sure, it started out as just a lark. I'm watching something on cable tv. I can't remember just what program, but one of the commercials was for that 900 telephone number to hear a chunk of this mysterious tape.

Well, I decided to be Mr. Big-Time Cynic...Mr. Hey, I-Know-Elvis-Is-Just-Worm-Shit-Now...Mr. It's-Just-Another-Stupid-Commercial-Like-The-Creep-Phone...That's right, that was me.

But then I called. And I listened.

So what if Elvis was talking about dating and playing racquetball? So what if the background hiss was loud enough to pass for 747 engine noise? So what if all I got for my \$2.00 was just about 30 seconds?

It intrigued me.

So I bought the book and the complete tape. And I listened and I'm reading.

Now, I really don't think JFK was killed by Lee Harvey Oswald. Martin Luther King's death and the murder of Robert Kennedy couldn't have been committed by the people now in prison. Too many people have seen Bigfoot and the Loch Ness monster to completely discount their existence. And tell the folks who've seen UFOs hover above their cars that they saw a cloud of marsh gas or a weather balloon.

I try to have an open mind, but I really didn't give this Elvis thing a moment's thought. The only thing I ever thought is that he was a victim of his own success, and he probably shouldn't have died so young. After all, he had never hurt anyone like Jerry Lee Lewis has...they don't call him the Killer for nothing...so it was a shame he died so young, so stupidly.

If Elvis is still alive, though, does that mean the American people have been duped about other things...?

Amelia Earhart never died at the hands of the Japanese on some far-flung Pacific isle. She used the corpse of a recently-deceased American missionary to help fake her own death so that she might live the rest of her life with her Polynesian lover.

Paul McCartney did actually die, as was implied by the coded messages in various Beatle albums. The lookalike replacement is the one responsible for musical flatulence like JUST ANOTHER SILLY LOVE SONG and self-indulgent pap like GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROAD STREET, not our Paul.

Jimmy Hoffa never died at the hands of fellow Teamsters or the Boys With Broken Noses. Jimmy dropped out of sight when the going got too tough and just recently retired from the post of assistant manager at a McDonald's restaurant outside of Butte, Montana. In a taped interview, Hoffa said a wax dummy resembling him had been buried in a bridge foundation outside of Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Paul Harvey did die about three years ago when he slipped off a Quality Extension Ladder—the True Value of the Month no less—he had purchased from his local True Value Hardware dealer. ABC radio, not wanting to miss out on their substantial profits from the show, has been piecing together the twice-daily programs from previous shows editing into Paul Harvey prose individual words and phrases. A search for a replacement is going on now.

D.B. Cooper never existed. The people aboard the airplane conspired to extort the skyjacking ransom and then faked "Cooper's" death. The reason little of the money has been found is the funds were all properly laundered through the Republican National Committee and distributed to the conspirators.

And I'm sure that's just the tip of the iceberg...

## When Six Is Nine

### Cat Food Company Denies Link With Beast

TERMINAL ISLAND, Calif (YU) — Star-Kist Foods denied again today persistent rumors that its latest cat-food product is the work of Satanists.

At dedication of the newly-constructed Morris Memorial Arboretum, Public Relations Director Stephen King said, "Rumors that our 9 Lives Crunchy Meals contain multiple regressions of the triple sixes do not deserve response. However," King continued, "it is my duty to point out that 9 Lives Crunchy Meals is sold by weight, not count, and any divisibility of the total morsels by 3 is strictly coincidental."

Critics of 9 Lives Crunchy Meals object to the shape of the bite-size nuggets, which the company claims to be nines.

In other developments, Product Engineer Aleister Crowley announced that it may be possible to create a cereal line under the tail of the nugget, to avoid any confusion as to the product's meaning.

Yossarian Universal



NOTES  
FROM  
LEFT  
FIELD

Good morning, campers. Well, I continue to pursue my dream of being

an obscure, unknown cartoonist. Life on the artistic fringe of America marches on. And every day that I wake up and realize I don't have to go to work I consider a victory for me over the fascist bourgeois system, man.

Brian Wilson is on the stereo—a great record, music fans, the first listenable music from Beach Boys Inc. since "Heroes and Villains" 15 years ago. Buy it now and enjoy it while you can before they ruin the songs hawking jingles for beer and athlete's foot commercials.

I got a 6 o'clock deadline—that damn strip has gotta be in the mail TODAY and I still don't even know what I'm gonna draw, for crissakes. It's times like this that I feel like an orange that the World is squeezing every last drop of creative juice from. Lo I search in vain for anything. ANYTHING AT ALL!, any halfway decent scrap of an idea that might be stretched into an actual comic strip. Believe me, there's nothing more depressing than being stuck with what one KNOWS is a mediocre idea, and then having to spend four hours rendering said mediocre idea into something that vaguely resembles a (hopefully) passable comic strip. Like beating a dead horse, yes?, but every now and then the damn thing actually finds its legs and gallops off to cartooning glory. It's that faint hope that keeps one's hopes alive during these dark mornings of creative bankruptcy.

Speaking of mornings, this is certainly no damn time to seek inspiration. It's like Dennis Miller pointed out on Carson: How the hell can ANYONE be upbeat or cheerful during a time-period called morning/mourning? I work best after midnight, with a pot of coffee and Letterman and Schafer fucking off in the background. By the time Morton Downey Jr. is grounding some poor hapless liberal into the dirt I'm reaching my stride.

It's now 10:32am. Plenty of time still 'til that last mail pick-up...tick tick tick...

What do I have to say to win over the hearts and minds of all them fab comics readers? My relationship to my audience often feels like that of a bullfighter to a bull, with "I don't get it!" being the verbal equivalent of a goring where it hurts. Due to a variety of factors—genetics? brain damage? an overindulgence of LSD and Paul Schafer's head? Who knows?—I never quite feel my mindset is gelling with that of the masses. I KNOW I'm in left field every time I walk into a comics store and see what the people are buying. Most of the stuff seems pretty blah. Even left-field stuff like RAW and MAUS seems pretty cruddy. I DO like WEIRDO, Peter Bagge, Dennis Worden, CALVIN & HOBBS, BABOON DOOLEY, FAR SIDE and BLOOM COUNTY. I was leafing through CRITTERS, featuring our own J.P. Morgan's "Fission Chicken," and was struck by the editor's description of his "courage" in taking a chance on this "way-out" comic. Now, I'm a big fan of J.P.'s stuff—it's funny, lively and original. But let's face it—"Fission Chicken" is your basic funny-talking-animal-superhero-parody. If this is "way-out," then I'm not sure I'm still on the planet.

Which brings me back, yet again, to that question that has haunted me since I failed to make the starting 5 in high school and ended up smoking a lot of pot in the parking lot and spending five weeks trying to get through the first 17 pages of "The Brothers Karamazov"—how did I get so weird?

And why the hell am I typing this when I should be working on my award-winning comic strip?

I mean, is this a normal thing for a 31-year-old man to be doing? Outside my second-story window the streets are filled with busloads and cars full of normal people going off to their normal jobs. Meanwhile, I sit here at my desk surrounded by the womb-like safety of my apartment enjoying blissful solitude wondering just how the hell these normal people do it.

14 The time at the tone is 10:58am...

## VIDEO, VIDEO

by Michael Polo

After a long day at the factory, you pour yourself a tall one and set the dial to music television. When the picture is in focus, you see a fat, t-shirted, unshaven type watching TV. The familiar sounds of a popular song are being broadcast from it. On cue, he breaks into song to the refrain of the later-mentioned chart-stopper. At the close of the tune, he turns to the station that announces the winning numbers. The lovely speaker says, "...and the winning numbers of today's drawing are 1,2,5,8,19 and 7." He makes an offensive gesture at her. Guess it's just one of those days.

### TWO PICKS IN THE LOTTERY

(to the tune of Eddie Money's Two Tickets to Paradise)

When I am shopping at the local corner store  
I always play a number with Pick 6 and 4.  
I'm praying for luck...praying for luck.  
I'm praying for luck...praying for luck.

I've got two Picks in the Lottery  
So that I can quit the brewery.  
I've got two Picks in the Lottery...  
Two Picks in the Lottery.

If it hits (1,2,5,8,9 and 17)  
Then I can take off in a chauffeured  
limousine.

That's why I'm praying for luck...  
praying for luck.  
I'm praying for luck...praying for luck.

I've got two Picks in the Lottery  
So that I can quit the brewery.  
I've got two Picks in the Lottery...  
Two Picks in the Lottery.

Too Much is Always  
Better Than  
Not Enough!

## Three Hours to Go

by Susan Packie

"Hey Louie, what are you doing?"

"Shut up, bozo. I'm taking a reading test. If I don't pass it, I don't get promoted to the tenth grade."

"Get off it. You've been staring at the same paragraph for the last fifteen minutes."

"That doesn't mean I'm dumber than the other kids. It just takes me a little longer to assimilate new material."

"I guess your counselor fed you that line. Well, how much have you read so far?"

"The first line."

"What's the problem?"

"I'm having trouble with this one word."

"That's 'deficiency.' A deficiency in reading skills is indicative of insufficient preparation in the lower grades." Can you rephrase that, using your own words?"

"A deficiency in reading skills is indicative of insufficient preparation in the lower grades."

"Yes, but what does that mean?"

"You don't know either?"

"I know, but you're taking the test. Don't you have any idea of what this paragraph is about?"

"It's about holding me back because I'm a minority."

"You're a minority?"

"Sure. I'm only one guy, ain't I?"

"Oh, right. But look at all the students who passed this reading test!"

"They're a majority. It's the minorities who are discriminated against."

"So what do you suggest?"

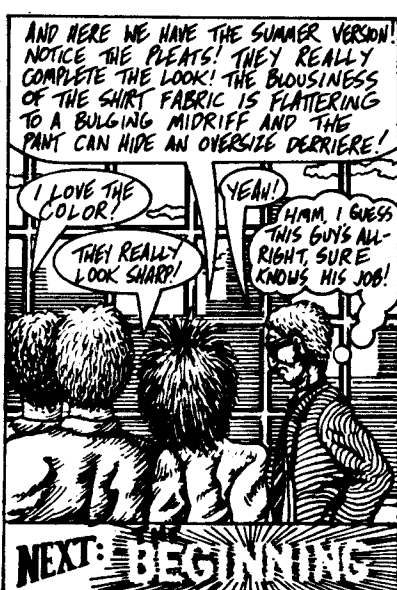
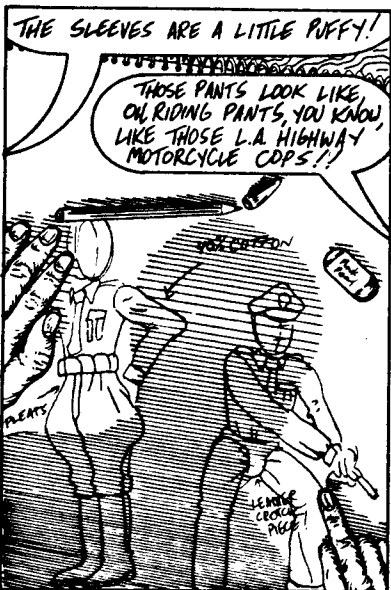
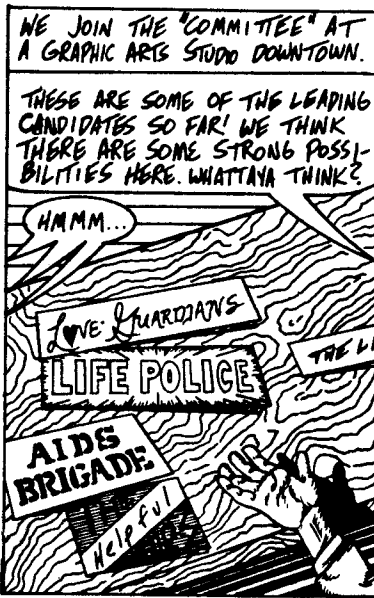
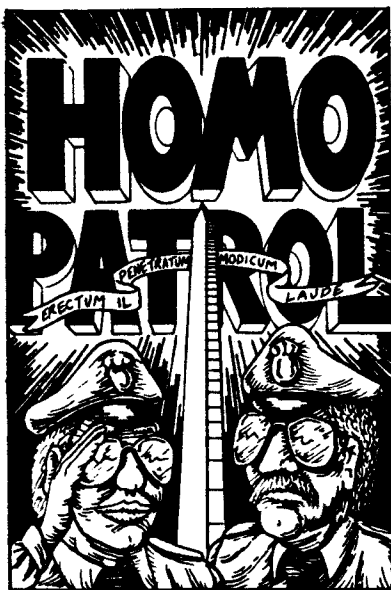
"Social promotion."

"How will that help?"

"It'll make me a majority."

"Good reading skills are necessary for all your course work. If you don't fail now, you'll fail later."

But Louis wasn't particularly concerned about that. He just wished he had a dictionary so he could look up the meaning of 'incomprehensible!'



**Art critics protest burger murder piece**  
 SAN YSIDRO, Calif (YU) —The James Huberty Vietnam/MacDonald's War Memorial has become the subject of controversy in this small take-out town. Many residents are not at all pleased with the design of the memorial — an all-beef patty, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, etc. — the bottom half of the bun smeared with ketchup-colored paint, and the names of the victims etched with silver leaf in the melted processed cheese product. Of particular dispute is the ordering of those names, which is supposedly chronological by moment of expiration, although the names are actually arranged in alphabetical order, a coincidence critics claim is highly unlikely.  
 YU News Service

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ALL OF ME  
 by Sigmund Weiss  
 My eyes were borrowed from the sea.  
 Each eye fed the fishes parts of me.  
 My ears were borrowed from the wind.  
 Each ear fed the wind parts of me.  
 My nose was borrowed from the earth.  
 My nose fed the earth parts of me.

My mouth  
 replete with wind, sea & earth  
 ate up all that is part of me.  
 Now  
 as I search the wild beyond  
 I wonder what the sun moon & stars  
 gave to me  
 and as I think

I think too much  
 till beyond is gone  
 ALL OF ME.

# The Poet's Diet Book

by Tamarina Dwyer

## CHAPTER THREE: A GET-TOGETHER AT JANET & FRED'S APARTMENT

In Chapters One and Two of this story, Janet, the poet, was working in a diner where she met Fred, her subsequent lover. Janet's determination to be a poet seems to be causing some problems.

Saturday afternoon, Fred was watching a football game on television when Janet turned on the vacuum cleaner. "You're invading a field of exact regulation with a weapon of science that will singlehandedly destroy my faith in the power of sports," he said grinningly, but Janet's hand, the knuckles too white as it clasped the handle of the cleaner, put his humor off track. He looked back at the television, but continued to watch Janet vacuum the carpet from the corner of his eye.

When Janet had finished, she stood in the middle of the room for several minutes before she unplugged the cleaner. Stopping near the electrical outlet, she ran her fingers down the cord, her eyes big and wondering, somewhat expressing disorientation. Unaware of Fred's watchful gaze, Janet's face changed abruptly and a sneering poet flicked the 'on' button with one hand and yanked out the cord with the other. Fred's lower lip dropped, but he caught himself quickly and recast all attention to the game.

That evening, he teased Janet while she was preparing the hors-d'oeuvres.

"Melba toast isn't salty enough for my palate. You're too conscious of my figure," Fred humorously commented to Janet as he took the cracker box from her hand and put it back on the shelf. "There are more than enough crackers on there."

"Why did you put so much salt on your potatoes, then?" Janet asked as she put cheese on a tray. Fred ignored her question and Janet carried the trays to the living room and set them on the table. Fred came into the room to join her with a can of beer in his hand.

"I'm going to put arsenic in your beer if you criticize my choice of grocery," Janet threatened as she put the tray of cheese closer to him on an end table near his armchair by the window. Fred, looking up at Janet, reached for a cracker and looked down again at the thin, brown cracker known as Melba toast.

Startled, the poet jumped and Fred looked up. "I'll get it," she yelled back to him on her way to the door. Two of Fred's buddies came down the hall, exchanged greetings with Janet and him, sat down, and Janet immediately offered them refreshments.

"How's your poetry comin'? You makin' lots of money at the diner?" Chuck asked Janet, his thin lips treating the words carefully. The poet casually set down her glass of wine and looked out the window as she thought about her unpublished materials. Chuck waited for an answer, but he became impatient and tried another overture. "Are you still using the eight syllable meter?"

"Yes," Janet replied, turning to Chuck, "but I've also been doing free verse and a mixed pattern of all kinds of meter with more abstract words. The poems are getting longer, but I'm not sure they say as much." Chuck's eyes, small and dark, looked into Janet's wide green stare before it returned to the window.

"How many times you gonna write about trees?" Chuck suddenly asked. Janet continued staring at the window. "Do you really see? Do you know what's goin' on? Are you gonna just sit there? C'mon! I asked you a question. React!" ordered Chuck as he pulled Janet's body from the chair and led her right up to the window. "See that tree there?" he began again. Janet looked at the window first. Then she looked at Chuck and down at the carpet. "No, look, goddamn it. Look," he ordered her again. "You see it, don't you? Why have you gotta put it on paper?"

Janet looked at him and responded in a weak voice, "I just like to write."

"What about that pigeon on the rooftop over there? You gotta put him on paper too, I suppose?" Janet merely looked out the window, seeing nothing, not even the pigeon, and tried to think of something to say. "Where you gonna hang your poems? Are you gonna cover the shrubbery and repave the sidewalks with sheets of words that you can read on your way to the diner? You gonna write about that tree while you're serving coffee?" Janet pulled away from Chuck's grasp and looked over to the stack of poems on the desk next to the wall. "Let me see it. Let me read it. I want to see just how creative you really are," said Chuck belligerently and disgustingly. The poet frowned, but she walked over to the desk and picked up a sheaf of poems. She didn't take time to pull out what she thought were the best and, after handing him a couple of incomplete works, Janet walked to the coffee table and took a cracker from the wooden tray. Chuck read several lines of broken words, parallels, and symmetrical versing. "Fairylend and feather tales! You gotta be kiddin'!" he criticized when he had finished reading. "There's no room on the Literary Market for this type of material. You can't do it. You know you can't. When you gonna grow up? Why can't you act like a lady? When you gonna face the facts? When you perceive the real truth, you'll know more than is necessary and you won't bother anymore." Chuck, waving the paper in front of him, peered out the window angrily and dropped the poem to his knee.

"Janet?" Fred began.

"I'm all right," she answered, holding back tears and pulling at the skin on her arm.

"You're all right!" Chuck exclaimed.

"Yeah, I'm all right," the poet repeated diffidently. "I just can't do it; that's what he said," Janet eeked out in a watery voice.

"Are you aware of your repetition?" Fred queried.

"That's not so poetic a remark," Ken said, smirking.

"I don't know. I just don't know," cried the poet, burying her head in her hands.

"Janet, I suggest that you quit play production when you're not being reimbursed and pull yourself together before I take a part," Fred said on his way to the kitchen.

"What you gonna do? Keep her in the diner forever?" Chuck shouted to Fred. Fred stopped midway across the room and turned around abruptly.

"Yes," he said, "and scrawl your remarks across the menu," he told Chuck, mad and disgusted with both Janet and his friend. Then he continued on to the kitchen and Chuck turned to Janet again.

"You're STUPID!" he screamed at her. The poet looked up silently from a tear-stained face. Quiet exasperated Chuck, and he walked up to Janet and put his arm around her. "Let me hold you," he whispered.

"You're temporarily meeting an intersection of one-way, narrow, winding dirt roads where collision is still possible," Fred warned Chuck as he returned from the kitchen.

"Your words are sweeter than her words," Chuck retaliated, dropping the poem on the desk. "You wanna serve candy next?"

"I fail to comprehend your attempt at humor. When you put your arm around her, you're placing too much faith in my stabilizing mechanisms. I strongly advise you to carry your urges to another party where they'll be more appreciated," Fred said irately, his eyes narrowed.

"Are you throwing me out?" Chuck asked, looking directly at Fred, his hands gripping the side of the desk as he leaned over Janet's folders of writing.

"Yes, as a matter of fact, I am doing that," Fred answered. Chuck turned his head to look at Janet and turned it back again to Fred. Nothing more was said and Chuck walked through the living room into the hall and out the door. Janet started picking up half-filled glasses and an empty cracker tray. Carrying them to the kitchen, the poet held back thoughts of lines in the poem that Chuck had read. As she was turning on the hot water faucet and reaching for the dishwashing liquid, she was interrupted by Fred.

"They weren't finished with their drinks, honey. You'll have to use more glasses now." Fred watched her as she turned off the water, pulled another tray from the cupboard and took the dirty glasses from the sink and put them back on the tray. Then she carried the tray into the living room and set it on the table. Fred came up behind her and grasped her elbow. "Janet, your drama is subtle, but inappropriate for guests. Would you mind filling the glasses?" The poet took the empty glasses back to the kitchen, set the tray on the counter, and returned to the living room. She picked up Ken's ashtray and emptied it in the basket next to the desk. Then she took the long, silver-handled ashtray from where Chuck had been sitting and emptied that.

Fred stood in the doorway and watched her, even more leery of Janet's reactions as his mind traveled back to the incidents that had occurred during the last few weeks.

Ken, also watching Janet, still not quite in the drunken stupor which he usually reached in the evenings, was mentally comparing the physical attributes of his wife and Janet. His wife, tall and slim, a brunette with dark eyes and shapely legs, a fanatic about make-up and weight control, was appearing in his mind intermittently between sips of beer. She, in an armchair of black leather, with legs stretched out in front of her in a graceful pose, her arms loosely hanging over the edges of the chair with a tempting smile on her face, was in direct contrast to the woman who was emptying his ashtray. His eyes followed Janet's quick, abrupt and almost broken, machine-like gestures as she gathered the cigarette butts together before emptying them into the basket. Her fingers were stiff and her face was tight and controlled. Ken sighed and, mumbling to himself, turned his attention to the window.

Chuck had been thumbing through a ski magazine that lay on the coffee table and Ken was getting bored with the evening, he was still hungry, and he was just generally annoyed with the routine of sit, talk, and drink, so he picked the magazine up. "We should go bowling or somethin'," he thought and just as quickly dropped the magazine and began thinking about the upcoming ski weekend.

He felt like babbling to the window, but Fred wouldn't have been able to listen to it for even a minute. Ken felt like he was sinking into a pool without water which was going to test both his physical and mental endurance, but Janet could relieve his boredom.

"Janet!" he shouted, after a few more sips and a few under-the-breath mumbles. "What's your philosophy of life?" He set his glass down so that only half of the glass was on the table and jerkily pulled out a scrap of paper from his shirt pocket. "C'mon. Write it down if you can't tell it. I'll read it. You got a pen?" he asked, laying the paper on the table and feeling both his shirt pockets for a pen. Janet looked up and her mechanical, starry-eyed gaze moved from the ashtray to the wall, back to the ashtray and around to Ken.

"I follow orders from a higher realm," she began. "I'm part of a conical sphere of rapidly-developing theory."

She was putting the ashtray back as Ken commented. "A philosophy must be more natural than that."

"What do you mean?" she asked, looking at him from her rigid pose by the ashtray. Her fingers were clutching the silver lion on the handle so that her veins seemed enlarged.

"You're in a haze," Ken remarked. "Rats in cages. Can you do anything with that?" he asked, leaning back against the sofa, try-

# The Hunger

by Linda Calderone Wilson

It was hungry. And without knowing, she fed it.

The woman searched through the scattered papers on her desk, seeking desperately any semi-blank piece on which to write the phone message. When she hung up the phone, she decided to make some effort to clean up her desk. Actually, she would be thrilled just to see a small portion of the top of the furniture piece. She gathered some of the pages into a small stack, opened the bottom drawer of the desk, and laid them on top of the papers that were already in there, leaving just enough room to shut the drawer.

The rest of her day passed rather swiftly. She fielded phone calls and sped through interviews, barely managing to catch her breath. Before she left her office for the weekend, she stared disparagingly at her desk, swept the remaining papers into a large pile, and put them in the bottom drawer, leaving just enough room to shut the drawer. Again.

The desk sighed. Weekends were the worst. While it's nice to have a respite from people pounding you all day with a pencil while they're on the phone, it sure was a long time to go without eating. He needed all the strength he could muster to hold up all those files and baskets and papers and books and the phone. It wasn't a great life, and he was beginning to carry a resentment. The LEAST she could do was to feed him once in a while.

"Kevin, do you know where the McKenna file is?" the woman asked through the intercom.

"I put it in your desk drawer this morning," the secretary responded.

"Well, I can't find it anywhere. I'll look for it later. Can you get me James Henderson on the phone?" And so, by not looking for it immediately, Amanda Forrest missed a brilliant opportunity for panic and terror...

Amanda was having "one of those days." She couldn't seem to find anything in her desk. Not that her desk wasn't full of the junk you usually find in desks, it just didn't seem to be full of anything she was looking for. This finally disturbed her enough to get up and make another cup of tea, so she could figure things out.

When she returned to her office, however, the phone rang. It came as no great surprise that the call was from her daughter, about the latest crisis instigated by the child's brother. When she managed to get Alyssa off the phone, she pulled it closer to make a series of calls. Actually, she TRIED to pull it closer. The phone did not seem to want to move any further. It was as if the phone cord had shrunk. Or something.

The desk felt a little different today. The objects on it didn't seem as heavy, for some reason. Perhaps it was finally gaining a little needed weight. But this newfound strength did not diminish its hunger in the least. In fact, the desk had all the potential to suddenly become a compulsive overeater. It had a lot of time and resentments to make up for.

Amanda had good intentions when she decided to try to unravel this mystery she suddenly found herself in the midst of. However, her desire did not exactly coincide with the realities of her duties. She would no sooner catch her breath when someone would make more demands upon her time. By 5:00, the mystery was unsolved, but not forgotten. However, she still gathered all the papers on her desk and put them in her bottom drawer. On her way out the door, however, she turned and eyed her desk suspiciously. Then she shook her head and went home.

Immediately after she left, Kevin, her secretary, heard almost a groaning sound from her office, but 5:00 was 5:00, and whatever it was could wait until Monday.

At 7:00, Lucas, the "janitorial worker," arrived with his dog, Poughkeepsie. When they entered Amanda's office, the dog growled at the wooden desk and bit its leg. This was not a brilliant move on the dog's part.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? Tune in next time...if you dare...

## NUT-CRACKER

by Sigmund Weiss

There is no easy way to be yourself, but if you wish to become an eagle, a lion, or a plant scattering seeds over the landscape, or a movie star full of hot air, or a sport looking for success, or wherever you go people know you, while you are waiting for a nut-cracker to crack your nuts, you can become something most people like, especially if you put on your best clothes that make you appear as a solid citizen ready to deluge yourself with wise-cracks about everyone else while you sit on a toilet letting your personality free to go where it will.

Has fear of the Unusual prevented you from joining the Church of the SubGenius? Send \$1 for Intense Pamphlet The Church of the SubGenius P.O. Box 140306 Dallas, TX 75214 Give "Bob" a chance or face the fact that you have a closed mind.

ing to draw Janet into conversation. She looked around the room and settled her gaze on Fred, who was still near the kitchen arch with his hands clasped behind him.

"Janet," Ken called softly. "Perhaps the Middle Ages," he went on, his words a little incoherent.

Fred walked over to the desk chair and sat down again, prepared for another of Ken's periodic speeches. Ken just put his leg across his knee, his hands behind his head, and stifled a laugh.

"The philosophy of the Middle Ages, dependent on economic condition as any philosophy, is one that is repeating itself now.

The basis of the philosophy is an indiscriminate value orientation that, um..." Ken's eyebrows furrowed as he paused while searching for the correct word. Janet and Fred waited for him to continue.

"...is an indiscriminate value orientation that is expressed today by psychology's experimental approach and its utilization of human beings as machines." Fred clapped twice and Ken's eyes darkened as Fred also chuckled.

"You aren't laughing, Janet," Ken said to her as she considered his words.

"I didn't hear everything you said, but I don't think human beings have ever been used as machines," she began.

"No, well, poets usually fall for a more romantic philosophy," Ken interrupted. "You're so wrapped up in physical nature that you're not haunted by machine theory."

"I don't have a philosophy," Janet started, moving toward Ken.

"And you're right, I do have to be extreme about my attention to nature."

"What draws your attention the most?" he asked.

"Bluebells right now and I'm working on a poem about red roses," Janet told him, all of a sudden eager to discuss her writing.

"Does Fred buy you flowers?" Ken asked. "In the winter, I mean?" he finished in a deep voice, his eyes conveying a stronger, more intimidating question. Fred glanced at Ken disapprovingly as he poured beaumont in the glasses on the table. "Don't you sometimes think that you're too extreme about physical nature and too trusting of human nature?" Ken went on.

"I," began Janet, but then she stopped and started picking the skin under her eyebrow. Ken watched her, waiting impatiently for a response. "Nature is capturing me by its glory. Its beauty, displayed in so many, subtle ways—the trees—I want to kiss them and talk to them—the flowers—I want to give to the world—and the food—I'm going to serve nature with my own mind!" The frown had come back and it replaced the starry-eyed gaze, but Janet's voice was still light and soft although it seemed as if she were caught in some kind of metaphysical quandary. However, before anyone could comment, the starry-eyed gaze returned.

She started tapping her fingers on the table. Then she looked down at the glasses and up again at Ken. The frown returned. "I want to put my words into the bark of the tree and I want to put food into the words."

Ken considered Janet's answers seriously for a moment, but his near-drunken state prevented him from any lengthy thought about Janet. She was too nervous for him and he tried to replace her gleaming eyes with the ski magazine, but he couldn't even focus on the inside cover of a blond selling a ski parka, so he dropped the ski magazine on the table again.

Fred had listened to the short conversation between Ken and Janet and he interpreted Janet's words and mannerisms and Ken's attention to Janet far more seriously than he wanted to. He realized that he shouldn't have confided in either Chuck or Ken and the pressure of decision began to weigh him down. Fred ruled out one more beer and, ignoring Ken's and Janet's rattling, kept an eye on Janet who was fiddling with her glass and he met his own faltering nature by slowly eliminating alternatives of action. He didn't love her enough to marry her, but she hadn't exactly lost her reasoning power though she was definitely on some edge of insanity. Still, I really don't want her to leave, Fred thought. I put too much faith in her and she isn't living up to it. I have to think of myself.

Ken interrupted Fred's contemplation peremptorily as he threw a quizzical look at Fred, jumped up from the sofa, and strode toward the kitchen. Fred got up, put his hands in his pockets, and sauntered into the kitchen to see what Ken wanted. He glanced at Janet on his way, but her back was to him because she was looking for a book on the shelf.

"What are you doing, ol' fellow?" Fred asked Ken, who was taking a delmonico steak from the refrigerator.

"I'm hungry and I'd like to broil this steak. You use butter or margarine, pal?" Ken asked, joining Fred's comradery.

Before Fred was able to comment, Janet came into the kitchen with a book. Ken, his thoughts unconnected and almost too tired to hold onto the steak, suddenly noticed her. "I'm dreamier than she is," he mumbled to himself and, wearing a faint, wise smile, he reached into the refrigerator and grabbed another steak. With that and a weary step, he staggered to the stove. "Any more beer left?" he stammered.

"My friend, you're antagonizing my ordinarily sedate temperament," Fred said angrily.

"You're not feeding me anymore, right?" Ken attempted to clarify as he set the steaks on the counter. Fred took a frying pan from Ken's hand and replied, "I don't want to pull trains out of stations that have no destinations."

"Then, I can sleep on your couch?" mumbled Ken.

"Um," muttered Fred, "but your gargantuan body is vacating the premises at 7:30 when I leave for work." (To be continued)



# Crossroads by Bob Blundell

"So what are we talking about here? I mean, does she pick her nose in public or what?" Morris asked, studying the bushy end of his celery stalk. "And even if she does, that's no reason to call it quits with her." He sucked down the last of his Bloody Mary and set the glass down on the bar, motioning to Harry the bartender for another round.

Jason nodded, staring somberly down into the remnants of a stout Gin and Tonic.

"Besides, she's a damn nice-looking lady," Robert added, his massive hand wrapped around a mug of beer.

"Yeah, cute as hell," Morris slurred.

"Pretty!" Robert corrected.

They glared at each other. Robert looked down at Morris menacingly.

"Pretty cute," Morris blurted, compromising.

They both nodded, smiling.

"So what's the problem, Jason?" Robert demanded, his voice loud and deep. He was loud because he had been drinking too much, drunk because he hadn't had anything to eat all day. It amazed anyone who knew him how a man his size—6'3" and some 240 pounds—could stay so healthy on a diet of beer and bar nuts.

"Well..." Jason began. He paused as Harry the bartender set their drinks in front of them. "It's just that...she's so damn..."

"Witty, intelligent?" Morris offered.

"Beautiful, talented?" Robert boomed.

"No! None of that! She's just so damn different." Jason sighed. He gulped half of his drink and cupped the glass in his palms watching the lime wedge float in the ice.

The three of them sat quietly.

"Jason," Robert began, "Martha's not a lesbian, is she?" His huge grey eyes peered down at Jason solemnly. They had taken on that crazed, frenzied look that usually came after his sixth or seventh beer.

"Hell no! You guys are crazy!"

Robert and Morris looked at each other and shrugged.

Jason ran his hand through his thick brown hair and looked at his friends. "Have either of you noticed the way she eats? I mean, she puts her fork in her left hand and gets the knife in her right hand and...and scrapes the food on her fork with the knife. It's goddamn bizarre!"

"Jesus Christ, Jason," Morris said. "The lady's from Scotland. That's the way the whole damn continent of Europe eats!"

Robert nodded.

"Maybe so, but it doesn't seem natural. It's embarrassing sometimes when we go out to eat. Seems like everyone's staring!"

"You could do like I do," Robert said emptying his mug.

"Don't eat. Just drink beer!"

"She talks different too," Jason muttered.

"I've noticed that," Robert said.

"Almost like she's speaking another language. Sounds Scottish to me," Morris explained. "What do you think, Robert?"

"Definitely! Definitely foreign. Probably Scottish. I'd say from somewhere in Scotland."

Robert and Morris began to laugh. Robert kept laughing a few seconds after Morris quit. He was usually too drunk to attempt a shot at humor. He was quite pleased with himself.

"That's not what I mean!"

"Just what do you mean, Jason?" Morris wiped his mouth on the back of his sleeve.

"Okay. It's not just her accent...Hell, it's her whole damn vocabulary." Jason sent a quick glance to both sides of them, then lowered his voice. "Sometimes she uses words I have to go look up in the dictionary!"

"Ah, the plot thickens," Morris said.

Robert reached across the bar drawing his own beer. "I thought you were the one who had the gift for writing."

"A command of the English language," Morris added.

"I don't know, guys. I mean, she really is different!" He paused.

Robert and Morris turned back to their drinks.

"She's supposed to go back in a couple weeks...I'm not sure I want her to."

Morris put a clammy palm on Jason's shoulder. "I believe we're beginning to scratch the surface now," he laughed. "Whatever happened to the old Jason we all knew and loved? Conquerer of mindless females?"

"Slayer of single women everywhere!" Robert roared. He held up his beer mug, toasting. "Here's to the late Jason McDaniels!"

They all drank. Jason sipped the last of his gin, managing a sick grin. He wondered what had happened to the late Jason McDaniels too.

"So what's up tonight, guys?" Robert asked after a moment of mourning.

"Shara's meeting me here in a few minutes," Morris said with a grin.

Jason remembered Shara. Blonde hair. Blue eyes. Vibrant body. He could imagine her in a Candy Striper uniform handing out magazines and orange juice, flashing people her sweet vacant little grin. The grin that told the world the light was on, but no one was home.

"There she is," Morris pointed toward the door.

Shara moved, swivelling through the crowd toward them. "Hi Jason. Hi Robert." Yellow curls frizzled, hanging across her forehead. Neckline plunged, showing a healthy, tan cleavage. She

smiled her empty smile. "What are you guys talking about?"

"Oh, we're just trying to help ol' Jason here through a little problem," Morris explained. "C'mon, it's time to get going."

Morris tugged at her arm. "See you later, guys."

"Yeah, later," Robert yelled.

Morris and Shara walked toward the door. "Remember what they say, Jason," Morris said, turning toward his friends. "No man is an island!" He winked and they left, Shara's arm wrapped possessively around his waist.

And a rolling stone gathers no moss, Jason thought. "Harry, how about the check?" He waved at Harry at the other end of the bar.

"What? Leaving already?" Robert frowned. "I thought we'd hang around. Have some more drinks."

"Nope, I'm heading home." He tossed a wad of bills on the bar. "I've got some serious thinking to do tonight."

"How about tomorrow night? Bunch of the guys are coming over for some poker."

"Can't. I'm taking Martha to dinner."

Robert's face lit up. "Get a table in the corner. Maybe no one will see her eating." He slammed a beefy fist onto the bar, bellowing a laugh that closely resembled that of a donkey.

"Yeah, thanks a lot, pal!" Jason gave him a quick salute and pushed through the crowd to the exit.

The restaurant was crowded, a flurry of activity; waiters striding back and forth, carrying enormous trays of expensive cuisine. Jason and Martha sat near the entrance, in the center of the dining area.

Martha sat erect in her chair—perfect posture, raking her fish onto her fork, wielding the knife in her right hand as a tool. Jason fidgeted in his seat. He scratched the spot on his chin where he had nicked himself shaving that evening and tried to process the thoughts that were flying through his head.

"How was your dinner?" Martha asked. Small green eyes with a splash of copper at the centers peered at him. "Aren't you hungry?"

"Yeah, sure," he muttered. He looked down at his plate. His baked trout lay completely untouched. It stared up at him, eyes a glassy shade of bronze. She must think I'm an idiot, he thought.

Martha frowned, cocking her head to the side. Her face was pale with a blush of pink in the cheeks. Blonde, shoulder-length curls fell gracefully down her neck. Jason looked her eyes, those great-looking eyes, and then shifted his stare to the hair. The hair that fell so gracefully—no, damn it!, cascaded down her back. He kicked off his shoes and tried to think of other things.

Martha didn't seem to notice Jason's spacey look, or the noise he made as he gritted his teeth. She began to talk. She spoke of the wonderful times she had had since she had arrived in the States and how much she would miss all the friends she had made. And wouldn't it be grand if the two of them could take a few days off and drive to the beach for a weekend.

Grand, he thought. No one says "grand." He looked up into her eyes, into a sea of beautiful damn green and copper. "How old are you?" he blurted.

Martha stared at him for a moment. "You know a lady never tells."

"No, I'm serious!"

"So you are." She paused. "I'm 28."

"I'm 32," he grumbled, noting he sounded disturbingly like his 82-year-old senile grandfather.

"My God! So you're over 30. You're not a leper. There is a difference, you know."

"Yeah, I guess so." Jason looked down, focusing his eyes on a food stain on the tablecloth.

"Jason, you seem so distant. What's troubling you?"

Jason shuffled his feet uneasily, sat up in his chair, clasped his hands in front of him and tried to level his eyes looking into hers. "Have you ever wondered how many crossroads come in a person's life?" He paused and cleared his throat. "How many opportunities will come along before there aren't any more?"

Her face became taut. "I don't think I quite know what you mean."

Of course you don't, he thought. I sound like an imbecile. He paused to gather his thoughts before speaking. "I mean...have you ever really wondered how many forks in the path of one's life there'll be?" He paused again, cracked his knuckles. "Wondered when to grab hold, when to let go, when to turn left, when to go right?" His voice trailed away.

Martha pushed her plate away from her. "I have always thought," she began, "if I understand what you are asking, that one should look at each option as it comes along, and take the most promising path."

Jason smiled. He knew it was going to be a sick disgusting little grin almost before it began to form. He covered his mouth with his palm, feigning a cough.

"Do you feel like I'm one of your crossroads, Jason?" She took a sip from her wine glass.

He explored those perfect eyes again. "Yes. I think I do."

"So what do you want, Jason?" Her stare was calm and direct.

What do I want, he thought. Why, to help people and love America. To score the winning touchdown. How about a partridge in a pear tree? He wondered if he was too old to join the Peace Corps. Or maybe become a soldier of fortune. And what would Morris and Robert tell him to do? And most of all he wondered if he really knew the answer to her question.

"You live so damn far away," he muttered.

(go to next page)



"Yes. I certainly do."  
 "I suppose we could visit each other." He looked up at her.  
 "That's not really very practical, though, is it? I mean, considering the distance and all."

"No, it isn't," she said.  
 Jason thought about his friends, Robert and Morris. And about all the pert, bubbly Sharas of the world out there waiting. And about the old saying, A rolling stone gathers no moss. Or, No guts, no glory. And the old beer commercial that used to tell the world to grab for all the gusto. Tastes great! Less filling! Then there was the hair that cascaded down the erect back.  
 "Martha," he began, "I've never really met anyone like you."  
 "Believe me, Jason, I've never met anyone like you either."  
 "So what do you think we should do?"  
 "Let's go for a drive," she said emphatically.  
 "A drive?"  
 "Yes, a drive. You know, both of us in the MG. Top down. Night air whipping through our hair. The whole spiel. Besides, there's something I want to show you." Martha stood. "Are you ready?"  
 "Yeah, sure."

Jason followed the directions Martha gave him, taking them out the Beltway and east of town.  
 "Where are you taking me?" he screamed above the roar of the four-cylinder engine as he downshifted into a steep turn.  
 "You'll see." She stroked the back of his neck. "Just a few more miles." Fifteen minutes later, Jason obediently turned on to a gravel road. He pulled to the edge of what appeared to be an enormous rock quarry, and stopped the engine.  
 "So. Here we are." He glanced up at the small sliver of moon and reached over to pull Martha toward him.  
 "Jason! Stop. I didn't bring us here for this! We need to talk!"  
 "Talk?"  
 "Yes. There's something you should know about me."  
 "I love you. What else is there to know?"  
 "Are you sure you feel that way?"  
 "Of course I do."

"We are talking about a major commitment here. Something that could change the course of both of our lives," she said.  
 "I realize that, believe me. I've thought a lot about it and I'm ready to make a commitment."  
 Martha smiled. "I'd hoped you'd feel that way." She dug into her purse and removed what appeared in the darkness to be a small black box about the size of a matchbook. She held it out toward Jason and pressed the top. It emitted a green luminescent light.  
 "What is that? What's going on?"  
 "I'm signalling my friends, Jason."  
 "Friends? You signal friends with a black box in the middle of a rock quarry?"

"Yes." Martha stared up into the black sky.  
 Jason looked up too. At first, all he could see were the shadows of the huge pine trees hanging overhead and the flicker of a few distant stars. Then from the west he saw a bright flash of light. It began as a tiny dot and grew larger as it loomed toward them. Its light became more intense and its size voluminous as the object whirled toward the rock quarry. Moments later, it was directly over them, gyrating, humming, casting a pale orange light over the 12-year-old MG and its occupants.

Martha held Jason's hand firmly. "This is your last chance to change your mind, Jason."

Jason stared up at the enormous craft hovering above them. He watched as the pale orange rays began to intensify, turning their bodies into dazzling human shapes of light.

"Martha," he swallowed, "we're not going to Scotland, are we?"  
 "No, Jason. We're not."

He squeezed her hand tightly. "Okay, I'm ready."  
 Martha smiled as the familiar sensation of their bodies being synthesized and lifted into space enveloped her.

## TROJAN HORSE MANURE

by Roger Coleman

1213 B.C. - News by carrier pigeon, Aegean time:

"Look," said the night guard, Private 1st Class Cyrus, "someone left a giant wooden horse outside the gate. Let's torch it; that sanctimonious High Priest will think Pegasus has landed."

"No," replied the Corporal of the Guard, "the Commander of the garrison must see it. It could be Icarus, reincarnate, with a blown O-ring."

"Come on. Fire it up. We won't have to explain how it got there while we snoozed," responded Cyrus, scratching his beard. "If we get rid of it, there will be no evidence and our tails will be covered."

Sinon, the Greek slave, convinced them to pull it in--  
 "You'll probably get a promotion"--as he said to himself...  
 beware of gifts bearing Greeks...

## TODAY'S HOROSCOPE FOR VIRGOS: INVITE GUESTS INTO YOUR HOUSE TONIGHT



MY DINNER WITH EMPEROR JEAN-BEDEL BOKASSA (J-B)

by Jeff Walker

Yes, I was Canadian Ambassador  
 To, not a state, but a massacre  
 And my sojourn there ended  
 All because I befriended  
 Le Grand Chef of black Central Africa.

Curse that head-huntingest honcho  
 Whose dead enemies filled out his paunch—oh!  
 In Berengo Palace  
 He drank blood from a chalice  
 But as ally and friend I was staunch!

Came one day "dreaded dinner invite"  
 Which refused would all but incite  
 Him, through gradual stages  
 To cannibal rages  
 And in fact make him rather uptight!

At the palace that night I arrived  
 As sole guest, but for one of his wives  
 Whom, just to please her,  
 He hacked from the freezer  
 And declared, "What a good boy am I!"

I admit, here my vision did fade  
 The last words I heard—"Our entree!"  
 Enveloped in nausea  
 I passed out, because ya  
 Don't see things like that every day.

"Hours" later I awoke at the table,  
 As within a bad dream or old fable  
 And the fiend's fork went squish  
 In some Islamic dish  
 He called "legs a la Betty Grable"

Which sickened and sent my mind reeling  
 And hovering up near the ceiling  
 Next course: intesterns  
 Sandwich style a la Western  
 What followed was far less appealing.

Looking down to the floor I thought, Odd,  
 There lies his wife still unthawed  
 So she's not for dinner  
 And them ain't her innards  
 That's me on the plate—Oh my God!

Right then as my name he did toasteth  
 I, so to speak, gave up the ghosteth  
 On my entrails he bloatethed  
 Whilst on high I floatethed  
 In search of some heavenly hosteth.

Through a tunnel I passed, long and dark,  
 Said a Being of Light, "Hold it—hark!  
 Stand aside, you—  
 Oral Roberts, pass through  
 The eye of the needle, then park."

On my heavenly heels I did turnst,  
 And crawled back through that tunnel of dirt  
 To the news of the vally:  
 (Palais Palate Ate Pal, EH?)  
 Where I rejoined J-B for dessert.

WHITE BOY'S WIRING  
 EXPLODES IN CONCERT  
 1ST NOTE, DEPRESSED  
 HE REVISES THE LIST  
 OF THINGS TO SOLVE:  
 a. poor vs rich  
 b. Black vs White  
 c. USSR vs USA  
 d. women vs men  
 SHOCKED BY REVELATION  
 WHITE BOY REALIZES HE  
 HAD REVERSED THE AC/DC  
 RUSHES TO RESET SET-UP  
 BUT EVERYONE HAS GONE  
 - Paul Weinman

IT'S ANOTHER DIRTY TRICK  
 Of nature but all religions other  
 than mine are just beating  
 around the bush. To make any  
 sense arithmetically a religion  
 should have been around a  
 million years more or less.

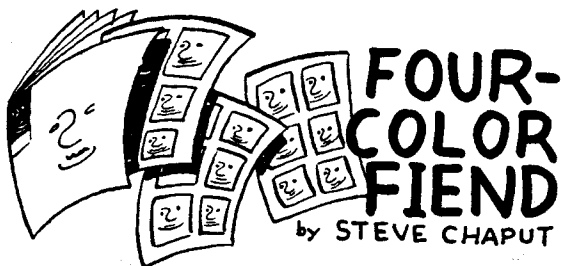
Box 2243 - YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO, 44504  
 BRAINBEAUISM

Prelate Sues U.S.

## Golf Course Hazards May Prompt Congressional Probe

HUMDRUM, Naura (TU)—Hammer DeRoburt, the Field Marshall, Archbishop, Chief Justice, and President for Life of this tiny island 2,500 miles southwest of Honolulu is suing the U.S. government for \$250, claiming that an injury to his big toe suffered on the Navy's golf course here prevents him from golfing before the altar.  
 DeRoburt says the big toe on his left foot was rendered completely and totally useless in 1984 when he slipped in some dog wastes on the 4th hole fairway. His suit claims the U.S. government was negligent in policing the area, and he seeks \$10 in actual damages to cover medical expenses and \$240 in punitive damages.  
 Lawyers for the government claim in a countersuit that DeRoburt was trespassing when the accident occurred. Assistant U.S. Attorney Winston Pusute is seeking \$5.2 billion from DeRoburt for the "unlawful use, enjoyment and wear and tear on the course."

Yousarian Universal



Well, it may come as a surprise to some of you out there, but I do read something besides super-hero comics! This time around I'd like to let you in on a few comics in which all you Politically Correct guys and gals might be interested.

**ITCHY PLANET #2** (Fantagraphics Books; \$2.25 US/\$3.40 Can.) is the quarterly PC book from the nice people who bring you The Comics Journal and Amazing Heroes. This issue has articles on the image of Arabs in comics, sexism and the various benefit comics published for Ethiopian famine relief. Upcoming books promise to cover elections and Green Cities (?). Recommended.

**FOOD FIRST!** (Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1885 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103; \$1 US funds per copy plus 15% postage and handling [\$1 minimum]. Inquire about bulk discounts)—This book is based on **FOOD FIRST: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity** by Frances Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins. It has been adapted by Leonard Rifas, with art by Rifas, Steve Leialoha and Larry Rippee. Lappe may be familiar to you as author of the best-seller *Diet for a Small Planet*. This book is being used as a fund raiser by a number of non-profit groups around the country. Thought-provoking. Recommended.

**STRIP AIDS U.S.A.** (Last Gasp; \$9.95 US)—Funds from this book are going to the Shanti Project of San Francisco, an organization providing training and support to healthcare workers and AIDS support facilities around the country and the world. Some of the artists appearing in this book are Sergio Aragones, Bob Burden, Howard Cruse, Will Eisner, Jules Feiffer, Los Bros. Hernandez, Bill Sienkiewicz and S. Clay Wilson. As you can see, they run the gamut from mainstream to underground and everything in between. From one-panel illos to three-page stories, the art style and formats also run the range from super-hero spoofs to autobiographical pieces by the likes of Harvey Kekar. Recommended.

**AARGH!** (Mad Love; \$4 US/\$5 Can.)—The first publication from Alan Moore's own company, this book is a fund raiser for the Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action. The title is derived from "Artists Against Rampant Government Homophobia," which is even worse in Great Britain than it is here (if you can believe it). The book contains work by many of the same people who appear in STRIP AIDS U.S.A., but a few others as well, such as Robert Crumb, Art Spiegelman, the aforementioned Moore and Dave Sim with "An Untold Tale of the 'Secret Sacred Wars'" (for all you Cerebus completists out there). As are all the others, this is recommended.

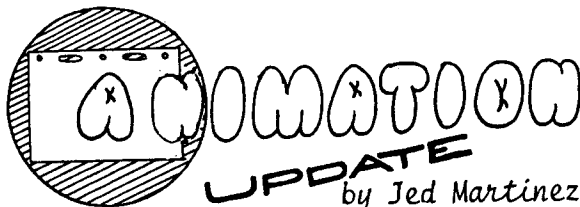
Just to end with a bit of comics news, a few of you may be interested to discover that ACTION COMICS WEEKLY won't be—weekly, that is. It will be going on hiatus for a few months and return (continuing the numbering) as the Superman book from George Perez. Hell, I actually enjoy some of these strips, too!!

Be on the lookout for INVASION!, the latest multi-part crossover saga from DC, with one of the spinoffs a "special issue" of the Daily Planet shortly after the first issue. Tie-ins are already starting with this month's FLASH, so stay tuned.

In case you're wondering...I voted to "kill off" Jason "Robin" Todd.

No Tany  
Sojao 30

(ED. NOTE: The 4-Color Fiend and I are selling some of his comics overflow—if you'd like a list of Steve's for-sale collection, please send us a SASE c/o INSIDE JOKE. Good prices for some rare [and not-so-rare] stuff! Money will be donated to IJ, I think.)



by Jed Martinez

#### FILM REVIEW:

The first time I'd viewed Steve Segal and Phil Trumbo's

**FUTUROPOLIS** was at a sneak preview a few years ago at the now-defunct Thalia in upper Manhattan. This 'Flash Gordon-esque' film combines numerous special effects, including several different forms of animation (pixillation, line drawings, and even drawing on the film frames itself, à la Norman McLaren). The main problem with this film is its running time (about 40 minutes); it's too long to be a short subject and too short to be called a feature-length movie, although it's probably the only film of its kind to include its own intermission segment (the 'McLaren' portion, done by Segal). To compensate, FUTUROPOLIS recently became the main feature in an anthology of fantasy shorts compiled by Expanded Entertainment. Some of the other features are worth a look-see, if not for their subject matter then definitely for the effects. Michael Posch (whose first hit film was "Rock 'N' Roll Pet Store")

presents "Mongo Makongo," a light satire of wildlife documentaries that crosses Marlin Perkins and Magritte. Mark D'Oliveira's "Evolution" (not to be confused with the Oscar-nominated short of the 1970s from Canada) shows how man evolved from his simian counterpart in the past, and how man's future advancements will drive us all ape (and all in one minute!). Todd Holland's "Chicken Thing" is the best parody of films like POLTERGEIST ever conceived. More familiar shorts include Chuck Jones' "Duck Dodgers," Tim (BEETLEJUICE) Burton's "Vincent," and a rare Beany & Cecil cartoon from Bob Clampett, "Beanyland," an obvious lampoon of Disneyland ("This wasn't made by a mouse; this place was made for mice!"). All in all, if sci-fi/fantasy turns you on, go see "FUTUROPOLIS AND TIMELESS TALES OF FANTASY."

**BOOK REVIEW:** The much-awaited biography *That's Not All, Folks!* is out, and it was worth the wait. The "Man of the Thousand Voices," Mel Blanc (with help from Philip Rashe), gives a vivid description of his unique life, from his birth in San Francisco in 1908 (under the name Melvin Jerome Blank) to the present, where he still entertains kids of all ages with his incredible vocal abilities. Mel had worked as a voice actor at many animation studios, but it was at Warner Brothers where he was at his best form. In the book you'll find out how he developed the many characters from the WB menagerie, and how he got the screen credit "Voice Characterizations By..." In addition, you'll hear other animated-related anecdotes, including Mel's only vocal assignment with Walt Disney Productions (for a role in PINOCCHIO). Of course, you'll also hear about how he got into cartoons, as well as TV and radio, and of his association with such stars as Al Jolson, George Burns, Abbot & Costello, Joe ("You wanna be a duck?") Penner, Judy Canova and his dear friend Jack Benny. A true kaleidoscope of show-biz tidbits, spanning 275 pages and several dozen photos, this is good reading (when your Trinitron's in the shop). The more you read, the more you'll appreciate this talented man's story. \$17.95 from Warner Brothers, appropriately enough.

**ANIMATION FOR SALE:** As the holidays approach, you're probably wondering what to get for that friend or relative who's into cartoons. My recommendation for gift-giving is a 1989 calendar. Besides the usual ones with a Disney motif, there are three calendars that are top choices: 1) The Hanna-Barbera calendar, commemorating the 30th anniversary of their start of animation for TV, featuring characters like Huckleberry Hound, Yogi Bear, The Flintstones, The Jetsons, and Top Cat; 2) For you Warner Bros animation buffs, there's the Looney Tunes calendar, with comments on the first page by Chuck Jones and full-color illustrations recreating scenes from the best cartoons of Termite Terrace, with a different scene for each month; 3) Lastly, the hottest item for 1989 is the hottest item of 1988, namely, the Who Framed Roger Rabbit calendar, with 12 different full-color scenes that combine live sets and actors with the various toons from the film. Prices of these calendars start at \$8.95 plus tax. My one quibble is, does anybody know if there's a Pink Panther calendar for 1989? I'm only asking because next year marks the Silver Anniversary for the fuchsia feline...Speaking of anniversaries, with a certain mouse celebrating his 60th year of existence, no better place to shop in NYC can top Mouse N' Around (197 Bleeker St., New York, NY 10012, 212/529-5656), where consumers will find everything from clothes to figurines depicting you-know-who and other Disney characters.

**MAGAZINE UPDATE:** Apart from Roger Rabbit appearing as the cover story for a variety of magazines (including "American Cinematographer," "Film Comment," "Starlog," "Comics Scene," "Post," "Cinefix" and even the French publication "Premiere"), the only other news to report is the termination of "Get Animated!" after its 19th issue (September '88) was released. Owing to commitments for several animation studios, editor/publisher John Cawley had decided to suspend publication of GAI, but the 'mean ol' fox' will still be a contributing factor to Gladstone's "Cartoon Quarterly," along with his partner Jim Korkis.

**FRUITS (AND VEGETABLES) OF THEIR LABOR:** A "bunch of golden raisins" go to Will Vinton, and rightly so. He and his Claymation crew picked up two well-deserved Emmy Awards, one for Outstanding Animated Program ("A Claymation Christmas"—see IJ #59) and one for Outstanding Achievement in Special Effects (for the "Moonlighting" episode "Come Back Little Shiksa")...For being hired as the new voice for Hanna-Barbera's perennial character Yogi Bear, actor Greg Burson (a protégé of the late Daws Butler) earns some "imitation fruit"...CBS and Buena Vista Television's special "Roger Rabbit and the Secrets of Toontown" scored "13 carrots" (out of a perfect score of 14). The one-carrot deduction was for obvious overhype of an otherwise excellent SPFX documentary...While we're on the subject, Marvel Publications deserves an "extra-large artichoke" for going one layer deeper with Roger. They printed a graphic novel of WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT, which was based on the film which, in turn, was based on Gary Wolf's novel about comic book characters. Talk about coming 'round full circle...On the cable TV front, some "baby bean sprouts" go to the many pay-per-view networks for another unofficial world TV premiere. This time they debuted the George Pal short subject anthology "The Puppetoon Movie"...For the most unusual comeback to TV, "Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids" earns the USA Network an "old radish in lime Jello"...And finally, Nickelodeon is rewarded with some "sliced bananas" for re-releasing some rarely-seen Looney Tunes shorts. Unfortunately, like its predecessors (the three major networks), many of the cartoons are edited for television; all the more reason to rent or buy the home-video versions of them, or to see them in movie theaters (for which they were originally made in the first place!)

# Why I Hate Hawaii

by Mark Rose

Oh, I suppose I don't really hate it, I mean why complain, you get a couple weeks off work, you go to a place where the main industry is pleasing sunburned tourists, and you eat and drink your way through what is supposed to be a relaxing vacation. Perhaps it would be more truthful to say I was disappointed in Paradise, our 50th state.

It wasn't our lodging; in fact, our bed and breakfast hosts were the best things on the trip. We went to Makena Landing on Maui, known as The Valley Isle, and were treated to native hospitality by the Luuwais. These people lent us boogie boards, swim fins, beach towels, beer, invited us to two family reunion dinners, entertained us with spontaneous and lively Hawaiian music on an ancient ukelele and guitar, and generally killed themselves to give us a good time. Too bad they didn't have air conditioning.

I come from Erie, Pennsylvania, where the snow sits six months on the ground and a warm day is looked on with disbelief, so much so that we continue to wear our parkas in the heat. Sure, they have a summer, but there's always a little wind to cool things down, and no humidity. Here, it's just hot. The merciless afternoon sun beat into our room, making it uninhabitable until well after dark. Since we couldn't go to the room and make love (we were on our honeymoon), we ended up going to the Maui Prince and drinking.

Now, admittedly, when you've been wilted by old summer Sol, there's hardly anything that will pick you up faster than a Tropical Itch made by the folks at the Cafe Kiowai in the Prince. But then again, it's not the kind of thing they mention in the guidebooks. What they do mention in the guidebooks are the glorious white sand beaches, the relaxing motion of the surf, colorfully intense sunsets, snorkeling extravaganzas, romantic moonlit walks, and anything else one sees on the cover of a Harlequin romance. What they don't mention are the good things: alcohol, marijuana dealers, and more alcohol. Of course, they miss out on a few bad things too, like the bugs.

Foolishly, I blundered one day into the tropical rain forest (okay, so it was a single stand of trees right off a paved four-lane highway next to a shopping mall) looking for wood roses for my mother-in-law (the same one who appropriated my Gun in Cheek book for good). When I emerged, my legs were covered with bright, itching red spots the diameter of a dime. They itched so badly I seriously thought of removing the little spots with a penknife. I don't know if the bastards were mosquitos, spiders or what, but they stayed with me through the trip, and only disappeared when we landed in wonderfully cold and clammy Seattle.

While I was displaying these warrior marks of insect bloodlust, we decided to sample the local food flavors by attending a luau. The Aloha Luau, to be exact, which translated means "Hello Feast." It was presided over by a rotund man named Don Kemahoe (or something), which translates into "King," and he told us how much his kukui nut necklace cost and how it only graced chieftains and special people, which translates into "lie." The luau is a traditional feast thrown at family gatherings to celebrate birthdays, important events, etc. The 300 of us intimate family members gathered around the picnic tables to celebrate the fact that the Royal Kaanapali Hotel was bilking us out of forty dollars apiece for this Aloha Luau. The food was fair (even though, for some reason, we were told what everything had cost), except shredded pork cooked in the ground really isn't all that special (it seems to me this is what we used to eat every day in the elementary school cafeteria). The entertainment was nice, especially six-foot-tall Jolana, who had an inscrutable face with wide-set eyes and...oh yes, sorry, I just got married, never mind...

For a breath of fresh air, we drove up to Haleakala Crater, ten thousand feet up, above the tree, animal and oxygen line. It was a moonscape with temperatures in the 50s from the knee up and 70s from the knee down (heated by the sun, the dirt radiates warmth). Admittedly this was an interesting trip, what with the Visitor Center, the panorama, stark scenery, and Janet's unquenchable desire to go hiking.

Of course I had come prepared, decked out in the first pair of sandals I had ever worn complete with the necessary bleeding blisters. A five-mile hike at ten thousand feet with a fifteen-hundred-foot change in elevation (with sandals) is not my idea of fun. So after that, we went back to the Maui Prince and drank Tropical Itches until we both lost the same game of Gin Rummy.

The Tropical Itch, a glorious concoction of rum, fruit juices and a dishwasher-safe backscratcher, seems to be a drink indigenous to Maui. When we made our second stop on the big island of Hawaii (not the main island of Oahu where Honolulu is, or the state itself, nor the medium-sized island of Molokai, but the big island, the Orchid Isle), their bartenders were a tad less competent, and the only decent Itch was the one on my legs.

It was just one more thing that made Hilo even less attractive. Ah, Hilo, the city styled on Forties wrong-side-of-the-tracks without any of the charm. Decorated with rusted-out corrugated metal huts, and filled with a populace that borders on the line between vicious psychotic/sullen malcontent, the place deserves its disastrous history. Twice the city has been practically wiped out by giant tsunami (tidal waves), and a few reminders of Nature's force let the visitor know that even when on vacation, one is still terribly mortal. We managed to survive, but I'm not sure how, what with seedy local bars, food that even the fish in the

koi pond wouldn't eat, and a cranky husband who wanted to go home. Things got so bad by the end of the trip, we were taking photographs of the better meals we were served, and seeing just how drunk we could get on Hawaiian rum and guava juice (which we learned later, much to our dissatisfaction, is a natural laxative).

Even flying home wasn't much of a joy. We were delayed two hours at the Kona Airport, missed our connecting flight at Honolulu and were delayed seven hours for the next one. We asked for a meal ticket, and while the maximum amount given was \$6.50 per person, the only restaurant served nothing priced under \$6.95. After arriving at 3:45 in the morning in Seattle, we found that they had misplaced our baggage (after telling us it would definitely be on our new flight), so we had to take a taxi home, wake up our next-door neighbor to use his key, and flop dejectedly into the house. They found our luggage the next day, but didn't deliver it until quarter to one the next morning. Ah yes, I love Hawaii. Next time, I'll enjoy it even more in Seattle.

For those readers who may actually be interested in going to Hawaii, and who may be better able to handle its peculiar charms, I strongly recommend the book *Bed & Breakfast Goes Hawaiian* by Evis Warner and Al Davis. Our hosts were extremely gracious, had access to all the popular attractions, and the unbelievably reasonable prices for staying in their lovely homes were the next best thing to camping for free.

## THE CHEMISTRY OF ANGER

by C.C. Wilson

Statistics prove that smoking can kill the smoker.

But what do we know about the number of innocent people murdered by folks who are in withdrawal from nicotine?

The life of Adolf Hitler, for instance, provides an extreme example of the nicotine-withdrawal syndrome. Hitler became secretly addicted to cigarettes during World War I and covertly remained so for the rest of his life. Adolf and Eva shared a last smoke in the bunker just before blowing their brains out. For public relations reasons he had tried again and again to quit. Hitler's biographers have yet to reveal the facts about his periodic smoking binges, after each of which he was relatively sane for a short period of time.

It will someday be admitted that the Germans made their biggest blunders, like invading Russia, when Hitler was suffering through long periods of withdrawal from nicotine.

There was a joke in Hitler's inner circle: "When Adolf withdraws, the Wehrmacht advances."

I myself gave up nicotine again six months ago. I went back to it a week ago for the sake of my family and friends, for the sake of that innocent bystander whom I might run over someday in my rage of withdrawal.

The Omniscient Authorities say that nicotine is out of my system a couple of weeks after I've quit. These OAs say that all of my symptoms after that are "strictly psychological."

"It may be all in my head, BUT WHAT A PLACE FOR IT TO BE." (caps mine)

In all seriousness, or at least in as much seriousness as I am allowed in an essay whose tone appears to be somewhat whimsical, I don't believe that an addictive drug like nicotine leaves the body just as it was before addiction began. Even when the chemical has departed, things are different in there. The synapses in my brain don't know how to make the chemicals that nicotine provided to help them transmit nerve messages. They are screaming for help. They demand that I eat more food, drink more coffee, consume more alcohol. Something. Anything, they don't care.

Don't tell me I just want to fool around with a cylinder of tobacco in my hands. Don't tell me that I have an oral fixation. When I'm using nicotine I don't even touch cigarettes any more. They tear up my throat too much. I chew those boring little pieces of prescription gum that contain nicotine. Less than one a day, usually. Less than the equivalent in nicotine of one cigarette a day.

But even this small amount of nicotine makes me feel a lot better. It also increases my blood pressure. I'm more likely to suffer a heart attack or a stroke.

But my going without nicotine is even more dangerous—for other people.

My hostility level increases geometrically. My already-overdeveloped critical faculty takes over my soul even as I become super-sensitive to the criticism of others. This is not a good combination of psychological reactions. This combination can lead to divorce, ruined friendships, a broken career, throttling the woman ahead of me in the drug store line as she takes ten minutes to make out a check for \$1.23, sitting on my roof with a high-powered rifle and picking off anything that moves.

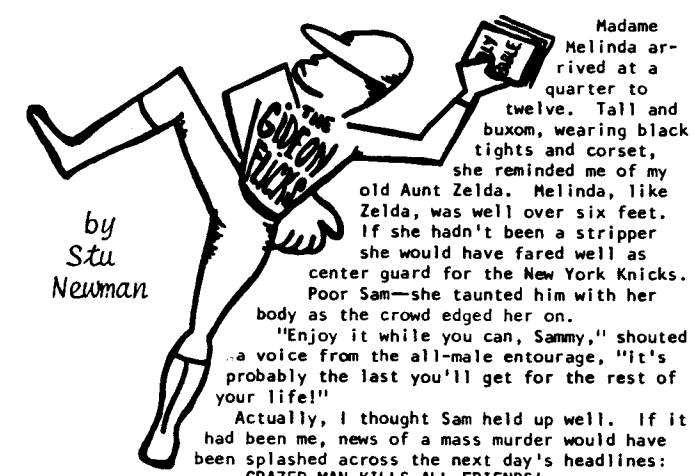
I would like to take this opportunity to apologize to everyone I have insulted in the last six months. Since I've gone back to my gum fix I'm a different person. Not exactly loving and supportive all the time, but better.

I'm going to find a medical expert, a shrink who specializes in chemical withdrawal. I'm sure he or she can find something helpful to me when I try to give up nicotine again (after I've repaired all of those relationships that are still salvageable). I'll bet we can substitute some less harmful drug. Like heroin. Or cocaine. Or maybe a combination of these two, something that can both pick me up and relax me the way nicotine does.



# NEED TO GET SICK? FAST?? EXPRESS GERMS

EDITOR'S NOTE: Remember, our next issue will be coming out in the beginning of December, so if you want to do any Christmas/holiday-related stuff, you must send it to me by Hallowe'en (talk about getting a jump on the season!), because by the time #65 comes out it will already be 1989. The same goes with any dated material relating to Thanksgiving, the New Year, that sort of thing. IJ operates on an every-six-week basis, and sometimes major holidays and occasions that are often subjects for IJ work fall in between our publishing times—this is one of them. Thanks for your promptness!



Madame Melinda arrived at a quarter to twelve. Tall and buxom, wearing black tights and corset, she reminded me of my old Aunt Zelda. Melinda, like Zelda, was well over six feet. If she hadn't been a stripper she would have fared well as center guard for the New York Knicks. Poor Sam—she taunted him with her body as the crowd edged her on.

"Enjoy it while you can, Sammy," shouted a voice from the all-male entourage, "it's probably the last you'll get for the rest of your life!"

Actually, I thought Sam held up well. If it had been me, news of a mass murder would have been splashed across the next day's headlines:

**CRAZED MAN KILLS ALL FRIENDS!**  
**WORLD'S TALLEST WOMAN FOUND DEAD IN BROOKLYN!**

I had shared a cab to Sam's bachelor party with Jack Taminetti and Neil Beane. Jack and Neil, like myself, were musicians—only they had recording contracts.

We arrived in Brooklyn at about 10:00. The room was packed to the rafters with macho geeks. One photograph could have done more to prove Darwin's theory of evolution than a museum full of fossils.

We located Sam. Jack asked him about his pregnant fiancée, Audrey.

"What'd you think it'll be? I hope it's not a girl."

"I hope it's not a boy, either," I added, "I'd like to see something new."

After three or four hours of oppressive inanity it was over. The bachelor party ended with the same dull thud with which it had started. Madame Melinda packed her flesh back into her corset and tights and was out the door within minutes.

The wedding was to take place in Detroit, the bride's hometown. To cut down on expenses, Neil and I decided to split a room.

Although we both lived in Manhattan and had plenty of gay friends, Neil sometimes displayed unusual hostility to the gay community. Upon bearing witness to men kissing on the street I remember him mumbling something about smashing heads. I took this as a sure sign of latent homosexuality and decided I would sleep with my back flush up against the wall.

My flight landed in Detroit about 6:00 Saturday night. I arrived at the Turnippin Inn around an hour later. The hotel was perfect—industrial park out back, interstate stretched across the front. It was the kind of place that did more to promote suicide in modern man than bankruptcy and divorce lawyers combined.

I went to dinner by myself but had the misfortune of bumping into Sam and some of the in-laws at the restaurant. Sam's father-to-be, Harvey, took notice that the waiter was black and promptly began to acknowledge this by ordering "saw! fute."

"B'rother," said Harvey with a thick Jewish accent, "gif me sum

saw! fute! I vant sum saw! fute!"

"Soul food, sir?"

"Ya, saw! fute, b'rother! Gif me vat dey eat in your neighborhood, b'rother!"

"Well sir, in my neighborhood they eat steak. Can I get you a steak, sir?"

"Na, I vant saw! fute...and 'Night T'rain!'"

The waiter gently put his hand on Harvey's shoulder. "Let me get you a nice steak, sir..."

The guy was so polite, he deserved the medal of honor. Back in New York, Harvey's head would've been chopped off in one fell swoop. I thought to myself, Harvey doesn't mean any harm. A little thing like the Civil War can slip anybody's mind.

I guess the thing I was not used to was the cultural difference between the orthodox Jew, like Audrey's dad, and the Americanized Jews, like my own family (whose most religious practice was eating at Chinese restaurants).

The most bizarre event of the weekend was commandeered by Audrey's friend, Shahmey. Earlier that day, Shahmey was in Sam's room. He took the Gideon Bible (which contains Old and New Testaments) from Sam's drawer and promptly flung it out the front door. Shahmey, too, was an Orthodox Jew. The only thing I couldn't figure out was whether he tossed the Bible out as a form of protest to the Christian scriptures which it contained, or if he thought he was Dwight Gooden in Game Six of the World Series.

The next day, Neil asked if there was anything special that one was supposed to do when walking down the aisle.

"Yes, you do this," I answered. I swung my hand back and forth and flicked my wrist. "It symbolizes throwing Bibles out the front door of hotel rooms."

Sam laughed and added, "It's called the Gideon Flick."

The wedding party met at 5:00 by the front desk. The Miss Grand Prix contest was taking place outside the front door of the hotel. Girls in swimsuits with legs up to my collarbone cluttered the lobby entrance. We worked our way through the barrages of flesh and grabbed a limousine to the temple.

The rabbi looked about as excited to perform the ceremony as a mechanic changing spark plugs. The vows were taken, Sam and Audrey were man and wife. The tune-up was a success.

I saw Shahmey later at the reception. He had a cold glass of gin in his Bible-tossing hand. Harvey, of course, was also there. I could see that once he calmed down, he actually tended to be a likeable guy. Audrey's sister, Beatrice, walked by carrying her son (who looked like Nikita Khrushchev but was only two or three feet tall). Beatrice and "little Nikita" drifted off into the crowd. The band played a medley of songs written during the Mesopotamian era. We drank and danced until they switched the bright lights on.

I boarded a New York-bound flight the following day. I thought about Sam on the way home. We went back a long way. We shared all the essentials of friendship: countless nights of pointless drinking; endless demented cavalcades through clubs and discos; wild sprees to exotic lands like California and Hoboken, New Jersey...

Though three years older than Sam, I was still single. I thought about settling down—wife, kids, microwave oven, automatic dryer...

I ordered a vodka and settled into a good book.

## The Book of Sam by Don Wagberg

Long and far, high and wide, Sam had searched for the key to responsibility resulting from confidence placed in one. Opponents encountered along the way had been formidable, but so had his fight. And finally, when nearing the twilight of his life, Sam got what was coming him.

It all began when Sam as a young and whacked-out kid went and banked the full sum of his childlike trust in Jamie. There was nothing but Jamie. Jamie, Jamie, Jamie. Whatever her wide, severely glossed mouth expressed as regarded her feelings for him, he believed. She and Sam belonged to each other because they had said so, and, from that magic moment on, life proceeded to be a day at the carnival for 36 months, six days and six hours, at the end of which time Sam caught Jamie sharing a beer and a few other things with Mochie The Dirtball, or "Buttface," as he affectionately was known in some circles.

"Trust," Sam could be heard mumbling in the high school halls. "Don't go spillin' your guts to me about trust. I know trust, all right. I know what it gets ya."

Despite the terrible way it throbbed for the first 21 days, this early wound was mendable, given Sam's youth and resilient disposition, and the scar was barely noticeable when he stepped in for round two at the university.

His opponent's name was Carla, and she believed in founding a relationship on trust. "Ooh, that word," Sam said to himself, "where have I heard it before?" It gave him palpitations, that he knew, but he decided, anyway at least, to commit a few liters of thought to her theory, because she was warm, and so was her personality.

After a while, however, three years or so to be exact, Carla helped Sam remember what he so carelessly had forgotten—the sting, the disbelief, the swelling puffy redness of the heart and constriction of the lungs and the suspicion that it was all a reflection of his inherently clumsy character, or, worst, that he smelled bad.

Now Sam was mad. The thought of doing himself in for the lonely glory of trust occurred to him a bunch of times while lying on his back in bed and staring at an unfocused ceiling and once while driving in his car, but the real fun turned out to be in the contemplation of it and nothing more; and, anyway, the thought of someone having to clean up his mess was a pretty vivid thought. But trust was not going to get off that easy, Sam swore to himself.

So Sam the young man petitioned his mother, his father, his best friend and his priest, and all of them, in effect, boiled it down to one thing: "Before you can trust another human being, Sam, you've got to trust yourself. It's got to start with yourself, and then everything eventually will fall into place (well, it sounds good, anyway)."

To Sam's credit, his heart was not yet so hard that he could not take reasonable advice there, and in time he built up such a wall of trust in himself that people came for many miles just to admire it. Sam tested his self-trust in many situations, small and huge, and found it to be relatively unshakable.

Now, by the natural order of things, time came to try it on Woman, the one who could take most of the credit for Sam's rarest achievement in spiritual architecture. She came in the form of Katy, indisputably the first female God in the flesh that Sam had ever known. And everything worked out between them for many years, and everyone marvelled at this match made on tv, this aesthetically pleasing relationship which grew and solidified until Sam was seen wearing it on his sleeve, while at the same time performing death-defying feats of confidence, like, primarily, taking it for granted that Katy was forever (although, that is what a god should be).

For five full years Sam with reckless abandon executed breath-taking love stunts atop the wall of his trust, true trust, until one time he got too cocky with a triple half-gainer and completely missed the wall, plunging into the pavement with a loud splatter. There was blood all over. "Who forgot to string the net?" Sam cried out in agony, this time torn and busted up almost beyond recognition. It took the combined and concerted efforts of nearly every friend and relative he had to convince him not to do it. "Don't, Sam, it's the coward's way out."

"Okay," said Sam, relaxing his grip on the manual eggbeater, "but here's the condition. Never again should you encourage me to trust; in fact, I never want to hear that crappy word. And don't ever shovel the terms 'Love' and 'Faith' at me again, unless you can back them up with good, hard evidence, thank you."

And they all lamented this new attitude of Sam's, but were in basic agreement that a cynical Sam was better than no Sam at all.

So 100-proof morbidity became Sam's best beverage, and he partook of its demonic delights in such massive quantities that it came to be considered the staple of his diet. Sufficiently numbed were his sensibilities. Crumbled, of course, too, was his great wall of trust. Some people, seeing this, in exasperation sometimes said, "Sam, why do you have to be so denying of the sincerity of people's motives and actions?" and he would retort with, "Remember what I told you?"

Others not as informed boldly stepped forward, with palms out in front, and conducted tremulous campaigns to kick Sam of his heinous habit, but ended up watching helplessly and in horror as it acquired too great a grip on him. They quickly fled, fearing for their own happinesses, which were flimsy enough as it was. In the end, it appeared, this was the Sam that the world would have to accept, for better or worse, even if it meant having to

explain every blooming little thing that came along.

"Dear Sam, what's the use of taking it all so seriously?" they'd say.

"What do you mean by that?" he'd reply.

Well, perhaps to everyone's ultimate benefit, Sam got a job and moved his ruins into the real world, where he adopted a healthy competitive behavior and was forgotten about. Meanwhile, Jamie, Carla and Katy went on to break many more hearts than they ever could have imagined possible in one lifetime, but that was the price they had to pay for being so much in demand.

Not until many years later did Sam, for the purposes of completing this tale, resurface, by then a grey, steely-eyed, accomplished, wealthy, hard-headed old Texas man whose memories of all those attributes that he once had deemed virtuous in his youth had been smothered out of existence. His worldly successes and securities were supplemented only by his fierce but quiet enthusiasm for the Dallas Cowboys, who had won him a few wagers here and there before motivating him to purchase a permanent seat at Texas Stadium, so he could permanently witness his benefactors benefiting him in the flesh. It was there, alongside him, that he met a long-time season-ticket holder by the name of Mary, a plain-talking but stunningly deep and honest businesslady who was known from time to time to blast off out of her seat at the littlest thing and spill popcorn all over Sam's lap, or to clutch Sam's arm and cut off his circulation while pedalling her legs up and down with the runner's.

"Get outta here with that stuff, lady," Sam could be heard muttering under his breath in the early stages of their (if the reader will allow me to use the term loosely) friendship, but as the boys in silver and blue continued to come through in the long run, a strange and unsettling thing began to occur. Thanks, in large part, to Mary's consistent exhibitionistic celebrations over simple demonstrations of athletic facility, Sam's childhood propensities—the ones that he had laid to rest—miraculously were being raised from the dead, and before long he was engaging in strategy discussions between downs with his new acquaintance, and once even caught himself wrapped bodily around her during an exceptionally crucial play. If only Sam could have seen himself, he might have been embarrassed. But this was real passion! This was every emotion that ever was experienced in the space of two hours!

So, in this totally unforeseen way, Sam broke his last law handed down to himself and developed a trusting relationship with the Cowboys. The monetary gains became secondary to the thrill of association with the winningest team in the NFL.

Sure, sometimes things went bad, but when they did Sam resisted temptations to blame it on poor play selection, or the quarterback for taking all day back there to get rid of it, or the sieve-like defensive backfield, and, instead, dumped the whole problem on Coach Tom Landry's shoulders, trusting him to make things all better again.

And you may think this is silly, or downright foolish, but no matter what you think, Sam and Mary, until the day they died, were inseparable in America's Team.

## THE ROSENBLATT EXPERIMENT

by Andy Roberts

"I'm just a bag of glands," he said, "with a sick, greasy skin," by way of explanation for being tossed out of K-Mart for price switching. You can see where his head's at. On the way back home he let a stranger on the bus use his Vicks inhaler. His favorite line? "Let's mate, baby," and "Does it glisten?" No, he's not shy, but you'd think he would be the way he looks. Jesus! Turkey Lips, we call him. He's got a beak like a gobbler on him. I think his confidence is just a decoy. It'd have to be—he reminds me of a wasted dog one step up the evolutionary ladder from rats. I mean this guy has been dorked and dumped on, man, more than once. I pity the poor sucker. His mouth is full of stars. That's what he told me: "My mouth is full of stars." The guy is girlish pale, long, thin, and slightly twisted.

"So he comes over to the house one day, on a goodwill visit—we invited him. Like he ever gets out anywhere or sees anybody, and the first thing he says when he steps in the door? 'Well, well, well, lookit these three—if it ain't the good, the bad, and the ugly.' Jill wanted to throttle him. I said he'll calm down. But he didn't. Next thing I know he's in the bedroom snorting through her panties, says he loves her thin, Bambi thighs. That was it, I threw him out."

"Then next week I was thinking about him, thought I'd drop over, see how he's getting on. Nah, you can't hold a grudge against a guy like that. I knock on the door. Come in, he says. So I do. He's at the kitchen table grappling with the Sunday newspaper like it was a giant stingray. Dead drunk at 8:00 a.m. I mean he held that bottle up and punished it with his lips. Hey, warm gin is nobody's nectar but I tipped the bottle anyway. Said he met a girl last night. 'Virgin,' he says, 'got the stain of honor on the sheets.' He's picked up some Latin diction somewhere, just read 100 Years of Solitude or something. 'Have a look. I was drunk,' he says, 'the bed was a roller coaster.' Then he joins me in the bedroom; acts surprised. 'Godamnightdamn! Look at it!' He acted like he'd never seen it before. Like he didn't really believe it. Then—"I got a secret," he said, pulling me closer—I noticed his ears were small, likt tiny pasta shells. 'You know that girl last night? She told me something. Wanna

(continued next page)

hear? Know what I want? she said. To look like Waylon Jennings with Carrie Fisher's mouth.'

"I split, man, I'd had enough.

"On the way back home, it was dark by then, a rusting Pinto of Indians squeaks to a stop in front of me. The driver gets out, looks like a football quarterback on LSD. Eyes doing sixes and sevens. 'Gob less you,' he says, stomped out of his mind. A god-damned stone, pacifist Indian in a rusting Pinto in the middle of New York City. 'Gob less you,' he says, and gets back in the car. But you know it wasn't so weird—getting fucked up and still functioning, that's the American way, says Rosenblatt. Says he's fighting the whole concept of rigid normality. Got a theory about how it's destroying society. Hey, hold on a minute will you, I got to take a leak.

"Okay. I don't know what to do in a hot tub. Do you? Rosenblatt's got one. You sit there and your skin goes to prunes and your trunks are bellying up around your waist. This is fun? Just me and him. I mean as a hedonist this guy is out standing in his field, right? You get it?...You don't get it? I'd have to draw you a picture. Got it? Right. Lonely, man, somebody shot the dots off his dice. How much longer can it go on, man? When's he going to wise up? Yeah? Well, I tell you—he left home at seventeen and fell under the spell of Italian opera. 'I won't be peed on!' he screams. This was at the Spoleto festival. Where I met him. They were using him as a gopher backstage. He was disillusioned. But that's the way it is with pain, it wouldn't bother you so much if it didn't hurt so bad, right? I gauged the damage in his eyes. Quite a lot there, man, quite a lot.

"So he's out of that racket now and into tennis. Following the tour around—tennis groupie. Got a thing for John McEnroe. Yeah, I know, man, so do I—four fingers and a thumb in the face. Who, Rosie? No, no, it's just platonic. You got to realize the man's unstable. They caught him once running through the woods naked with a can of Go transmission fluid. Before the AIDS thing he was getting his syringes from behind the doctor's office. What's that? Yeah, I've known him ten, twelve years now. Me and a couple of buddies—Helmut, Newton, Dexter and Rollo—used to run together years ago. Before Rosie went crazy. But I'm loyal, man, I hang on. I like my boxers dumb, you know. What's that? Ah, well. Like, Leon Spinks was the perfect heavyweight, Leon Spinks you could get a handle on. Remember Toby Spanker? Too bad he gave it up, man. Promising. Just said toodles and went into catering. Rosie worked for him for awhile. Till he threatened to blow him away and he had to leave.

"Sure, I'll have another. Thanks." I popped the top and downed half the beer in a swig.

"There's nothing attractive, no low tones at all in his voice. So he gave up torching and went into baseball. 'I coulda made it in the Bigs,' he says. 'I got the power of Mantle, the arm of Clemente, and the speed of Babe Ruth. Two out of three ain't bad.' Well, like George Burns says: 'Honesty is the most important quality in this business. If you can fake that, you've got it made.' Rosie couldn't.

"Hey, I got to be going, man." I stood up and eased a treble fart from my jeans, stepped out into the crick and stutter of sun-heated insects; a smell of hot pollen wafted up from the grass. I waved goodbye to my brother and took the dirt road out. Old Rosenblatt, if only he were real, I thought. Well, what the hell, man, is there anything wrong with entertaining people? Making them laugh? Especially your own brother. I mean he needs it, if anybody does, with his wife and three kids and job as a woodcutter. So it's all in my head, right, but I remember what Alice Walker once said: "So much of the satisfying work of a life begins as an experiment; having learned this, no experiment is quite a failure." I agreed, and started working on another.

#### MY LITTLE BROTHER

by Mary Ann Henn

I'm older than he is  
but I'm a nun—  
meaning what  
do I know about  
life so he answers  
my questions before I  
ask them and slits  
his eyes at me.

He throws popcorn  
in his mouth  
and chews, still  
looking at me.  
"Do you get it?  
That's life, out here  
in the Real World  
but how would you  
know?" I'm older  
than he is but I'm  
a nun.

## Nothing Happened

by Paul Beckman

So that's it.  
How can it be, that's it?  
I'm telling you, that's it.  
That's the reason you're not speaking with her any more?  
I'm talking to her. She's the one not speaking to me. That's it. That's the story. She'll have to speak first. Then I'll speak to her.

I'm missing something. Tell me what happened.

I told you. She did the same thing as last time.

Humor me. Tell me again.

Well, I was in Stop & Shop 'cause I had coupons. Usually I shop at Waldbaum's. I was picking up a loaf of rye bread when that woman comes up to me and—

24 "That woman" is your sister.

—that woman comes up to me and says, "Seedless. How can you buy seedless?" The first time that woman has spoken to me in five years as to tell me that I'm buying the wrong rye bread. Can you believe it?

Then what happened?

Seedless? I says. Oy, without my glasses they both look alike. I fumbled around in the purse for my glasses, put them on and switch for the rye bread with seeds.

But you don't like seeds in your rye bread. You say it gets under your plate.

I know, but I couldn't let HER know that.

Then?

Then she says, "I thought you shopped that other place. Why are you slumming?" The mouth on her. I tell you, if I wasn't a lady I'd have walked away. So I says, Coupons.

That's all you said?

That's all I had to say.

Then?

Then what?

Then what happened?

Nothing happened then.

How can nothing happen? You're not talking again. Then what happened.

Then nothing happened. I shopped. The woman went on her way. Your sister.

I'm not saying anything bad.

Well...?

She bumped me in mustard.

She bumped you in mustard.

That's right.

So...?

So. I was minding my own business looking at a jar of Gulden's when a cart bumps my cart and it's HER.

Anything break?

No.

Anyone hurt?

No.

So, what's the problem?

What's the problem, Mister? What's the problem, you ask?

I'm not "Mister," I'm your nephew. What's the problem?

SHE says to me, "For a few cents you can get the spicy mustard. It's worth the money." So I get my glasses out and switch for the spicy.

But the spicy upsets your stomach.

You think I'd let HER know that?

So 'cause she bumped you in mustard you're not talking?

So.

No, what?

No. We're not talking 'cause she bumped me in mustard.

Tell me.

She says, "So as long as you're here you might as well come for coffee." Another time maybe, I says. It's time for me to go home for lunch. "So come for coffee and lunch," she says. "You're already here, I'll get some tuna," she says. So I says, Don't get bread. Bread I have right here. A nice rye. So she says, "I can't eat that bread, the seeds get under my plate." So. Can you believe it?

So that's why you're not talking again?

Of course not. So I come up to her house for just coffee and maybe just a bite and right off she apologizes for the mess and the house is so clean you could eat off the floor which is probably what she'd like me to do.

So what happened? Finally after five years you're at least talking and sitting together. What happened again?

So she says, "Come into the kitchen while I make the tuna." So I come into the kitchen while she starts the tuna and she says to me, "Coffee?" Sure, I says. Well, the water boils and she puts the instant in the cup and pours the water about two-thirds full. I make instant for myself. Don't get me wrong. It's fine. Usually for company, though, I perc. I know, I know, this is for a sister. Good enough.

So?

So she gives me the cup of instant and goes back to mixing the tuna and I says, I'd like a full cup of coffee, not a half cup. "It's not a half cup," she says. "I left room for cream." I take mine black. So I'd like a full cup. "So you'll have another," she says. It's not the same, I says.

Well?

Well, what?

Well, what happened then?

Nothing happened then.

Then why aren't you talking again?

'Cause nothing happened.

If nothing happened then why aren't you talking? What happened next?

Nothing happened. She mixed the tuna without saying another word and I waited for her to fill my cup with more hot water.

And...?

And nothing. She mixed. I waited. Then I got up and left. You left? You just got up and left? Why? After five years.

Why?

She says, "Come up for coffee." I came up for coffee. She didn't say "come up for a half cup of coffee." That I don't need her for. If she says "come up for a cup of coffee" she should at least give a cup of coffee if I come up.

And what's why you're not talking again?

You know a better reason?



# SECOND DRAFT

## Part Three

by Sergio Taubmann

(Martin Warner's world has been changing lately. Nobody believes that he was once a book publisher with a dark-haired, decidedly unmarried girl named Ellen and a house on the East Side. His believability is not helped by the fact that his attempts to record these changes tend to disappear. The changes are becoming more extreme: he now lives on the West Side, his friend Dave is now a homeless person and Ellen is now named Eileen and is anxious to get married. Thus, he decides to seek help...)

Martin sat down opposite the scholarly-looking gentleman. He was about forty-five and had greying blonde hair. His suit was ill-fitting despite its supposed oversized nature. Martin got the impression that this professor liked to masquerade as an intellectual he could never become. What he was professor of was parapsychology, which meant he could have an explanation for the blackouts. The office they were in was at Hunter College.

That he was a professor of parapsychology did not bother Martin. After all, when he worked in the Accounts Payable office at Vanguard Press, he was always interested in the occult. What bothered Martin was that Hunter didn't have a parapsychology department until a week ago.

Martin gave the man a detailed description of his experience. The professor listened and nodded, muttering encouragements. His eyes betrayed the fact that Newsweek covers were dancing in his head. Martin wasn't a patient to him but a scientific advancement.

When Martin was done, the man sat back in his plush chair and lit up a cigarette. "I cannot give you any definite answers, Mr. Warner," began the professor. "I can guess at the reasons behind your problems, however. The secret to understanding your predicament, I feel, is in realizing that time is not linear. Oh, that serves the purposes of sci-fi authors quite well, but it's just not how things are. Time is circular. It is entirely possible, accepting this perception of time, for future events to affect the present."

The cigarette smoke assailed Martin's nostrils. He made a face and drew away. "I don't understand."

The professor smiled. "Of course you don't." He leaned against a file cabinet and struck a scholarly pose. "Let's say, for example, that you are told to expect a large sum of money in the future. By anticipating this future event, you will make certain decisions that will alter your present. You might make a large purchase on credit you normally wouldn't—a car or a house. Now, if the money ends up not coming your present is altered even further. You would have to give up your purchase or go into debt to pay for it. Now, granted, this is a short-term, hypothetical example. The changes you have described to me are of such magnitude and the future event that triggered them must be of a truly awesome size. It is so large that the present is transforming wildly to accommodate that change."

"If this is the case, we must ask why you are noticing these changes while others are not. I suspect it is because your lifestyle has made you sensitive to such changes."

"But I'm an ordinary guy. I don't know about timelines and stuff," Martin protested.

The professor smiled. "I wouldn't be so modest, Mr. Warner. The fact is, your lifestyle is bland, even—if I dare say—dull. There's no variance in your routines. Because of your ordered existence, you notice the changes in reality more readily than your friends. It's because you're so aware of what's real that you're aware of what's unreal."

"You mean I know what's going on because I know what's going on?" asked Martin. He had to admit he was more confused than before he entered the office.

The professor got up from behind his desk. His eyes were focused beyond Martin. This female accountant turned male academic was now looking into the eyes of published fame. Martin thought he was increasingly becoming a grotesque parody of the learned man. "Yes, in relation to yourself, of course," the professor replied. "Hmmm. I'm positive there are others just as dull as yourself out there, Mr. Warner. People who need help and an outlet to articulate their fears. I would love to do a study of this phenomenon...with your permission, of course."

"I'll think about it," Martin said. He didn't have to think about it very long. Two days later, a blackout traded Hunter College in for a Food Emporium and the accountant turned professor turned into an attractive—and decidedly female—cheese hostess.

Brrrrriiiiiinnnnngggggg

Martin did not bother getting up to answer the phone. He did not want to risk hurting himself trying to locate it. Ever since he taped up all the windows, hurting himself was a present danger. Besides, he knew his answering machine would get it.

Brrrrriiiiiinnnnngggggg

Martin listened from his bed to the machine message. He hoped the caller was not one of those rude people who hung up when they got a message. After twenty seconds, there was a beep.

"Marty? This is Jimmy at Bullocks and Pure. When are you coming back to work?" There was a pause. "Are you okay? Let us know what's going on. Please. Goodbye."

Brrrrriiiiiinnnnngggggg

Martin didn't bother turning his head. He was too weak to move. He hadn't gotten up from his bed in days. A furriness weaved its way around his feet.

## Salespersons Set To Space Out

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (YU) — NASA announced today that both an insurance salesman and a used car salesman will be selected to join the crew of

shuttle Exterminator on a mid-1989 flight. Since the salesman-in-space program was proposed last September, more than 19 million salesmen, most of them on commission, have applied for the position.

Yossarian Universal

WHISKEYS by Elayne

"MORE STRANGE BUT TRUE QUOTATIONS":

Here's another goodie from NY's answer to Reagan, Mayor Ed "Whiner" Koch---



"People who say they are starving — it is simply not true. In most cases, they are demented," the mayor said. He said that panhandlers who don't take advantage of the city's shelter and welfare system "either they are mentally disturbed or it's a scam."



Ooh, strong stuff; sounds a lot like Ronzo's "The poor are that way because they want to be poor..."



Aah, for the eloquent days of Marie Antoinette!



- Kathleen S and Family

C. 8-30-88 Pica-Pica Enterprises

Brrrrriiiiiinnnnngggggg

=Click=

"This is Martin Warner. I'm unable to come to the phone right now. Please leave your name, number and time you called. I will get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you."

There was a brief silence.

=Beep=

"Martin, this is Eileen. Where are you?"

Martin didn't answer. He continued staring into the dark.

"It's not just me, you know. Everybody's worried. Let me know what's going on, what's wrong. I want to help you. For God's sake, I love—" The message tape snapped and became entangled in the answering machine. Martin forced himself to get up and disconnect it. He banged his shin against the dresser doing it. Afterwards, he was so exhausted that he had to lay down and close his eyes. The interior of his eyelids was just as black as his bedroom.

The phone rang. Martin could hardly hear it through the numbness that came over his body. It rang again. The door to Martin's bedroom muffled its brassy trill. He had locked that door when he realized that it led to the living room. The living room led to the hall, which led out to the street. Martin couldn't handle the street. It was so different from what he remembered, too unfamiliar. At least the bedroom he lay in was familiar to him. He trusted it.

Con Ed had turned off the electricity for lack of payment. Martin didn't notice. He had grown quite fond of the darkness. The darkness at least stayed constant.

The phone went silent. Martin didn't notice.

The gas was turned off. This didn't harm Martin's present lifestyle. The bed-ridden just didn't need their kitchen. It was too far.

The police kicked open the door after the neighbors complained about the smell. Inside they found a rat-infested apartment that resembled a domestic prison. The stench of excrement and urine was overpowering. The furniture had gathered a thin coating of dust. The windows were covered up with black electrical tape and oak tag, blocking out the sunlight.

When the policemen found the corpse, one threw up.

"The guy buys it and you don't notice?" the eldest cop asked. His mouth gaped open to minimize the smell.

"We didn't know he was here," shot back a Spanish kid of about 17. His mother had called in the complaint. "We thought this place was empty."

A crowd was beginning to gather. The eldest cop tried to remove them to give his partner some time to recover. The poor guy was still on his knees in a dry heave.

When the police finally inspected the apartment, they were struck by the bizarre nature of the case. Why did a man with a refrigerator full of food and \$700 in his wallet starve to death?

And what was an executive at Bullocks and Pure in New York doing in a Detroit slum?

=END=



# Stepped Off of the Page

by Michelle Marr

Jamie hurried out of the cafeteria, tears leaving damp trails through her blush. Philip had been acting distant for almost a week and now she knew why. The louse was two-timing her; none of his excuses could account for the blonde cheerleader who had been sitting in his lap.

She blindly made her way through the crowded halls; her destination was the calm of the library. Lately, it had been her only refuge, a place where she could escape the friends who were suddenly avoiding her and excluding her from their plans.

Once she had entered the room with its tables that were empty except for a handful of students frantically studying for finals that could either save their grades or add another year to their careers as high school students, Jamie calmed down. She headed for a vacant table that was tucked away in a corner, far from the other students.

Enjoying her self-imposed solitude, Jamie opened her tattered folder and began to write, losing herself in the world of fantasy that she had worked so hard to create. The characters had been refined and developed until each had a life and personality of her own.

Mendelai, the blonde explorer who could look feminine and delicate, yet still be at home in a steamy tropical jungle, journeyed through her notebooks in a quest for legendary treasures. Never far behind was Vangien, her worst enemy in the jungle as well as in the civilized world.

Jamie was deeply involved in recording the details of Mendelai's search for a golden icon in the shrine of a pagan goddess when the shrill peal of a bell announced the end of the lunch period. Her concentration shattered, she shut the notebook and headed for her locker, number 666, to gather the pile of books for her next class.

As she pulled her history book from its dangerous perch on the top shelf of her locker, she glimpsed a tall blonde out of the corner of her eye. Dressed in khaki shorts and a camouflage shirt, the woman looked vaguely familiar, yet Jamie was certain that she had never seen her before. When she finally had the stack of books under control, the stranger was gone.

Philip was approaching with his blonde friend clinging to the arm of his jacket. Seeing him, Jamie ducked quickly into the classroom. It would be two hours until she could escape the oppressive building and retreat to the peace of her bedroom at home. Her worst class still lay ominously ahead.

The World History course was no problem; she had been reading about ancient civilizations since the fourth grade, when Mendelai undertook her first adventure. An easy class, except for the

whispers behind her. Whispers that she supposed were about her and the habits that had suddenly become grounds for vicious teasing from her peers.

Physical Education was the worst of her six classes. In the eyes of her teacher, she had a severe attitude problem. The woman also thought that "Thou shalt know and understand the rules of softball" was the eleventh commandment.

While she was trying to bat, Jamie saw the strange woman for the second time. Casually, the woman sat on a motorcycle just outside of the chain link fence. She had donned a pair of calf-length boots and mirrored sunglasses. Jamie could still not decide what it was that made her so disturbingly familiar; the woman moved and looked like someone Jamie knew well, but the teen just couldn't seem to make a connection.

With her attention focused elsewhere, Jamie struck out. But since she struck out when her full attention was focused on the game, she was used to it. The glares of disgust were something she had grown used to.

"Nice try," one of the boys sympathized. "You just have to keep your eye on the ball."

"Thanks."

The class seemed to take an eternity to end, but finally the teacher waved them towards the building. "Jamie Markson," she called, "I want to have a word with you."

"Yeah," Jamie panted as she ran up. She knew that she was in for a lecture.

"I know that this is the last week of school, but you are still a student in this class. If you don't start participating, you will be a student in this class next year as well."

"I'll work on it." Jamie had learned through experience that you never argue with PE teachers. The class is a dictatorship and their word is law.

"And watch that attitude. You seem to have more trouble getting along with your peers than any student I have ever taught."

"Personality clash," Jamie offered as an explanation.

"With twenty-three people?"

"Look, can I go get dressed?" Jamie asked cautiously. "I have a bus to catch."

"Go ahead." The older woman had busied herself making notations in the grade book. "And don't forget about that participation."

Jamie walked slowly up the stairs to the gym, purposely taking her time so she would have to spend as brief a period in the locker room as possible. When she had spent as much time watching the freshmen play volleyball as humanly possible, she went inside to get dressed.

The locker room was dismal with its burnt-out lights and cracked mirrors. Now that it was summer, the school had finally turned on the heater.

"Hey, Jamie," one of her classmates taunted, "you manage to get in trouble again? Flunking PE is gonna look real great on your report card."

"Better than flunking my native language," Jamie retorted as she struggled with the rusty lock. Her tormenter was in her English class and she had seen some of the other girl's grades.

Somehow, she made it through the last five minutes of her day. As always, they seemed to drag on forever. But today, her other tormenters had found a new victim. There was a new student in the class who had more of a response to their teasing. Although Jamie felt sympathy for the girl, she was glad that she was finally being left alone.

As she rushed down the stairs to the bus loading area, Jamie realized that the blonde was still sitting there. "Doesn't she have something other to do than hang around a school parking lot?" she asked herself.

The woman suddenly called out to Jamie, startling her. "Jamie, come here a sec. I want to talk to you."

Unsure whether it was a safe thing to do, but overcome by curiosity, Jamie approached the chain link fence. Nothing could happen to her in a crowded parking lot, much less through a chain link fence.

"I'm disappointed that you haven't recognized me already," the woman said, pulling a laminated card from her pocket and handing it to Jamie.

It was a driver's license bearing the woman's picture and the name "Mendelai Hawke."

"But you're just—" Jamie protested, gripping the card so tightly that it bent.

"No. At least not any more," Mendelai assured her. "Now come on, we have a plane to catch."

"Where?" Jamie offered no argument; if the woman was who she claimed to be, there was no need to. And since no one had ever read the stories, the woman was either authentic or Jamie had gone completely off the deep end.

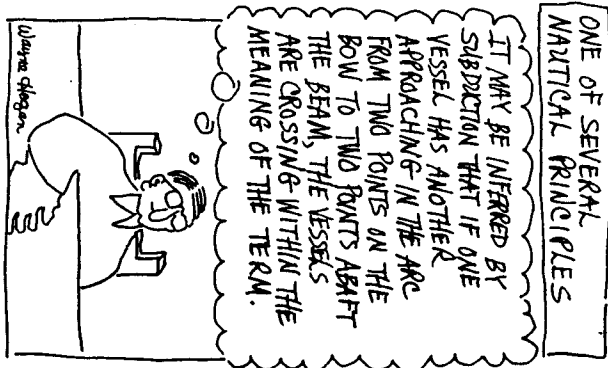
"The Amazon jungle. Vangien has a head-start on us and I want to get at that icon before she does."

Jamie decided instantly that it was better to take this one chance that dreams could come true than to run to catch the bus that had already started its engine.

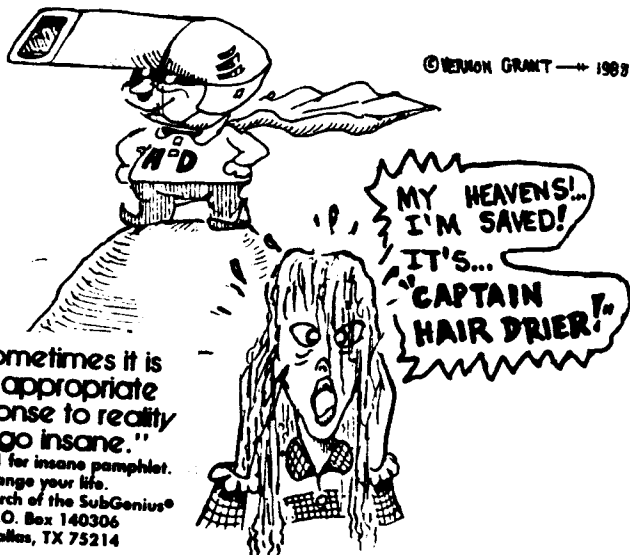
"So, are you coming?"

"You bet," Jamie smiled, dumping her pile of schoolbooks into the gutter filled with rainwater from the day before. She climbed onto the motorcycle behind Mendelai and the two rode away from the school and away from Jamie's shattered friendships.

"Oh, by the way," Mendelai said as she maneuvered out onto the street, "before we go to the airport, let's stop for pizza. I'm starved."



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# Sayz-U!(Letters)

Dear Elaine,

11:Sep:88

I have been absent from the pages for awhile. This is the first time I have had a chance to read the whole thing. Anyway, this racism topic has got my interest. While I am a bit burnt out on social issues, due to a talk radio overdose, I can try to piece together enough to get my point across, and aggravate a few people while I'm at it.

When I ask bigoted people why they feel the way they do or when I hear them talk about it, bigots generally talk of lifestyle—not physical characteristics. Very few white bigots say they hate blacks because of their noses or skin color. Their comments describe the lower socio-economic class lifestyle that the bigotees lead. It is amusing to watch lower-class whites deride lower-class blacks for the same class characteristics that the whites possess. The middle- to upper-class mentalities despise poor people of any kind.

Being of Sicilian descent, and a New Yorker, I am well familiar with this. This is why I am prone to wear orange on St. Patrick's Day; I dislike the Irish for the hard time they gave my forebears when they came to this country. The assimilated groups deride the newest groups to arrive, because they generally arrive under poor circumstances (refugees, poor, scandal) and start out at the bottom. And don't forget the difference between rural and urban living styles. The population shifts in this century have been from rural to urban. People who shit in the back yard and not going to start using toilets automatically.

Let's see...where am I? Oh yes, to expand on this model, I believe that the classes behave the same, regardless of the ethnic or racial background. My mother was raised upper-middle class; she acts the same as many of the WASPs or Jews I work for, even though she works as a finish seamstress in an upholstery shop. My dad is of the lower class, and would act this way regardless of his income (look at the nouveau riche for prime examples of this).

We have a school segregation problem in Palm Beach County. It is actually more of a class segregation than racial. All of the blacks who had the wherewithal to get out, got out. There are poor whites attending these schools; they are the ones who cannot afford to leave the area. Blacks are not being forced to live in the areas they do, but stay there because they can't afford to leave. It is a lot like the situation our family is in. We live in a poorer declining section of Lake Worth because we can't afford to move. The Guardian Angels are stationed two blocks away, right in the middle of the crack area. The city is starting to reclaim this area. Because of economics being what they are, this area will primarily remain mixed. As you can probably guess, I think bussing is a waste of time.

I think racism is mostly class-oriented and cultural in nature as most bigots (and I am formally in that category) dislike lifestyle rather than physical characteristics. After all, how reasonable can you sound by hating someone because of the color of their skins? To hate someone because of their lifestyle makes more sense.

I hope to hell this ends this discussion.

(Somehow I tend to doubt it. After all, it's not terribly fair for you to say your piece and then seek to close off any replies, is it? While I can concede your point of classism to some extent [hell, even Boy George Bush seems to have finally awakened to the actual existence of a class-based society in this country, albeit through accusing Mike Dukakis of fostering it—in psychological terms this is known as "projection"], I have to cite one example that seems to belie that excuse for racism. Yonkers, NY recently conceded, under threat of bankruptcy of city officials, to implementing a housing desegregation plan to which they'd been insisting they'd been opposed on the basis of class rather than race [as Jesse Jackson pointed out to them, what makes class prejudice more acceptable than race prejudice?], but it was interesting to note that any time a well-to-do black family went looking for a place to live in the nice section of the town, Yonkers real estate agents always, without exception, directed them to the lower-class [predominantly black] section, despite their income level. Classism may beget racism to some extent, but I personally see no excuse for either. Poor people aren't less human because they have less money. And, uh, "bigotees?" Interesting pseudo-word...)

This IJ is interesting as always; I am glad that the quality is still there. I am also glad that INSIDE STROKE has had a resurrection (so to speak).

As usual, Anni is her caustic self. I really should comment on her stuff, because the content is so consistently good. It is sort of like reporting the number of successful plane landings and landings per day; the real news is when one crashes. I avoid television talk shows, with the exception of GERALDO, which is true bulldada. Morton Downey is occasionally funny, GM Dobbs, but I want to hit him in the head with a 2 x 4 most of the time. And I will look for REJUVENATRIX when it hits this area, Dorian. I haven't seen a horror movie without commercial interruption for a while. It takes practice to work and watch at the same time, and I am out of practice.

"Dear Landlord" partially inspired me to write this "Sayz U." Thanks, DB! And Larry's "Sobriety" was interesting, because I occasionally attend Al-Anon meetings. Al-Anon and The Church of the SubGenius are possibly the two greatest organizations I know. Al-

Anon told me that it's okay, you're not crazy, and the Church told me that it's okay, you are crazy. There's a zen statement for you.

"The Visit," "Cat Capers," "Commercial McClue-In," "Homo Patrol," "Tables Turned" and "An Inconsequential Birth..." were my fave shorts this time around...or at least the ones I read and didn't skim. Specific comments go as follows:

Ace—What keeps me sane is A) knowing that the USA was founded to keep economic and political privilege in the hands of a few; I can now go on with my creative life knowing this is what was meant to be (mind you, I exercise my free speech whenever I can get someone to listen); B) the successful execution of my crafts; I feel sane when what I do works out. This is my normality; C) reading at the counters of cheesy restaurants, donut shops, on buses or at the beach; and finally, D) my son. I watch him beam when he masters a new skill or when we roughhouse, and know full well that when he turns twelve he'll probably hate me and become a fundamentalist storm trooper or something.

JP—Love FC! That's why I put him in the back cover (of course, he was the only one I could draw right, but that's technical). I have seen ROGER RABBIT twice, and read the book, which I recommend (a black comedy for sure), but only for technical and aesthetic reasons. It's good. This is the first major film innovation since the matte and miniature work in STAR WARS. I hate merchandising as well, like you, to the point where I consciously avoid most TV, period. And outside of the USA Network, there are no monster movies readily available here, except twice a week... real late...which I watch when I can remember to tape them.

James Wallis—Eh? Back from the dead? How come we lost touch? I hope it wasn't something I did, as I can be extremely offensive at times. Drop me a line if you can. How did the novel come out?

My congratulations to Anni and John Crawford on their books. I have seen Baboon Dooley show up in a few places here and there, and am proud to think I saw him here first. We have a pretty impressive roster, you know. There are going to be a lot of successful IJ alumni about. There are now. I just realized that I will be turning in my twenty-fourth back cover, if I can get to the copy machine. Number 64 will be four years exactly. I sold three of the four prints I did of the full page 'toons at Worldcon this year (all stamped "courtesy of IJ"), and Ivan Stang knew who I was (sort of) because of IJ. I may be able to get some work into the Stark Fist (I hear you laughing...) or the next set of 3-FISTED TALES OF "BOB" (not the one they've almost finished).

I attended my first Devival (praise "Bob") with all of the biggies presiding. Stang, Hypercleats, Meyer, Sterno and others were there. Got 'em to autograph my SG book and the pictures came out great. It is a south Florida tradition to launch Sweet 'n Low into the audience at the climax of the Devival and I did, of course. And magically, every one of those little pink packets was absorbed into the audience. A miracle, if there ever was one. I won't go into detail about the launching of the bleeding penis of Jimmy Swaggart, it being New Orleans and all. Jest use yer imaginations, that's awl. I new mah collidj footbaw! twang wood cum in handy sum day.

Aloha, y'awl.

PHIL TORTORICI

P.O. Box 57487

West Palm Beach, FL 33045-7487

P.S. I repeat my cry from the wilds of South Florida—If any of you can think to drop me a rock music article or two for my reference files, I'd greatly appreciate it. Key fobs, too.

Hi Everybody!

Ooowee! I loved Anni's piece of hanky info on the writer's strike biz! One of her everbest and to her I say, Adore to profound! Lots of my fellow scribes and scribesneeringly asked me (between snorting their coke and erasing their floppy disks) whyfor I did not go on strike because, after all, I do be a riter and even belong to some riters special groups. And the reason I said I didn't stop writing was this: With me, writing isn't a profession or avocation or even a talent outlet—with me, writing is a goddamn DISEASE. So I have NO CONTROL! Just like with me, reading is a disease. I will read anything. Probably I am the onliest person who actually reads all that stuff on detergent boxes and household cleaners. I can even give you the toll-free numbers to call if you have any questions or comments about Kotex maxipads or Aquafresh toothpaste. (I always wonder what sort of questions and comments they get—does someone call and ask if the products emit radiation or what? What could you possibly ask about toothpaste or maxipads?)

So that was my reason—I couldn't stop writing or reading because with me it's an actual ORGANIC PHYSIOLOGICAL disorder, only one of the many diseases my body (aka AMITYVILLE HORROR) hosts. Now, most folks accepted my reason, silly as they thought it was, because they know that arguing with me is pointless, like trying to strangle somebody with Charmin. But some of the sharper ones caught on and had to make bold and ask me why I had actually submitted material and was published (get out the garlic and the crucifix!). And there they had me. And that's where they left me, too. Because all I could say was the truth: Fame and Wealth, you guys, c'mon!

But I admire any strikers, even Brother Harlan, who I still love even tho' he needs a new hairdresser.

Anni's piece was a knockout, and I still not be fully conscious.

That's why, so far, I haven't seen WHO FRAMED ROGER EBERT—uh, RABBIT. But I think I get the general idea from all the tv commercials and stuff. I also haven't seen COCKTAIL, which is good

because I still haven't figured out why Tom Cruise? I understood Travolta (sort of) and I even got far enough to understand Stallone. But I am still as blank as a blackboard in a black hole about Tom Cruise. Yuh, he does have teeth. So did Mr. Ed. No, he sure can't act. Imagine someone like Crispin Glover in LEGEND instead of Teeth Cruise. Anyway, if any of you guys have figured out why Tom Cruise, hip me to it. I like Lou Diamond Phillips and Andy Garcia a lot. Send photos, if you can, or the real thing, especially Andy Garcia. Question: (El-Ayne should know) Can a person be a Rastafarian and practice Santeria pennecontemporaneously and still be accepted by Cornelia Guest and family? It's just that I need some extra money and I thought...oh, never mind.

I still need the phone numbers of Alex Trebeck, Mel Gibson, George Harrison, Lou and Andy. C'mon people, help the fucking handicapped. Jeez.

Curt Simmons' letter was real sweet, but hey Curt, honey, the USA really ain't the best place to live, it just ain't. Way ahead of it you got Bali, Nepal, New Zealand, Greenland and Iceland. But the real best place is the Kingdom of Tonga in the South Pacific—where it is tres chic to be fat and eat till you make Walter Hudson look like Tinkerbell. There's food aplenty, hospitality, not too many laws and the King is a swell guy. Also, there's some islands in the Fiji group that are sweller than the USA. The USA is okay but it's got too many people, too rich and too poor, and it's noisy here. Seems like nobody ever shuts the fuck up. But at least they show PEOPLE'S COURT regularly here and where else can you buy glitter pens?

Okay, I know already this letter is too long. El-Ayne is always pissbagging and moaning about SPACE and COST and all that other FINITE stuff, the hell with fuckin ART and EXPRESSION and CREATIVITY! But I got one more thing I need to bitch about—on the TV they got mostly 2 kinds of commercials, beer and cars. They got beer commercials with cars in 'em, and they got car commercials with people driving sharp mountain curves at 230 mph. (Do not attempt this at home.) Back and forth, booze and cars. Then some schmuck comes on from some GET CLEAN clinic where you go to become de-booosed and de-drugged. I wanna know about this. I also wanna know why Michael J. Fox. And why him saying "DRUGS" as synonymous with COCAINE? Like there aren't any other drugs out there, right? Like Michelob and Miller and all those godforsaken wine coolers. I don't drink at all—I can give the impression of being drunk sans booze. I take drugs because they're faster, they don't make you smell bad or vomit or give you hangovers. I don't like cocaine at all because it makes you ambitious. I like drugs that give the illusion that no longer are you human, but you wouldn't know what a "planet" was either, so you get to g'head to infinity. But these commercials juxtaposing cars and booze piss me off. And all the girls with the big gazongas and stuff. Just what we need—another Robert Palmer video. All these skinny, perfect people bouncing around like silly putty over Pepsi or Mountain Dew or some such thing. That guy with the hot sand 'neath his feet hightailing it to the Pepsi stand—like he's gonna pour the Pepsi on his feet. Anybody with half a brain knows if the hot sand is making owee boobos on your dogs, you go into the OCEAN, not to some overpriced non-biodegradable beverage stand. Sheesh.

And one more thing—the Wrigley gum commercial is a total failure. The one with the guy and his computer—he finally says, "So how come you never talked to me before?" Ad execs blew this one. The computer shoulda come back with, "So how come you never gave me GUM before?"

You get it.

That's it—in deference to El-Ayne's desperate need for SPACE and so on, I remain, whatever the fuck I am.

DEBORAH BENEDICT  
854 Y Street  
Lincoln, NE 68508

P.S. DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE! BUT BUY A LOT OF BEER AND TOYOTAS!  
YO! YOUNG REPUBLICANS! JUST SAY NYET!

Dear Elayne,

New IJ looks great! Love the 2-staple magazine format... (We plan to keep that format if, heaven forbid, we have to be 36 pages in any issue from now on. Otherwise, I'll have to weigh the sucker to see if I can put two staples in and not go over 3 ounces.) How you've managed to keep IJ going all these years is a constant amazement! Have mixed feelings about the resurrection of INSIDE STROKE...Great to see "Baboon Dootley" back in IJ. Brings back memories of the Olde Days with Clay Geerdes, Steven Scharff and front cover "See you in the funny papers" stories...Has it really been 8 years? My stars. P.S. You don't "write any humor for IJ?" Your witty li'l editorial asides are some of the funniest stuff in there.

Best,

ACE BACKWORDS  
1630 University Ave., #26  
Berkeley, CA 94703

(Ah, vindicated! Well, I always thought my asides were a bit amusing, but I have to concede these little comments in script are not exactly what most people would call comedy writing...I too miss the front cover stories, Clay Geerdes wants nothing more to do with IJ and has donated his old copies to some library in Iowa, but Steven Scharff's still very much with us!)  
Personal note:

I want to congratulate and commend Elayne Wechsler for keeping IJ and its contributors together for these eight years. What would have sent me screaming into a padded cell, she has made

28 blossom. If/when you retire from IJ, Elayne, you must tell me now

you do it. Then you can teach others.

STEVEN F. SCHARFF

P.O. Box 5004

Hillside Twp., NJ 07205-5004

(See? And I'd like to personally congratulate Steven for being with us since before the beginning, and is the only person I know to have received all 71 issues of IJ, including the eight issues from the infamous "Volume 1" during our "Uncle Floyd" days. Thanks for sticking with us, Steve!)

Hi Elayne!

I've been wanting to send you a couple of stories or something to you for INSIDE JOKE for a while. I enjoy it so much, and I want to become a part of it...The last issue of IJ was brilliant, as usual. I really dig "Commercial McClue-In" and "Zenarchy Stories." I thought it was kinda funny how just about everyone (okay, not EVERYONE, but all the media-oriented columns) was really obsessed about how they WEREN'T OBSESSED WITH ROGER RABBIT, DAMMIT! I dunno, maybe it just seemed like it to me for some reason.

Thanx a lot for the plug for T.W.I. in the "Fan Moose" column. There were a lot of cool zines in there that I'm not familiar with; I think I'll check a few out. "Fan Moose" is really great. Maybe you should keep it as an occasional thing like you have.

Speaking of zines, a few months back I sent Mike Gunderloy of FACTSHEET FIVE a few T.W.I.s, along with a fairly substantial SASE as part of his Zine Exchange program. Well, it's the weirdest thing. One of the zines I got back in the SASE was—wait, I have to go back and explain something (I guarantee, my letters get kinda weird after a couple of beers, but my stories and poems are taken a bit more seriously by their author)...A while back, I got this polite little note with a zine called META-SCOOP, which is this little, kinda New Age-y newsletter from Texas. They said they wanted to trade, because they saw my zine in FACTSHEET FIVE and thought that T.W.I. sounded interesting. I wrote and sent them a T.W.I. and said that I didn't think that we were really much the same, but I'd trade if they wanted to. I got a few more, but I think that they thought I abandoned them after a while, since they published once a month or so and T.W.I. comes out when I have the money, which is damn seldom.

So I sorta forgot about them, until I got this zine exchange envelope back from Gunderloy. There was a lot of cool and bizarre shit in it, as you might expect, and among the wreckage was a copy of META-SCOOP. Well, that was not too strange in itself, but imagine my shock, surprise, and horror (well, not HORROR) as I looked at this zine and saw that it was addressed to YOU!! Yup, INSIDE JOKE, Madison Square Station.

Small world, eh?

What was really cool was that one corner was all coffee stained. I think it's coffee. It might be cola or hummus or something else, but I'm pretty sure it's coffee with just a little cream. Wow! Is this, like, YOUR coffee? Or did Mike Gunderloy spill some coffee on this thing on its way to my P.O. box? Somebody cool spilled some beverage on here. This is a stain of greatness, perhaps fumbled onto this zine from the cup of late-night java that allowed you to finish up the masterful IJ #60 on time. Yes, this is the mark of coffee ACHIEVEMENT!

Whatever...

CURTIS OLSON

P.O. Box 19441

Washington, D.C. 20036

(Um, well, uh, I don't quite know how to tell you this, Curtis, so let me lead into it by mentioning that when I had to stop trading IJ with other zines, I packed off most of my excess collection, the stuff I wasn't planning on keeping [mostly 'cause those editors didn't seem to have any use for IJ], and sent it off to Mike, something I still do regularly when I build up a certain amount of stuff that people send me even though I never asked for it. Well, that's not coffee, I'm afraid, Curtis. You see, our cat Phredd has somewhat of a weak bladder around boxes, especially those in which we keep zines and comic books until we get around [probably in San Fran] to finally buying file cabinets, and unlike Steve, I never thought of protecting my zines by putting them in plastic... so I'm sure you can guess the rest. Sorry to shatter your romantic illusions; I just hope you didn't take the liberty of sniffing the zine. It's really only one corner; the really stained stuff I threw out, naturally. Steve's the coffee drinker in Apt. Third-Eye, by the way; I'm strictly a tea-totaller, but I've been known to get through those long IJ layout nights with help from some "tea" of the other variety...)

Dear Elayne,

Wow, another 36-page issue with #62! If you're gonna make this a habit, I guess you should make it two bucks...but when are we gonna see some hundred-page issues, eh? (Bite your tongue.) Anyway, reading this issue, we see that the Ack is back (all right!); "A Striker's Guide to Killing Time" is a handy guide for cartoonists and Snide Critics, too. "Talk Show Host Confidential" here puts in words what we all think about TV personalities. Dorian's REJUVENATRIX memoirs are, again, fun to read. "The 50¢ Question" reminded me of my stint at A&S, as stockboy in the lamp department. DeeBee's "Dear Landlord" screed against bigotry was so full of anger, the paper was beginning to smoulder! (And by the by, I hope you are well and doing fine, Deborah!) Dr. Iguana was cool, especially the show starring Elton John. Larry O's "Sobriety" sounded like a Pyrrhic victory...the booze problems stop, but other problems arise; ya can't win! Larry S's "Visit" was a masterful example of taking a really depressing subject (mysterious

illness) and writing about it in a hilarious way: the receptionist sculpted of shit, sleepwalking and pickin' other people's noses... "It was gone. The puffiness, not the butt." Good job, and I hope you're feeling okay too, LS... The sanity-keeping replies to Ace's question were more good stuff. Uh-ohhh, the Snide Critic picks on Roger Rabbit, and "Kid" takes mighty unkindly to this! Whoaaa... "McClue-In" was still good to read anyway, kiss kiss. ("See you in September" for a Roy Rogers commercial, indeed! Has R.O.C.K. taken action on this?) "Poet's Diet Book" has an eerie quality, probably from the depiction of Janet's (mounting?) obsessions. I like Mark Rose's "Boycotts" 'cause I always enjoy reading why one refuses to buy certain items, or shop at certain places. MasterMath strikes again—good. J. MacD's damn "Space Opera" sounds like a loving (?) tribute to the dumb-dumb sci-fi of the past; perhaps a complete draft could be sent to Spielberg or Lucas (ha-ha-ha, Kid)... Larry B's "news" was neat—he should contact Yossarian Universal. "Second Draft" keeps up the suspense; I'm looking forward to seeing the third part. And hooray—Baboon Dooley is back again! Chuckles were gained from taking B.R. Duncan's quiz. All this wrapped in two swell covers by Grant (Funny Alien) and Tortorici (Cool surfing vampire & victim).

Yeah, I know my letters o' comment have a staccato, terse feel, but whattaya want—IJ was jammed full of different things even before it hit 36 pages! And hey, now it has (drumroll, please)... it has TWO STAPLES!! Can laser-scan glossy covers be far behind? I can't wait!

Slack on you,

JOHN P. MORGAN  
185 Seabreeze Ave., #4  
East Keansburg, NJ 07734

Hello All!

Here's my opinion on some of your stuff:

Anni Ackner was fiendishly funny, as usual. (How about giving President Lou his own column? We could start a campaign to buy Popovac an anchor...) (Honestly, doesn't everyone pretty much feel the Popovac stuff has been done to death by now?)

"Talk Show Host" was... interesting. (I knew it was a conspiracy! It's all a conspiracy! Blahh!! Fnord.)

Hey, Dorian—got any openings next summer? (I could use a job, this sounds a lot more interesting than stapling.)

Deborah Benedict: You made your point rather well—but who in IJ-land is a bigot? Seems to me you're kind of "preaching to the saved." (It seems to me Ace was raising the point of difference, not superiority—but I've always been pathologically dense about hatred.) By the way, I've got nothing against male homosexuals, but I wouldn't want my daughter to marry one. (Joke! It was a joke! Honest!)

Hey, Gary Pig Gold—have you seen those \$7 tapes "Is Elvis Alive?" Here's what happens: you buy it, take it home, play it, and it has one word, "No." [Sucker!]

Larry Stolte: Liked "The Visit." It's just the bug that's going around fnord—nothing to worry about. (Did you really go through all that? Yuck!)

Hey, "Kid" Sieve: Have you reviewed those Wendy's "Hamburger A or Hamburger B" commercials yet? Maybe I'm overdosed on banality, but I think they're funny. (Da Kid say, "Yep, that was in my comments about James Dean, who plays the interviewer.")

Snide Critic—How about reviewing "Last Temptation of Christ?" That oughta be a laugh and a half. (Did you know there's a "The Gods Must Be Crazy 2" coming out? It can't be as great as #1. No way.)

Is "Fred the Poser Bad Guy, etc." going to be continued? Seems interesting. (No, as far as I know that was a one-shot.)

Like I said in my cheapskate letter, Steve, are you reading (or buying, for that matter) TOTAL ECLIPSE? Eclipse Comics' "Secret Wars"—hoo boy. I wouldn't mind it much, except that "Tales of the Beanworld" is in it. (This had better be good!) (Do you read "Beanworld," for that matter?) (We both read and adore BEANWORLD; I'm totally eclipsed by TOTAL ECLIPSE but perhaps Steve will have something to say about it in #64.)

Mark Rose: I've got to agree with your boycotts, with one exception. In my area, B. Dalton is the only "big" bookstore selling HIGH WEIRDNESS BY MAIL, so I think they deserve some respect—after all, it's only a dumb commercial (sorry, Kid!).

"Shot Dead" reminds me of some of Martin Gardner's math puzzles, somehow. Strange, and I liked it.

"MasterMath Explains..." was extremely—ONLY \$9.95 IF YOU ORDER NOW! PLUS, YOU ALSO GET THIS EASY-TO-USE "START-YOUR-OWN-CIVILIZATION KIT!" THAT NUMBER AGAIN, 1-800-5—Keep it up, whatever it is.

"Another Damn Space Opera"? Well, it is, but it's a funny one.

"As the Rag Turns" was funny. A nice one-shot.

Rodny, as much as I hate to admit it, I didn't understand "This Insane Thing." Since you're usually as subtle as an H-bomb, I guess I missed something. Sort of a punk "American Splendor?"

Don Wagberg: I couldn't make any logic or stimuli, reason out of your story—just too cryptic for a hasty peruser or observer like me.

Max Nuclear: "Irving Thugleens" is great (but sick)! Please continue.

S. Taubmann: I think I know what's happening to Martin: Like the "Post Brothers," he's shifting between alternate reality levels, only he can't control it. Interesting story—what's up with Dave? (My guess is wrong, isn't it?)

R. Bain: "BibTophiliac Blitz" is one of the all-time—oh, forget it, that's such an old joke. It's worth me mentioning that

## HEADLINE:

"EXPECT \$3,000,000,000  
OFFENSIVE) BUDGET"



\* PAY AS YOU GO \*

some of the addresses [in HIGH WEIRDNESS] are out of date. (Hey, Deborah: Send away for the "hate groups" stuff—now that's bigotry!) I'm not sure which ones yet, though (the "First Arachnid Church" moved without leaving a chance of address, though).

Adios, Amoebas!

R. BAIN (back at college)  
Box S-55, Castle Point Station  
Hoboken, NJ 07030 USA,  
Planet of the Apes

P.S. One last thing: my split-personality, Ol' Sam, has declared Ken Burke's character "Wino Ted" an official Discordian mythological hero—congratulations! Long Live Wino Ted! (Who's Dr. Iguana and where is he?)

Dear Elayne:

14 September 1988

Hi! Well, received IJ #62 a couple-three-four days ago, and thought I'd finally beat the deadline—but you know me... So, anyhow, let's get the comments and shit outta the way so this thing can get mailed before the end of the month!

Okay, the artwork: really liked the cover art and I absolutely loved the TULI-TOON on page 3.

Welcome back, Anni! I got a chuckle or two outta Susan Pac-kie's "50¢ Question," and I guess Deborah Benedict is coming back with a bang. I ain't about to touch that issue for fear of sounding like an idiot or worse.

Gary Pig Gold and Tom Deja were both good and I guess being an alcoholic must be pretty much like the depiction in Larry Oberc's piece. Talk about needing a reminder that IJ is a comedy magazine! Really, Larry, SOBRIETY was totally depressing! Lighten up and shit, my friend!

I chuckled maniacally throughout Larry Stolte's VISIT and I must confess to a certain perverse enjoyment of the whole thing...

CAT CAPERS was just a teensy-bit cat-egorical, don'tcha think? Sort of a cat-astrophe, although I, personally, don't have anything against such a cat-amount story.

Mark Rose deserves the David Letterman "YES" award this issue, I think. I heartily despise both Waldenbooks and B. Dalton. My used-to-be-local Waldenbooks refused to carry anything by Harlan Ellison and numerous other writers on the basis that they were "too controversial." This from a bookstore dealing in a vast assortment of books relating to pornography, religion, politics, Satanism, occultism, murder and mayhem, rape, sex, race, and I could go on and on but I won't. If those topics aren't controversial, I don't know what is. But those don't count. Only controversial writers. Dickheads.

SHOT DEAD? kind of reminds me of a logic problem from a crossword puzzle book. And A MAN OF DIGNITY was really treading on thin ice, wasn't it?

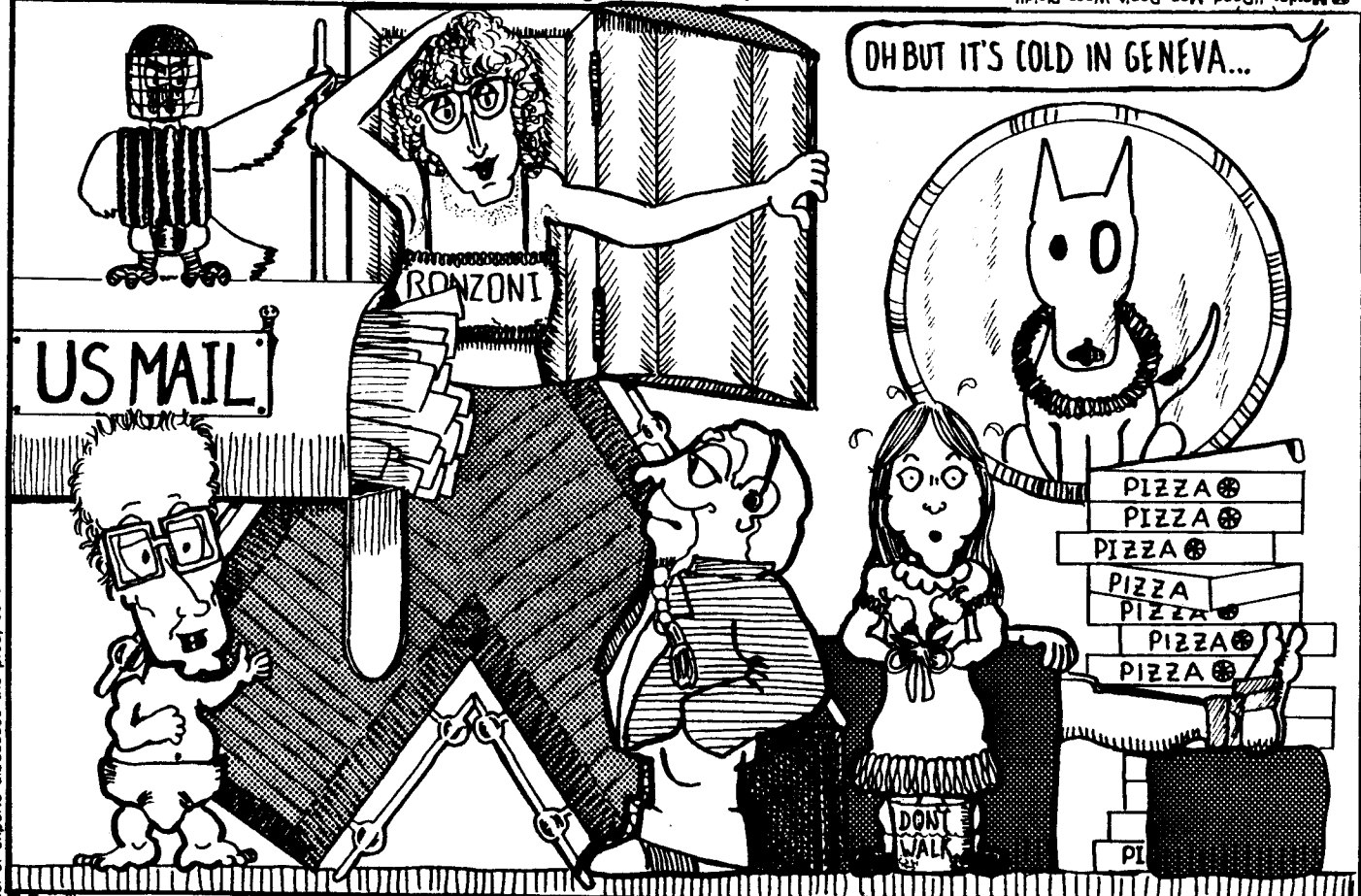
I'd have found a couple different questions for David Letterman, myself, but I still enjoyed THE REAL NEW YORK. And I even liked THIS INSANE THING and TABLES TURNED and LIFE-SAVING DRILL.

Well, the baby's awake, I got a million things to do and I gotta get this puppy in the mail. So, I'll wrap it up here and say no more. Oh, other than, I really got into AN INCONSEQUENTIAL BIRTH AND ITS INCREDIBLE CONSEQUENCES. Food for thought, eh?

Most of the time, but not always.

KATHY STADALSKY  
933 State Route 314  
Mansfield, OH 44903-9807 29

**Koppel Report:** "A National Town Meeting on the Legalization of Drugs." A panel of experts discusses the pros, cons and tort 50 free



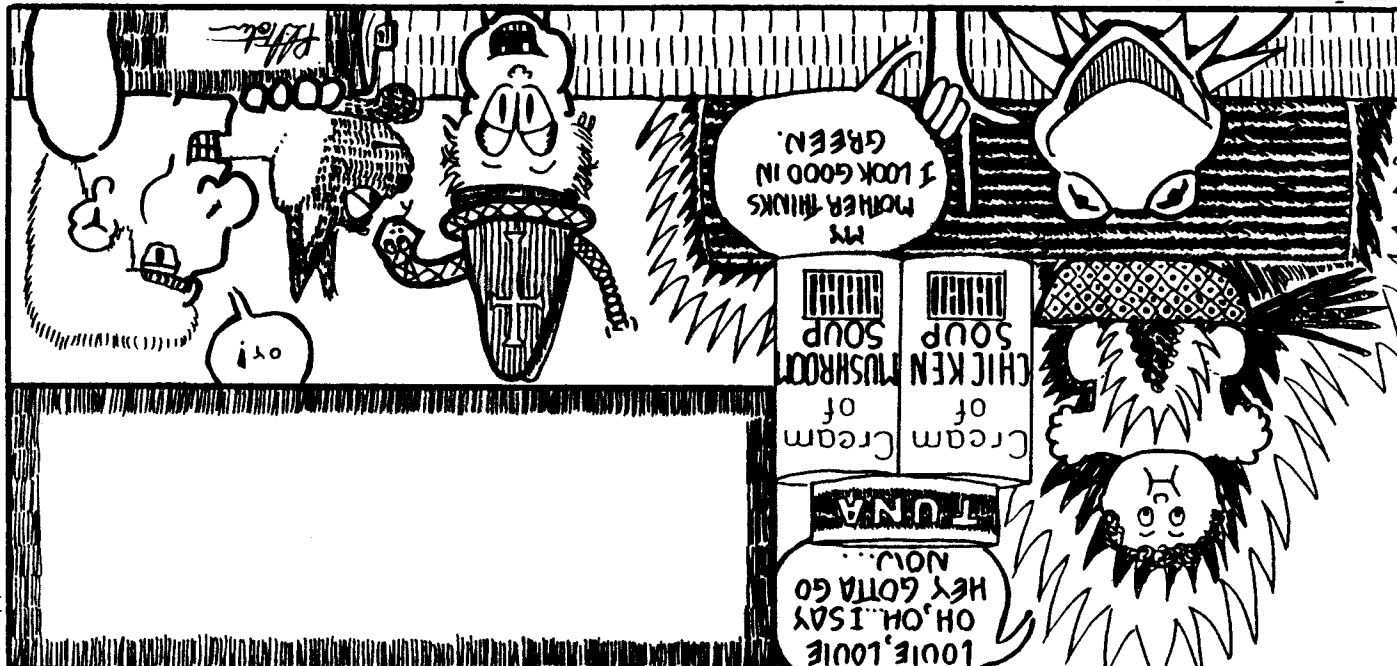
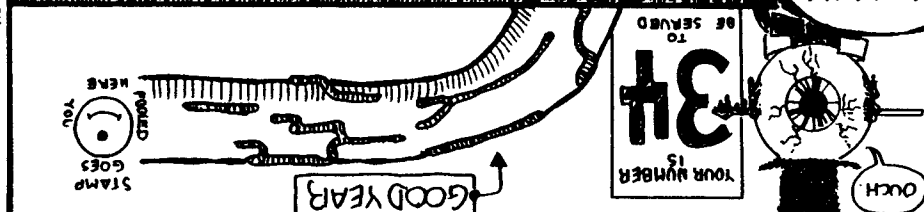
**PLAY Movie:** "In Love" (1983, Adults only) Kelly Nichols, Jerry Butler, Hamburger Theater meets Key Largo friend years later. Adult situations, language, nudity. (R) 2 hrs

**PLAY Fantasies:** "Private Passions" Scenes include a steam bath and doctor's office.

**NIK Mr. Ed:** Ed tries to redraw blueprints eaten by a goat.

**PLAY Playmate Playoffs:** The Challenge Cup. Two teams of playmates compete in outrageous athletic events. 1 hr  
**PLAY Movie:** "Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid" (1982, Comedy) Steve Martin, Rachel Ward, Gurnshaw Rigby. Reardon hunts Nazi Von whom? Kathleen Turner and Dick Van Dyke join host Joanna Cassidy to show the making of "Who Framed Roger Rabbit." 1 hr

INSIDE JOKE  
 DO SLAYNE WESCHLER  
 PO#1609  
 WEST MADISON STATION  
 NEW YORK, NY 10159



**MAX Movie:** "Stripper" (1985, Documentary) Adult situations, language, nudity. (R) 1 hr. 35 mins. Good (VCR)

**HBO Movie:** "Stripped to Kill" (1987, Crime drama) Adult situations, language, nudity, violence. (R) 1 hr. 30 mins. Poor (VCR)

**MAX (8:05) Movie:** "Hercules" (1959, Adventure) (G) 1 hr. 55 mins. Fair (VCR)  
**TBS Tom & Jerry's Funhouse** 1 hr. 05 mins.