

\$1.50



INSIDE JOKE #64

A Newsletter of
Comedy and Creativity

and

Upcoming Events



Sorry this entry isn't longer, but I haven't gotten my Chase's Annual Events for 1989 yet!

DECEMBER 15 (1988) - DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO IJ #65

DECEMBER 16 - Boston Tea Party (1773); Philip K. Dick (b. 1928); Beethoven (b. 1770)

DECEMBER 17 - CAROL MAGARY (21); Saturnalia

DECEMBER 18 - Slavery Outlawed in US (1865); Betty Grable (b. 1916); Leonard Maltin (38); Ossie Davis (61); Steven Spielberg (53)

DECEMBER 19 - Phil Ochs (b. 1940); Prof. Longhair (70?)

DECEMBER 21 - Frank Zappa (48)

DECEMBER 22 - National Flashlight Day

DECEMBER 25 - Rod Serling (67); Cab Calloway (81); Bah Humbug; Humphrey Bogart (b. 1899)

DECEMBER 26 - Steve Allen (67); Henry Miller (b. 1891)

DECEMBER 28 - "Poor Richard's Almanack" published (1732)

DECEMBER 30 - Michael Nesmith (45); Bo Diddley (60)

DECEMBER 31 - Leap Second Adjustment Time; Odetta (58)

JANUARY 1, 1989 - Here we go again...

JANUARY 2 - NINA BOGIN (35); Lynda Barry (33); Isaac Asimov (69) (b. 1973)

JANUARY 3 - J.R.R. Tolkien (b. 1892); Lucretia Mott

JANUARY 4 - Sterling Holloway (b. 1905); Trivia Day

JANUARY 6 - Sherlock Holmes (b. 1854); Tom Mix (b. 1880)

JANUARY 8 - STEVEN SCHARFF (27); David Bowie (42); Elvis Presley (b. 1935)

JANUARY 10 - Donald Fagen (39); Ray Bolger (b. 1904)

JANUARY 14 - LYN TOWNSHEND (23)

JANUARY 15 - Captain Beefheart (?); Goodman Ace (b. 1899); Hat Day; Chuck Berry (63)

JANUARY 16 - National Nothing Day

JANUARY 17 - TOM CORNEJO (24); Thomas Crapper (b. 1837);

Andy Kaufman (b. 1939); Ben Franklin (b. 1706)

JANUARY 18 - Danny Kaye (b. 1913); Cary Grant (b. 1904); A.A. Milne (b. 1882); Human Relations Day

* INSIDE JOKE is put on hexaweekly by Elayne "31something" *
* Wechsler and lots of dear friends at this kinda special, kinda *
* wacky, Christmas kinda time of the year, and emanates from *
* beautiful downtown Brooklyn, where it's said more NY cabbies *
* live than anywhere else. Try to flag one down, just try... *
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JANUARY 19 - BRIAN CATANZARO (34); Edgar Allen Poe (b.

1809); Janis Joplin (b. 1943); Fritz Weaver (63)

JANUARY 20 - George Burns (93); Fellini (b. 1920)

JANUARY 23 - National Handwriting Day; E. Kovacs (b.1919)

JANUARY 24 - John Belushi (b. 1950); Gold in CA (1848)

JANUARY 27 - DEBORAH BENEDICT (38); Jerome Kern (b. 1885)

JANUARY 28 - GARY FLOAM (42); National Kazoo Day

JANUARY 29 - Thomas Paine (b. 1737); W.C. Fields (b.1880)

JANUARY 30 - R. Brautigan (b.1935); B. Tuchman (77)

JANUARY 31 - Phil Collins (37); Jackie Robinson (b. 1919)
1919); Zane Grey (b. 1875); DEADLINE FOR SUBS TO IJ#66

ACKNOWLEDITORIAL

Despite things being a bit hectic with our vacation shortening my typing time (and by the way, hi and thanks to all the folks we were able to see in SF and LA, and apologies to those with whom we couldn't get together this year), and my work space having moved to a busy office where I can't type when others are in the room, this issue will print, on time, on my 31st birthday. Thirty was a good year for me (I got married and overcame my lifelong irrational fear of getting my ears pierced, to name two big events), and I hope IJ has reflected that.

On the other hand, I realize what a long way I have yet to go in many respects. After all this time, I'm still not as careful as I could be at expressing myself in correspondence, and I am grateful at hearing from those of you who may feel I malign you unjustly in personal letters; I'm working on upgrading my eloquence and etiquette. And I may never totally get rid of my prudishness about matters More Than I Need To Know (this issue's MTINTK Alerts go to Don Wagberg and Nick Dana, although others do cross the line here and there), but I beg you to remember the operative word "I." MTINTK is never necessarily MTYNK, and in time I hope to learn to lighten up on things (i.e., bring myself to type certain stuff) a little more.

This leads nicely into our new Contest (since we don't have room for a Questionnaire this issue, although I'll miss not seeing your comments on '88 trends), the winner of which will receive a free issue of IJ for the person of their choice: I refer you first to our letters column, where I've received and responded to some much-needed feedback on last issue's suggestions for saving print space. In my reply I mention my reluctance to be called an "editor" at all (let alone one with a capital "e") in future IJs. And since "typist/layout person/manager/subscriber manager/organizer/etc." is too long to fit in the edit. box, I invite alternatives from you, the audience/readers/perusers/etc. What would you like to call me (yes, I deserve that) so new and old readers alike will better understand what I do and why I'm not an editor? So far, phone calls have elicited names like Warden and Den Mother, but I'm hoping for something a bit more specifically designate.

Staffers Steven Scharff, Deborah Benedict and Mike Dobbs have taken this issue off, giving us room for our semi-annual TV reviews, Christmas greetings and some new folks, including Sheila Gibson (of IT'S fame), Karl Schmitz and our cover artist, Mario Acevedo. I don't know at this point whether INSIDE STROKE will be out in time for the holidays, but I'll update you all next time...

INSIDE JOKE is available for \$1.50 an issue, with advance subs of up to \$12 (1 yr/8 issues); anything above that will be considered donation (thanks to J.C. Brainbeau for his generosity and to Jim Middleton for his ad—the calendar's great!). I can only afford to mail out one issue per person now, but you can copy it as many times as you want. Writers and artists have the option of paying 65¢ in American postage (74¢ in US postage if you're from Canada) instead of the \$1.50 for the next issue in which their stuff appears—everyone else has to pay the \$1.50, in money (except prisoners, from whom I accept \$1.50 in stamps, and overseas folks, who should send 3 IRCs for which I'll send your IJ surface mail). I still can't afford to trade for other publications, much as I miss doing that, but I hear a marijuana joint is worth about \$1.50 now, no? If there's an "X" by your name on your mailing label, this is your last issue. Everything else is covered in the Guidelines. Send letters, submissions, money, etc. to me (Elayne Wechsler, NOT "Chaput"—"Chaput" or "Wechsler-Chaput" is ONLY for mail you send to me at home; the palatial p.o. box will always be registered under the name "Wechsler," as will my checking account) at P.O. Box 1609, Madison Square Station, New York, NY 10159.

This issue is dedicated to Salvador Dali and to the memory of a couple of Johns, Houseman and Carradine.

P.S. Oops - staffer address list next issue, promise!



DIARY of The ROCK FIEND

by
Anni Ackner

DOCTOR, MY EYE



In the course of our investigations, over the past several years, of the foibles, fads and faux pas of this crazy little sphere floating in space that I like to call The Planet Earth, we have, on many occasions—as those of you who have been paying attention will recall—proven indisputably that ours is not a perfect world. From the problems in the Mid-East to the Greenhouse Effect to the fact that people will go on insisting that tofu is an edible food, evidence of the imperfection of our civilization is rampant, and the bottom line—the general usage of which phrase is ramp in and of itself that things are not as they should be—is, unfortunately, that there isn't much a Thinking Person can do about it except put on a brave face, square his or her shoulders, and make sure that Valium prescription is kept up to date, all of which would be well and good if things would only maintain a constant state of general rottenness, and let it go at that. As it stands, however, just about every day brings its own particular, newly-minted horror, and the Thinking Person who wishes to remain on the sunny side of a rubber room is constantly having to adjust.

One of the more odious examples of the less-than-perfect nature of our modern world is the inescapable and, apparently, unalterable fact that sooner or later, despite all manner of good intentions and noble aspirations, even the best people are going to wind up seeing a Doctor. Seeing a Doctor—not unlike seeing the President of the United States on television, an experience which, in fact, it strongly resembles—is simply one of those things that, while it may be ducked, avoided and put off, sometimes for years at a time, has a way of catching up with one, usually at entirely the wrong times and when one least expects it, and which, furthermore—and in this respect it does tend to differ from catching a random glimpse of The Leader of the Free World—has absolutely nothing to do with Being Ill. Being Ill, to define our terms, is actually a blanket title for two separate states: (A) Being Pleasantly Ill, during which one remains home from one's place of employment, snuggles in one's comfortable bed, munches delicate meals specially prepared to tempt an invalid's appetite, catches up on the last few issues of *People*, and occasionally blows one's nose daintily while one's friends and acquaintances pay demure, discreet visits and bring one a little presents. As no one in his or her right mind would willingly do anything whatsoever to alter this particular status quo, obviously Seeing a Doctor is a superfluous act in this instance. (B) Being Unpleasantly Ill, during which one is in the hospital and probably unconscious, just about guaranteeing that one will not come within sniffing distance of a Doctor until it is time to settle one's bill, at which precise moment what appears to be the entire cast of *M*A*S*H* and their friends THE YOUNG LAWYERS will come a-creeeping into one's room, and smile upon one tenderly, which is not precisely the same thing as Seeing a Doctor, as we shall discover.

Seeing a Doctor is a state most generally entered into when one is feeling at one's best, which is all to the good, as it is a state that requires that one be at the peak of one's mental prowess and possess, moreover, the reflexes and speed needed to make a quick getaway. Beyond this, it is a state usually encountered at the request of somebody else—an insurance company, a prospective employer, another Doctor, or the drivers of an entire lane of oncoming traffic on the Belt Parkway—and from which one is liable to emerge frustrated, depressed, bitter, and much more ill than one had ever dreamed of being. To be brutally frank, a Doctor is a fey, fabulous creature, kin to the minotaur, the harpy, and Jay McInerney's literary agent, and, unless one is properly prepared, even a short encounter with one can leave a Thinking Person devastated. It is highly unfortunate, then, that most of us set out to See a Doctor without anything even approaching the proper mental, physical and emotional preparations, a situation that can only lead to heartbreak (for the Thinking Person). The only thing that has ever been scientifically proven to lead to heartbreak for a Doctor is a sudden strike by the Fraternal Order of Naugahyde Furniture Manufacturers). In order to escape unscathed from Seeing a Doctor, it is necessary—nay, essential—to attain and internalize certain unshakeable attitudes, which in turn help insure that one will act in ways most likely to aid in self-preservation. Since it is obviously in everyone's best interest that Thinking People not be reduced to shivering wrecks that only faintly resemble the human beings they once were—for one thing, someone has to pick up the check for lunch—I have—oh, you just knew it, didn't you?—prepared a little list that I believe will be useful in the acquisition and retention of these attitudes and mindsets, and which I call, with all modesty:

ANNI'S CAN'T-BE-BEAT METHODS FOR SURVIVING CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE MEDICAL KIND or, What To Do In Case The Doctor Comes

1) It is always wise to remember, first of all, that Doctors are not the same as you and me, and are subject to a completely different set of belief systems and motivations. A male Doctor, for

instance, is normally someone who, as an adolescent, desired to grow up and make a great deal of money in the shortest time possible, but lacked the manual dexterity to become a really good plumber, the antic imagination to become a really bad hairdresser, and the strength of character to become the head waiter at any New York restaurant, and so opted for the only get-rich-quick scheme left open. A female Doctor, on the other hand, is normally someone who, as an adolescent, harboured fantasies of Working With People and/or Saving The World, but soon discovered that the possibilities of wearing one's Chanel skirt were fairly limited in, say, Botswana, and so was forced to rethink her priorities. In either case, partly due to certain, secret courses in medical school and partly due to long exposure to reruns of *Ben Casey*, all Doctors, regardless of sex, seriously believe that they are the Almighty, and we are helpless scum. Despite a Thinking Person's own reasonable objections to this matter—we, after all, know the Almighty, we've worked with the Almighty, and we can safely say that, you, Doctor, are not the Almighty—it is well to humour the Doctor on this account, lest one accidentally end up with a completely unplanned sex change operation.

2) Having said that, however, it should always be borne in mind that the Doctor-scum relationship is, after all, a 50-50 proposition. The Doctor has something you want—an insurance form, the ability to tell the difference between a freckle and raging melanoma (it's amazing how many of us can't manage that on our own, particularly at 4 in the morning), that prescription for Valium—and you have something the Doctor wants—the next payment on the new BMW—and it will give you courage to remember that the Doctor can't exist without you. It won't do you any good, mind you, but a little courage can't hurt.

3) Speaking, as we were a moment ago, of *Ben Casey*, never, ever lose sight of the fact that you will not be consulting him. Nor will you be consulting Dr. Kildare, Hawkeye Pierce, Marcus Welby or whatever televised medical deity most received your admiration. About the best you can hope for along these lines is someone approximating St. Elsewhere's Dr. Ehrlich, and even there you're running strictly on the most fantastic luck. The fact is that most Doctors are about as lovable, warm and understanding as your average Central American dictator, and attempting to tell them your problems, or expecting them to take any interest in your thoughts or emotions whatsoever, is the sheerest folly, and can lead only to your receiving some very fishy looks, and perhaps the suggestion that you pay a visit to the Doctor's dear friend, the Psychiatrist. Treat the Doctor as you would any slightly dotty, manipulative, domineering aunt or uncle who just happens to control the family trust fund, and you will be the happier for it.

4) It is important to realize that the Doctor, in his or her role as the Almighty, thrives on intimidation, which can be defined in this case as the art of unnerving you so badly that you do not follow your gut instincts and attempt to stab the Doctor with a rectal thermometer. Put another way, if the Doctor can effectively convince you that his or her time and energy are more valuable than yours, there's a fairly good chance that you won't bring suit against him or her for violating the Anti-Trust Act when you receive your bill. It is this line of logic that leads to such amusing Doctor-Tricks as forcing a prospective patient to wait six weeks for an appointment, and explains why, after one has sweated out the requisite six weeks, one arrives at the Doctor's sanctuary to discover that two pneumonia victims, five nice people with runny noses and an entire extended family of migrant farm workers afflicted with impetigo are all sharing your 10:15am audience. Strong as the temptation may be, in these circumstances, to either yell at the nurse (who will, invariably, be a 21-year-old female with Florence Griffith-Joyner fingernails and an advanced case of anorexia nervosa) or stroll outdoors and let the air out of the Doctor's tires, about the only way to adequately state your opinion on this matter is to climb up upon the plastic-marble coffee table, execute a brief time step, and begin to discourse upon the latest attempt by the CIA to photograph your brainwaves using hidden messages to be found in videotapes of President Reagan's final State of the Union address. While this probably won't get you in to see the Doctor any faster, it will have the salutary effect of clearing out the waiting room, so at least you'll have a place to sit down.

5) Having once allowed you to enter the examining room, the Doctor will inevitably continue the process of intimidation by forcing you to undress, don a paper garment that opens cunningly up the back, and mount a cold, metal table covered in the sort of material most often to be found masquerading as toilet tissue in Parisian bathrooms, upon which he or she will leave you alone to contemplate your fate for an hour or two. Of course, the governing theories here are that (1) anyone naked and covered only by a glorified Handi-wipe is a priori in a vulnerable position; and (2) anyone left alone in a bare, white room with only a box of tongue depressors for company will welcome a digital rectal examination as a rollicking bit of fun. Unfortunately, there isn't very much you can do about this (it has been suggested that insisting that the Doctor disrobe with you might, if nothing else, put you on more or less of an equal footing, so to speak, but the problem here is that, for one thing, the Doctor will probably refuse, or, more importantly, the Doctor is liable to say yes, in which case you are going to be forced to run screaming through a medical building with perhaps more of your ideology exposed than you might ideally like, so you see) except to make the best of it. Arm yourself with a cassette deck, some soothing music, a scandalous novel and a nice box of Godiva chocolates, spread your favourite

Continued next page

beach towel or afghan on the table, and relax. Build a geodesic dome out of specimen bottles. Acquire some amusing lingerie, put your gown on backwards, and surprise the Doctor. Solve cryptograms on the wall tiles. You're going to be in there for awhile—let it be a challenge to you.

6) No matter how hysterically funny this strikes you, there has never been a Doctor in the history of the profession who enjoyed having someone shout "Kirk to Bridge!" into the business end of his or her stethoscope.

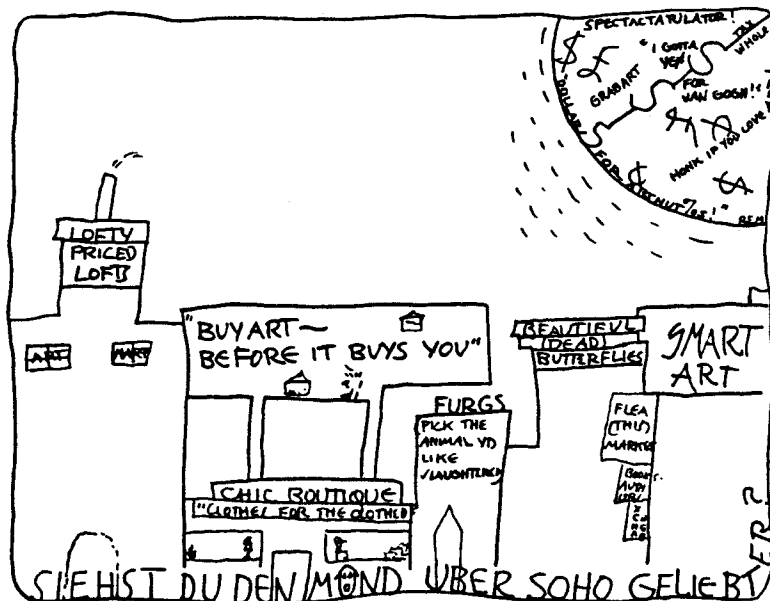
7) Doctors, to a person, positively loathe anyone they perceive as having what is euphemistically referred to, in medical lingo, as a "lifestyle problem." Translated into English, "having a lifestyle problem" does not mean, as you might suppose, honestly believing that the current Administration is not planning to raise your taxes, but, in fact, simply means that the person thus endowed is overweight. If you have a lifestyle problem, and you crawl into the Doctor's office, tearfully begging him or her to please do something, anything, about your ruptured appendix, you will receive a mimeographed diet sheet and a stern lecture informing you that if you weren't so damned fat, your appendix would not have ruptured, and there it is. Again, your options in this instance are pretty well limited. It does absolutely no good to explain to the Doctor that the latest findings in The New England Journal of Medicine conclusively prove that obesity is caused by metabolism and heredity, and not overeating. The Doctor does not read The New England Journal of Medicine. The Doctor reads Forbes. To be brutally frank, there are only three things you can do in this situation: You can actually go on the recommended diet, after six months of which you will either have lost weight or you will have not, but in either case you will be much too depressed to care what the Doctor thinks of you; you can refuse to ever go to any Doctor again for any reason, which will work fine until your arteries start to harden; or you can lie. Accept the diet sheet graciously, smile prettily, promise to be an extremely good patient and forever forgo, and then go have a hot fudge sundae to take the bad taste out of your mouth. Change Doctors after every visit, tell each new one that you have already lost over 100 lbs., preen, and learn to accept compliments. When you run out of Doctors in any given area, move. This may lead to a somewhat splotchy career record, but it beats having to learn all about the Menace of Simple Carbohydrates every time your ingrown toenail needs attending.

8) It used to be stated, with a certain degree of truth, that the only way to get medical attention on a Wednesday morning was to have a heart attack on a golf course. This is no longer true. These days, the only way to get medical attention on a Wednesday morning is to have a heart attack on a racquetball court. It's a fine distinction, but worth noting.

9) If you smoke cigarettes, for God's sake, don't tell the Doctor. Insist that you suffer from chronic bronchitis and let it go at that. Next to people with lifestyle problems, Doctors most detest people who smoke cigarettes. This is because no Doctor in the world smokes cigarettes, but every Doctor in the world used to smoke cigarettes and, furthermore, every Doctor in the world found it so easy and so very much of a joy to stop smoking cigarettes that they feel an overwhelming inner need to share their happiness with the rest of us. Anyone who has ever spent time in the company of a former cocaine addict who has recently become a Fundamental Christian can surmise the outcome.

10) Upon exiting the Doctor's office and receiving your bill, it is wise to avoid pounding your head against the wall, referring to the Doctor as a thief, a chiseler, or a member of a Republican-based Defense Department, or in any other way causing a nasty scene. Even though your bill will undoubtedly strike you as more befitting the charge for an entire year's wardrobe tailored exclusively by Oscar de la Renta than ten minutes alone with someone you don't even like, even though you will probably be charged for procedures which you are fairly certain were never performed upon you (just for your information, there is no such thing as a "non-invasive, psychic blood work-up"), even though, by the most conservative calculations, the Doctor is earning more in one hour than you are in three months, grit your teeth, pay the damned thing, then go home and quietly take out a bank loan. If all this sounds like utter, self-serving cowardice, it is, but it can't be helped. Creating a ruckus in front of the Doctor's waiting patients, while it may provide a few brief moments of satisfaction, will, in the long run, tend to mean that the Doctor has fewer patients. If the Doctor has fewer patients, it's going to be that much more difficult for him or her to keep up the time-share on the condo in Aspen. If it's harder to keep up the time-share on the condo in Aspen, the Doctor is going to need more money. If the Doctor needs more money, just where do you think he or she is going to get it, huh? Pay attention to this—the Reagan Administration ran on this theory for eight years.

And so, as far better people than I have said, it goes. The sad, sad fact of the matter is that, when it comes to Doctors, if you don't like, just about all you can do is lump it. Of course, if you really do get desperate around the situation, one alternative that may be explored is becoming a Doctor yourself, in which case you'll have the ability to write your own prescriptions, diagnose your own freckles, and worry about your own time-shares, to say nothing of the fact that no one dares tell a Doctor that he or she simply must lose 35 lbs. For those who have difficulty managing to maintain an honest job, it's certainly something to consider, and if you do happen to consider it, there's a little matter of this pain in my ankle I'd like to discuss with you, if you happen to have a spare moment before the turn of the century.



THERE IS A CURE FOR AIDS!

The following article by Dr. Willsworth T. Fuquay, III, Ph.D., M.D., D.O., L.P.A., A.S.S., D.P.M., CB/GYN, D.V.M., is reprinted with kind permission from the monthly publication Word of God Magazine, published by Staff of God Publications, Inc.

WHO GETS AIDS?

AIDS affects persons involved in the sins of immorality. There are some innocent victims, such as those contracting the disease from blood transfusions, children born to infected mothers and women infected by bisexual and/or drug-using husbands; however, AIDS primarily strikes immoral sinners.

WHAT DOES GOD HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THIS?

God says that homosexuality is an abomination. An abomination is something so disgusting and terrible that it causes God to hate it. So we can clearly see that God hates homosexuals. God says to cut homosexuals off from the rest of society. He also says that their punishment should be death. Since our civil laws so wrongfully protect homosexuals we can't put them to death. So, they are being killed by their own evil—just as God wants.

What about the other victims of AIDS? Some are prostitutes and other promiscuous people of both sexes. Some are intravenous drug users. God's penalty for those who go on in their evil, chosen lifestyle is the same as that for homosexuals: they are being put to death through their own evil with AIDS.

THE ANSWER TO AIDS

We appreciate what the medical profession has done for us in so many areas; however, for people to live morally loose and promiscuous lives and then to rely on modern medicine to save them from the consequences of their own actions will not go unpunished! God will have the last word!!! The AIDS outbreak tells us that God is speaking! He is sending mankind a warning! Will we take heed?

Mankind has so little self-control with regards to sexual lust that AIDS will probably never be entirely eradicated. But for those of you who do have control over your appetites, here is what you can do to ensure your safety:

- Do not have any sexual intercourse outside of legitimate marriage;
- Do not participate in anal sex within the marriage;
- Do not participate in oral sex within the marriage;
- Do not use foreign objects in sex play within the marriage (for legitimate sex techniques, read one of the many books on the subject written by Christians with a Godly view);
- Do not eat in restaurants that hire homosexual cooks and waiters;
- Avoid all homosexual, bisexual and drug-using persons. If you must associate with them, do not touch them!

The Bible gives clear instructions and a simple formula for living by God's plan:

- Husbands, love your wives;
- Wives, submit unto and reverence your own husbands;
- Children, obey your parents.

How far modern society has fallen from God's plan! The devil is peddling his pack of lies today via TV, literature, and the work of evil men. Many, many people are buying them.

The result? Broken homes; roaming, uncontrollable children listening to rock music; broken hearts; guilty consciences leading to mental illness and suicide; and AIDS and other "social sin" diseases ending in shattered, shortened lives.

Dear friends, not everyone is buying the devil's pack of lies! Some of us are taking God's way of moral purity and are enjoying blessing and fulfillment in life.

At present, there is no physical cure for AIDS. But, praise God, I can offer you a spiritual cure for your sin-sick soul! Repent, have faith and confess! — Kathy Stadalsky

Won't you join us today?

equipment control

PART TWO

by Nick Dana

It was nine o'clock in the morning. I had already found 22 file cabinets—2, 3, 4, and 5-drawer models, legal, letter, or lateral, in various colors, with and without locks—7 desks, two beepers, a polystaltic pump, one horizontal gel electrophoresis apparatus, four chromatographs—three liquid and one gas—a mini-computer, and a half dozen modems. It's been nine years now, but I can recall the particulars of that first day as if I were getting laid. By the elevator, I found Kimberly's bulletin board. There were five names on the list. I plunked a quarter in the wall-mounted cash box. There was a small flying pig painted in dayglo colors on its top, and the slot went through the pig's skull.

On the sixth floor somebody told me to check the Animal Behavior Modification Lab for the kymograph. All they had up there were imbedding ovens and water bath. I took care of those and rode the elevator down to the basement. I knocked on the laboratory door, and somebody said, "Come in."

"Equipment Control," I said, opening the door, "I'm looking for a kymograph from BioPro Optics and Sons. Folks in the sixth floor sent me down here."

"You want the Surgical Section," she said without looking up from the paperwork on her desk.

"You must have worked up on the fifth floor," I said. It was a stupid thing to say, but I said it.

She jumped up from her work and whirled around, her eyes squinting, the edges of her lips curled down like frost-bitten seedlings. "And what makes you say that?"

"Nothing," I mumbled, "I thought you were somebody else. Just making small talk. Nothing to it."

"I had this streak four or five years before I started working here," she huffed, and turned back to her paperwork.

"I'm sorry," I said. "I shouldn't have mentioned it."

"I am NOT dying," she hissed.

I wasn't sure what to do. She didn't have the kymograph. I had been stupid. She wasn't anything like Kimberly Basil, although they looked enough alike to be sisters. I'd have to be more careful. I was sorry for having said what I said, sorry that so many people were upset they were dying, but Cosmo's Fifth Law of Probability states: "A person who is not dead yet is still alive," so I said, "Goody for you."

"WHAT did you say?" she snapped, but the snap was kind of spongy, like a stir-fried pea. "Did you say 'Goody for you'?"

"Well, it's good you're not dying, right? It would seem kind of senseless for everybody to go on dying if somebody wasn't going to get some benefit out of it by living forever, right? I'm Cosmo Cosmos, and I'm not dying either. I've got a cat just like me. Neither one of us is dying. Neither is my wife."

"Get the hell out of here," she said.

"Sure thing," I said, opening the door. "Thanks for all your assistance. See you in a hundred years. You don't have a glass eye yet."

Of course she told me to wait. Did I have any invoicing on a PDP 8? What about this file cabinet? She had two new shock-scrubbers. She didn't mean to sound like a bitch. We talked. Her name was Melody Holtzclaw, and yes, she used to work on the fifth floor. She still had a good friend up there, but she hardly saw her any more. She hardly ever saw anyone. In fact, I'd been the first visitor to her area in over a month. I decal'd the file cabinet.

"Kimberly used to visit," Melody said, "but it seems like a year since the last time I saw her."

"She's got a glass eye now," I said. "It's sort of blue green."

"Oh God," she said. "Oh, for Christ's sake."

She said she needed to take a break. Could I wait here until she got back? It wouldn't be five or ten minutes.

"Sure thing," I said, "I've still got the 8 to do. What about the desk? Is it new?"

"Yeah," she said. "Two or three weeks. You probably don't have the invoicing yet. I'll get you the req and p.o. number, if that'd help."

"Yeah, thanks," I said, "that'll be fine. Go ahead and take a break. I'm in no hurry. Anything special I need to watch out for?"

"Don't let anybody in," she said.

"Nobody?"

"Nobody," she said. "This is a confidential area. I'd really appreciate it. I don't get many breaks."

"Hey," I said, "take your break. I've got plenty of time. Don't get bummed."

After Melody left, I went about my business, collecting serial and model numbers, taking measurements of furniture, activating the decal adhesive with my little jar of Equipment Control Glue. I was stopping up a decal from the desk when I heard an oddly familiar sound to my left. I cocked my head to listen for it more closely when it happened again. SMACK, SMACK, SMACK, it went. Then silence. SMACK, SMACK, SMACK. I went ahead and affixed the decal. All of a sudden there was a wail and a SMASH, RATTLE, SMASH, SMASH, SMASH, like a child trying to bust out of its crib. I jumped up and bashed my head on the partially-open desk drawer. The wailing went on, and there were popping sounds which reminded

me of my own father's belt. There was a door between the PDP 8 and the locked door to the hall, and the baby's cries were coming from behind it. POP, POP, POP, and SMASH, RATTLE, SMASH, and UHHUNGAAH, WEEAUGH, UHHUNGAAH. I opened the door.

In front of me was a cage and in the cage was a monkey. I stepped further into the room. There must have been fifty cages in the room, each with a single occupant. Most of those occupants were staring at me. Down the end of the row of cages, I could see a small monkey pounding against its cage and wailing while the older monkey in the cage above it beat itself with a length of rubber hose. "What the fuck?" I said, and soon the baby monkey and its upstairs neighbor were shrieking and pointing at me. Hands poked out of the cages, like the hands of young beggars I'd seen in Boulder and old beggars in lower Manhattan. I couldn't make any more sense from a panhandler's crazed mumblings than I could from these monkeys. "Scree-doody-shick," "Spare change?" "Clean your windshield?" and "SMACK, SMACK, SMACK," it was all the same to me. What a life I'd gotten myself into, alone in a roomful of confidential monkeys, and directly before me, the most vocal beast in the Animal Behavior Modification Lab was blowing kisses at me. I felt like a kid again. Cosmo's Corollary on Aging states that each time you experience something for the first time, you are a kid again. KISS, KISS, KISS, the monkey went. I realized I was just standing there grinning, so I blew a kiss back, scratched behind one of my ears and shook my head.

I am still not sure how to explain what happened next, so I will state exactly what happened. My right hand was still moving away from my lips when the monkey turned around, exposed its dull pink ass, pointed at the same, and laughed. The monkey laughed. I thought only people could laugh. Like I said, I felt like a kid again. I was embarrassed. All of the monkeys were howling now. As I backed toward the door, the one in front of me slapped its shin and said: "SHREEE-GOT-HOT-CHA, SHREEE-GOT-HOT-CHA." Finally I was through the door. I closed it, sat on the edge of the desk, and waited for some kind of explanation. Cosmo's Third Law of Probability, of course, implies that if you need an explanation there isn't one or should there be one it will not suffice.

"Jack," Melody said when she finally returned, "I was afraid you'd already left. Thanks so much for waiting. Really. I'm sorry I took so long."

"I'm just waiting for an explanation," I said, tapping the side of the desk with my swinging heel.

"For what?" she huffed. "I already said I was sorry for taking so long. I went up to try to find Kimberly, but I don't see why that's any of your business."

"That's not what I'm talking about. What goes on down here?" I asked, pointing at the door. The monkeys were silent now. They had quieted down about a minute before I heard Melody's key in the lock.

"You didn't go in there?"

"Of course I went in there. I thought I heard a baby getting the shit kicked out of it."

"Matilda," Melody smiled.

"Who?"

"Matilda," she answered. "One of the lab assistants took Matilda home for a weekend and she learned how to cry like the Dickens' baby. They've got a six-week-old girl."

"What about the one right in front of the door? That goddamned monkey told me to kiss her ass."

Melody chuckled. "Henrietta? That's just like Henrietta. She's really quite intelligent, but she insists on being vulgar. She can speak about 600 words."

"Speak?"

"With her hands," she assured me. "Henrietta has learned ASL, American Sign Language, and the amazing thing is we didn't teach her."

"You didn't teach her?" I puffed. "What, do you mean she taught herself? What, did she read it in a book?"

"Her parents taught her," Melody said. "From what she's told us, we think Bruno and Olive Oyl were her parents. Maybe you remember reading about the experiments down in Georgia. Bruno was the first monkey to demonstrate the ability to form new words in ASL. Olive Oyl was on loan from the Colorado Research Unit. One day they both disappeared without a trace, and then about a year ago, Henrietta wandered into an archeological dig in Kenya. She kept going through the same gestures over and over again, and everybody thought she had some form of palsy, so they drugged her and sent her back here for study. She's lucky she wasn't killed. Helen Keller had only deafness, dumbness, and blindness to overcome in communicating with other humans, but Henrietta had to overcome being a monkey as well."

"Helen Keller never told anyone to kiss her ass either, I bet," I shot back.

"Maybe she was trying to proposition you," she answered.

"Henrietta probably thinks you're cute."

"Thanks a lot."

"I meant that as a compliment," she said, sitting back down at her desk.

"What do you do with the monkeys?" I wanted to know.

"We use them in research. We're trying to find out what human intelligence is."

"But what do you do with them?" I repeated.

"We teach them what we can, and then we send them upstairs."

"So what happens to them upstairs?"

"They're studied. You ask a lot of questions, Jack Bob Smith, 5 Equipment Control Tech. This is a confidential project, you know."

Continued next page

What's Equipment Control Tech stand for, anyway?"

"It's a small prep school located twenty-seven miles from Charleston, South Carolina, where young men are taught how to groom their machines," I answered.

"And you're a comedian too?"

"Just a little crazy is all," I said, leaning over and moving in to give her a little kiss on the cheek.

"No Jack," she said, "please don't. I'm a Fishmanite."

"Oh shit," I said. Followers of Fishman agree to kill themselves if they even submit to a gentle caress. With Fishman, one is all and more than one is always an imposition.

"Well," I said, gathering up my papers, my decals, and my Equipment Control Glue," thanks a lot for your time. If it weren't for Fishman—"

"I know," she said, "but with Fishman it's forever."

"Yeah," I said, "so I've heard. By the way, where exactly is the Surgical Section? Not the fifth floor, is it?"

"Subbasement," she said. "Take the stairs on the other side of the elevator, and please don't tell anyone about Henrietta. This project is supposed to be a secret. Be careful. Nice meeting you."

"Same here," I said, and left.

(To be continued)

BACK TO ZERO

(In which Our Hero, finding himself at the starting place of a new relationship, ruminates on what makes long-term relationships such a big deal anyway)

The last time you heard me moan about my social life, I was relatively happy in a fairly stable relationship. Well, that got blown to hell a few months ago. On the other hand, I've recently entered into another relationship with another woman.

So I've been forced to "rip it up and start again," to quote the English Beat.¹ My social relationship odometer has been set back to zero—one of the few times resetting an odometer is fully legal. I had to begin all the rituals I thought I was done with long ago. At least I had to start once I got over the shock.

I mean "shock" sincerely. The period of recovery from a long-term relationship mirrors the process of acceptance terminally ill patients go through. First you have denial, then anger, followed quickly by a fine bout of catatonia, ending with acceptance. That's how it falls, folks. The tricky thing is riding these phases out without turning yourself into a mental case, a Moonie or both.

The danger of plunging headlong into screaming Dante-ish lunacy is intensified when the relationship has gone on for a marked period of time. This period of time varies but it's invariably the moment that you realize that things are more serious than intended. That moment moves you away from the "Just Seeing Somebody" phase full-tilt-boogie into the realm of "relationship." Things count in a relationship. As such, loss of said relationship counts—it counts very much in the pain department.

To be fair, there are benefits to having a long-term relationship. Most couples can dispense with those long embarrassing shows of public emotion that get them in trouble and ruin a perfectly good evening for us single souls. After all, you know you like each other now; you don't need to perform all those affectionate acrobatics popular in B movies and certain Olympic events.

All that "Getting To Know You" idle chit-chat can be dispensed with, too. After a period of this length, you better damn well know with whom you're dealing. That's not to say you should have a full medical history. A sense of mystery is good for a relationship. However, the difference between a sense of mystery and being the long lost Anastasia² is great. So, despite its awkwardness, quizzing the person isn't a bad thing. A way to remove the embarrassment of this phase would be helpful, though. If you're a detective or have no shame, you've got no problem in circumventing this process ("Hello, Motor Vehicle? This is Tom Deja from the Blaine Detective Agency. We're doing a background check on Ms. Melanie Sieger and we would like to know..."³). The rest of us don't have that avenue open. We have to sit through hours of dull conversation, probing and poking in hopes that information on our date will become apparent. The person who comes up with a way to avoid this dialogue will make a fortune.

Also, in the long run a lengthy relationship is less expensive. That fear-fraught early period is filled to the brim with overpriced dinners, live shows and other extras like flowers and candy. Our society is still one that equates caring with purchasing power. A large enough show of affection could put some people into debt for years. Once it's obvious you're serious about this other person, there are other things to go into debt over.

By the time you reach the "Relationship" stage, immediate expenses become a thing of the past. As with those exaggerated shows of affection cited above, you know you like the human being from whom you're sitting across. There's no need for valuable gifts to show that like. Of course, there might be need of an engagement ring down the line, but that's understandable. A rela-

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tionship that has gone long enough to require an engagement ring needs a reminder of the costliness of commitment.⁴

In fact, a long-term relationship demands you cut down on spending. You're no longer looking at the here-and-now. Your eyes are on the future. Couples in for the long haul spend more time at home because, let's face it, there's so much of which you have to make sure. Yes, you can live with this person. But can you live with his or her parents? Can you truthfully tolerate a man whose facial hair has migrated to his nose? Can you tolerate an aunt who insists on talking about her harmless but visually disgusting condition? Do you love this person enough to have Uncle Disraeli, whose favorite pastimes are comparing great war atrocities and smashing beer cans on his head, over for Thanksgiving? These questions may seem silly, but this information could make or break your relationship.

So it's actually to your benefit to stop spending that money and stay home. The need for information is only surpassed by the need for security if you decide to spend the rest of your life with this person.

However, there are problems, too. You might have to work a bit harder to keep the excitement in your relationship. That's not really so bad. A few spur-of-the-moment decisions, several gallons of chocolate mousse, hospital bills in extreme cases and your lack of excitement problem is solved. What is arguably the worst predicament is the loss of individual identity you feel. After you pass that hurdle and people get used to the idea of the two of you together, you undergo this bizarre metamorphosis. No longer are you a person and your loved one a person; you both become this single identity with one name.

For example, take a look at my friend Vinnie and my friend/colaborator/fellow IJ staffer Dorian. Long before they became engaged, people started referring to them as "Vinendorrie." There was no separation. Only hearty souls like myself still address them separately. All the others talked to, told stories about and believed in this single beast who just appeared to be two distinctly different people.

That's probably what made the recent breakup of my relationship so difficult. Yes, I initiated it and felt it was for the best, yet I found the breakup difficult because I was used to being part of this symbiotic being. As with Vinnie and Dorian, most people were referring to me not just as Tom but as Tomen... Some people were even referring to my ladyfriend as my "wife," not to mention those of you⁵ who automatically assumed that, every time I said "I've got good news," almost always responded with "You're getting engaged?!" So I became somewhat convinced that I was only part of a two-tiered whole. That six weeks of running around numbed, not sure what to do next, was the period of time I needed to recover my individuality.

Actually, it was more like four weeks. The other two were taken up relearning the peculiar language of the single man. It took time to get used to the idea that yes, it was permissible to flirt again, that it was perfectly fine for me to once again show desire for a woman other than my ladyfriend openly. At first, it was too much too soon; I was attempting to dazzle any woman who came within two miles with my dubious, all-too-rusty charms. I also began giving out my "business card"⁶ to women I thought were interesting. Needless to say, these early returns to singleness were awkward—not to mention inept and aggravating to my friends.

And so, things stabilized. I'm now comfortable with my singleness again. Most importantly, I'm comfortable with my social individuality. Of course, this presently might all be for naught. Now that I've begun seeing somebody and now it's time to waste tremendous amounts of money, probe without seeming to probe and begin to consider my best plan of attack as far as acrobatics are concerned. Just goes to show that you never learn.

Or that you gotta keep trying. Take your pick.⁷

The Rip It Up An' FOOTNOTE AGAIN SECTION

1—I know, I know, I promised a stop to all this name-dropping. Give me a break—this one was irresistible. I promise it won't happen again.

2—No, I never dated Anastasia. It's just more shameless name-dropping.

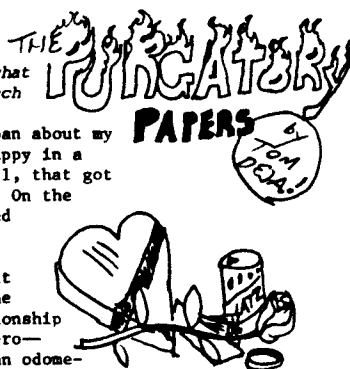
3—I've never done this, but I have it from good sources that this can be deadly to the relationship. A friend of mine tried to put spies in his girlfriend's area and ended up without a girlfriend, without a best friend and without much of a life. Let that be a lesson to you.

4—Although why somebody would want to celebrate their love by buying what is freely admitted to be a symbolic chain is beyond me. Isn't love supposed to liberate people rather than tie them down? I don't know; I just sit here and bitch. And I didn't even spy on my girlfriends, either.

5—And you know who you are. If you don't know, I know, and I won't forget, either.

6—It was an actual business card, too—a part of a feeble attempt to start my own business as a "recovery specialist" (translated: I found things). Actually, it was more a way to fulfill my Raymond Chandler fantasies.

7—You think our Editrix is gonna hate me for all these footnotes? You decide.





Detective Cluer?
 Yes. Sergeant Drihyde?
 Yes.
 Well, what's up?
 Had lunch yet?
 Nope. You?
 Well, I don't think you're gonna feel much like eating after you take a look behind that door.
 Whaddaya mean?
 Take a look.
 JESUS. What in hell happened to HIM?
 That's why we're here. Station got a call late last night.
 Said this guy—
 Got an ID on him?
 Yeah, just a sec...uh, okay. It's "Gold."
 "G-O-L-D"?
 Right. "Gold. Gary P."
 "Pig"?
 Yeah. For "Pig."
 Huh?
 Pig. Gary Pig Gold.
 Really.
 Really. We checked it out already.
 PIG?
 He's a writer.
 Oh. Okay then.
 Or WAS. Seems he owed three weeks on his newspaper.
 Three weeks.
 Yeah. That's about six, seven bucks.
 Uh-huh.
 And when the boy came by to collect for it—
 GEEZ! Remind me to pay my newspaper bill as soon as I get home!
 No. The paperboy found him like this when he got the landlord to let him in.
 Jesus.
 Looks like he's been gone about two, three days.
 Hmm. Any idea what went down?
 Nope. Not a print in the place. Nothing stolen. Nothing even MOVED. But whoever got in here sure did a number on this Gold guy's head.
 Tell me about it! Just look at the way his neck—
 Put that down, Cluer.
 Sorry.
 We've been over and over this place with a fine-tooth comb.
 Checked out the landlord and the paperboy. They're clean. And neither of 'em saw or heard a thing.
 Great.
 And it seems this Gold guy was quite a loner. Quiet guy. No friends that we know of.
 Looks like he had some enemies, though.
 Right.
 Say, what's that under his arm?
 The carpet.
 No, no, THAT arm. Over there.
 Oh. You mean that book?
 Yeah.
 I'll tell ya about that. Pick it up.
 The book?
 Yeah. Go on.
 But it's all covered in—
 Just pick it up, will ya?
 Okay, okay...hmm..."Confessions of a Dangerous Mind" by Chuck...
 Chuck...
 Barris. Chuck Barris.
 Chuck Barris.
 Yeah.
 Ever heard of him?
 I hadn't, 'til we had him checked out.
 Who? Barris?
 Yeah. Listen to this: Born 1930 in West Philly. Dad was a dentist. He's dead now.
 Any mother?
 Housewife. Living in Westfield now. One sister. Ad executive.
 What's this Chuck character do?
 That's the interesting part. He worked in a steel mill; quit to go to university. Of Pennsylvania. Fucked around quite a bit. Flunked out. Moved to New York City. Got a job at NBC.
 NBC?
 National Broadcasting Company. Or Biscuits. Something like that.
 Fucked around quite a lot. Quit. Worked for the TelePrompter Corporation.
 The what?
 It's not important. Was fired. Worked for the Brentano Bookstore. Fucked around. Was—
 Fired.
 Right. Then he started writing television shows. Set up his own company, Chuck Barris Productions, with money he made as a songwriter.
 A songwriter?
 Yeah. Ever heard of "Palisades Park"?
 Who's she?
 No, no, it's a song. Big hit back in the sixties, I guess.
 So what's all this got to do with that heap on the floor, huh?
 Well, Chuck Barris Productions Productions has a buncha big TV shows—"The Newlywed Game," "The Dating Game," "The Mating Game,"

"The NEW Newlywed Game," "The Gong Show," "What's That Smell"—
 Where?
 No, no, Cluer, it's a game show.
 Oh.
 Eventually Barris moves to L.A. Becomes a big exec at ABC.
 More biscuits?
 Something like that. Fucked around all OVER the place. But ya see, it's really all just a front.
 A front? For what?
 Well, ya see, our pal Barris really works for the CIA.
 The CIA?
 Yeah. Central Intelli—
 Yeah, yeah, I know. Doin' what?
 Well, he was one of their top moles.
 Moles.
 You know. Underground. Counterintelligence. He even worked for awhile as a hit man.
 No!
 You bet. While he's busy feelin' up Jaye P. Morgan—
 Who?
 on TV, he's really over in Paris blowin' away goddamn KGB agents.
 And he's got the best cover in the world, don't he?
 He's on TV.
 Feelin' up fuckin' Jaye P. Morgan!
 Shit! So this Gold here. He's KGB?
 Nah. He just read the book.
 The book?
 The Barris book. "Confessions of a Dangerous Mind." Bought a copy for a buck just a few weeks ago, we found out. Took it home.
 Starts readin' it. Before he knows it—BANG.
 Bang.
 He's history.
 Just 'coz he reads this here book.
 Not exactly. It went farther than that. Come here a minute...
 just watch out ya don't step on any of that—
 Yeah. What a mess.
 Here. Lookit that.
 What?
 The picture, Cluer. The picture.
 Hmm...looks like some nut in a cheap suit with a...a...is that—
 Yeah. A bag over his head. Name's Murray Langston, alias "The Unknown Comic."
 Unknown? But I thought you just said he's—
 It's a stage name.
 Oh. Like "Pig"?
 Uhh...yeah. Sort of. Anyways, it ain't that this Langston guy's just super-embarrassed at having to perform in front of sixty million "Gong Show" viewers every night alongside such trash as Gene Gene The Dancing Machine—
 And that Morgan broad.
 Right. Ya see, he's got that bag over his head for a reason.
 Skin problem? Chronic bronchial congestion?
 Nope. Try "mole."
 Oh. So he does have a skin prob—
 No, no, "mole" as in "underground." "Mole" as in—
 CIA?
 Nope. He's not one of ours.
 You mean, he's—
 Yup. As red as they come. KGB all the way.
 Whew! So lemme get this straight: You're sayin' that there's this university dropout steel worker book clerk who wrote a hit song, got on TV, and was a slug—
 Mole.
 Whatever—for the CIA. And on his TV show he has some Russian spy with a bag over his head tellin' jokes while this Morgan chick keeps flashin' her boobs.
 That's about it.
 About WHAT?! I still don't get it! And even if I did, what's it all—whatever it is—got to do with this Pig all over the floor here?
 Just think for a minute, Cluer. This Gold guy—he's a writer, right? Nevertheless, he's quite the clever son of a bitch, and when he gets hold of this Barris book, he starts readin' between the lines, so to speak, and slowly puts two and two together and—
 Uhh...gets four?
 Exactly.
 ...Huh?
 Listen! Barris: CIA. Langston: KGB. Gold:—
 ...PIG?
 No. IJ!
 IJ? Not more biscuits!
 Nope. IJ. Stands for "Inside Joke," a magazine outta New York—
 Figures.
 —that Gold writes for. "A newsletter of comedy and creativity," it calls itself.
 Uh-huh...
 See, it was gettin' closer and closer to Hallowe'en, and I'm told that's one helluva psychic holiday for these writer people. And Gold's under deadline. And he needs a story. And he reads "Confessions of a Dangerous Mind." And he starts to realize what's REALLY going on. And he thinks for a while: should he, or shouldn't he?
 Pay the paperboy?
 EXPOSE the whole goddamn plot!
 Plot?
 Especially during this, of all years.
 1988?
 (continued next page)

Not just any old year, Cluer. This is an election year.
 It is?
 And this Gold fella's got it all figured out. And he don't plan on keepin' it to himself either!
 OJ?
 That's "IJ." You got it, Cluer!
 Got what, fer chrissake?!
 Come on! Chuck Barris! CIA! Murray Langston!
 KGB.
 Right! The Unknown Comic! And it's 1988!
 Election year?
 Right again! Think now: Michael Dukakis?
 Uhh...Democrat?
 More or less. And George Bush?
 Who?
 George Bush! Our newly-elected President?
 Hmm...I think I know what you mean...Pretty forgettable guy, huh?
 Exactly!
 Like he's always the invisible guy in the Doonesbury comics! You can't even see him, unless—
 Unless...
 They stick something over his head...
 Now ya got it!
 And this Chuss Barrick—
 Chuck Barris.
 Whatever—he's actually been...hired by the government to...to...
 Nah, now wait just a minute! You don't mean to stand there and tell me that—
 Don'tcha see? It all makes perfect sense!
 But if what you're saying is true, this has to mean the biggest political conspiracy since...since...Kennedy, fer chrissake!
 I'm afraid it's far bigger than even that, ol' buddy. This one's bigger even than Hinckley and Foster!
 You mean those two guys who talk about movies on TV?
 Never mind...
 And so this poor old Gold guy here reads that book, turns on "The Gong Show," and realizes that he's onto something pretty fuckin' hot, right?
 The hottest.
 And he tries to get it to press as quickly as he can.
 Before the election.
 And before Chuss Berrick can—
 Hold it just a sec there, Cluer. I wouldn't go spillin' all those beans. At least not just yet.
 How come?
 Well, I mean, what if INSIDE JOKE does decide to run this story?

"Yes. No. Not really."
 "Well, make up your mind. Which is it?"
 "Beline..."
 "Not Beline, she has a mouth larger than the Zombie Wombats of New Cleveland..."
 "Frost, Bunny, she's gonna dis-inform everybody." "Disinform" was a term she picked up from Jenny in a conversation they had on synonyms. Synonyms was a new subject in Prudence's English class and because Prudence had been in the hospital she had missed that class. Jenny assisted her in learning the missed lesson and, in the course of studying, Prudence learned that "disinform" was one of the many words in the English language that was a synonym for "lie." "She's gonna spread so many rumours around people won't know what to think."
 "So what's she gonna tell them? That the Principal thinks you're borderline psychotic or that you knifed someone in the hallway?"
 Prudence, in her ever-increasing desire to be like her aunt Jenny, decided to write a short story. She was staying with Jenny, as Claire had to leave town on a business trip and Grandma Ed was sick and didn't want to give Prudence her cold. Prudence hadn't seen Grandma Ed in close to two weeks and every time she asked about Grandma Ed all anyone said was, "It's a secret." Prudence had grown cold on the "secret" business. She figured it couldn't be anything spectacularly awesome, like a pony, because at the rate things were going, it would be dead by the time she got it. Jenny was taking a writing class. Prudence came in one day from school to see Jenny surrounded by manuscripts. Prudence sat down and read a few of the pieces and wasn't very impressed. She decided that she could turn out better work, and thus she set out to prove it.

PINKY NUSSBAUM IN THE LAND OF THE DEAD

by Prudence Gaelor

Once upon a time there was a little girl named Pinky Nussbaum who had two goldfish, Uther Killjoy and WonderTwin. She was very attached to her goldfish. She fed them and cared for them and spent many hours looking for interesting stones to put in their tank to make their world more beautiful. Pinky loved her goldfish very much.

One day, when Pinky was bathing her fish in distilled water, they died suddenly. Pinky was very upset and cried a lot. Pinky's parents explained to her that WonderTwin and Uther Killjoy had entered the Land of the Dead, and that while Pinky was separated from them now, at the end of her lifetime she would join them in the Land of the Dead and they would never be separated again until the end of time. Pinky asked her parents how long it would be until the end of her life and they said that there was no reason that she couldn't live to be a hundred if she ate properly and went out and played in the sunshine every day.

Pinky didn't want to wait a hundred years to see her beloved fish again. She decided that very night she would visit them in her dreams, because even dead she was sure they would still be better company than the other kids on her block. Before bed, Pinky put on her Special Wish Jammies that she usually reserved for the night before her birthday and any other occasion when she might receive gifts. She lay down on her bed, closed her eyes, placed her hands over her heart like a bat and wished she were in the Land of the Dead.

When she opened her eyes, Pinky found herself in a large room painted black with roving lights and a glitter ball suspended from the ceiling. Wherever she turned there were large screen TVs all tuned to "Fantasy Island." The episode where Roddy McDowall played the Devil kept repeating itself on every screen.

Pinky looked everywhere for Uther Killjoy and WonderTwin but found them nowhere. Finally she mustered the courage to ask some dead kid who had accidentally blown half of his head off with his daddy's Magnum where she might find them.

"You won't find them here," he said. "It's not in their contract."

Pinky puzzled over this awhile and then asked the boy what he meant. He explained that sharing a world with humans was a rite of passage that every animal had to endure before going on to an eternity of happiness free of all humans and that Pinky would never see her fish again.

This made Pinky very sad, but no one seemed to notice because they were all watching "Fantasy Island." Her parents had lied to her. She wondered what else her parents had lied about. Pinky decided to return and confront them. She closed her eyes, assumed the bat position and wished herself home.

But when Pinky opened her eyes she was still in the Land of the Dead. The haunting strains of the "Fantasy Island" theme filled her ears. She was stuck there.

Prudence was so excited about her story that she couldn't wait to get home and show it to Jenny. The concept came to her in Social Studies, she wrote it during Math and drew the accompanying illustrations at recess when all the other kids were playing tag. She folded the pages into a neat little booklet, affixed it with the safety pin she had been using to keep the lining in the sleeve of her coat in place, and gave it to Miss Paine, her teacher, to read and correct any spelling errors. She used words she remembered from Jenny's stories and because some of the words were new to her she wasn't sure of the spelling.

The next thing Prudence knew, she was sitting in the office while the Principal, Dr. Sharkey, discussed the story with Jenny, thus blowing her surprise.

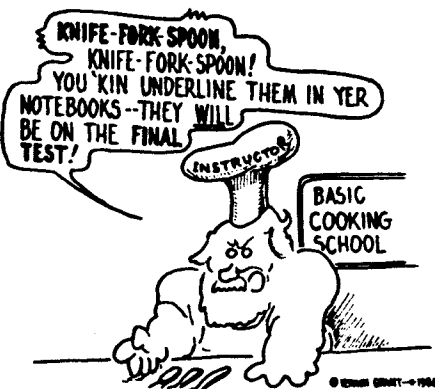
(To be continued)



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PINKY NUSSBAUM IN THE LAND OF THE DEAD by Prudence Gaelor

(ED. NOTE: Pru asks readers to forgive her that her promised Pru 'n Bunny installment "The Secret" is, in her opinion, not quite up to publication yet, and hopes you enjoy this multi-parter in the meantime. Also, she thanks those involved for their patience while awaiting SPONTANEOUS HUMAN COMBUSTION QUARTERLY #3, which will be out Real Soon Now, and to all those who sent her SHCO money as of this press date, she'll be sending you issues 2 and 3.)

"And that's why they threw you out of school?" Pink Bunny asked, drawing nearer.

"Yeah," Prudence responded distractedly. She had her attention focused on the rubber toe of her hi-tops on which she was doodling. She dropped the ballpoint and studied the shoe for a moment, and with a lunge reached into her desk drawer and pulled out a small plastic thingy with holes in it that had come in her Spirograph set. She picked up the ballpoint, inserted the tip in one of the orifices and continued doodling. One twirl of the thingy, two, four...she had doodled a semi-intricate snowflake pattern.

Prudence was too confused over the issue. Too confused. She wasn't sure whether to be majorly embarrassed or extremely pleased with herself. Until she had her feelings sorted she decided to play at ambivalence, but knowing the utter transparency of the charade she was unable to look Pink Bunny in the eye. He could read her too well, and the knowledge that some situation was momentarily overwhelmed her would give fodder for future teasings.

"Do people know?"

THE CONTINUING SAGA OF DR. IGUANA

THE STORY SO FAR.

by Ken Burke

Perry Mason grabbed one of many half-filled cups of coffee on his desk and drank it. The coffee was cold and there was a faint flavor of cigarette ash in the mixture. Mason surveyed the mess on his desk and swore.

"DAMN! This was supposed to be cleaned up by now."

Pressing the intercom button for either his secretary or switchboard operator Mason prepared to bark stern directions to whomever answered, but there was no answer. Mason angrily rose and rushed to the outer office with precise terms of sharp rebuke on his lips. He was stopped short by the sight of his vacant outer office. It was Sunday, and his staff was at home until tomorrow.

"DAMN!" spat Mason. "Nothing's been the same around here since Della left."

The famous trial lawyer spoke the truth. Nothing had been the same since Della Street left his office over a year ago. New secretaries, ones not as proficient as Della, but who demanded nearly twice her wages and benefits, could not perform half of Della's functions. Nor could they properly acclimate themselves to Mason's office routine. They interrupted his highly evolved thinking process, they could not execute the simplest task without explicit instructions, and they argued that making coffee and hiding clients in their apartments was not part of their job descriptions. Worst of all, none of Della's replacements viewed their position with Mason as anything more than a job. Della's most sorely missed attribute was her ability to regard her work as a grand adventure in the criminal justice system. She was more partner than employee, but now she was gone.

"Della...Della, how could you have gone and left me like this? So many years together...we knew each other's minds and movements so well..."

For a while Gertie had left her duties in the reception area to take over Della's spot, but the strain of working for Mason without having Della Street act as a buffer for Perry's insulting, aggressive manner was too much for her, and she gave her notice in writing saying, "I'm sorry that I'm not your precious 'Saint Della Street.' She's too tough of an act to follow. I quit."

"Della...how many nights did we sit in this office, sending out for coffee and sandwiches, trying to hash out the particulars of an especially complex case? You always listened so eloquently, and the adoring flutter of your eyelashes always revved my thoughts into near stratospheric brilliance."

Perry had not been on speaking terms with Paul Drake since one of the new secretaries wrote the Drake Detective Agency a check from an account containing insufficient funds. Mason soon discovered that without Della on hand to keep the accounts in order, stall creditors during times of poor cash flow, and smooth hot tempers, he had few friends in the business world. New detective agencies did not provide the same personal service or implement directions as the Drake Agency once did, and they were easily swayed into disloyalty through bribery or police bullying.

For the most part Mason's command of the legal system had actually improved, but without sympathetic private investigators or a conscientious "gal Friday" to relieve him of the day-to-day details of time-consuming office work, Mason's mastery of the law seemed to lose focus, and his ability to think on his feet during cross-examination became clouded. On those few cases where everything came together in exactly the right sequence, and Perry was again the supreme master of his complex universe, the lawyer walked away from his triumphs into dispiriting isolation. As he left the halls of justice, his uncaring new employees drifted away from him without so much as a congratulations or an acknowledgement of their boss's uniqueness. Viewing him as an irascible drudge, they always politely declined his invitations to a celebration dinner. Mason tried to shrug off his loneliness, telling himself that "the work" and the preservation of justice were their own rewards, but so many consecutive days of doing solitary work in an emotional vacuum were beginning to take their toll on the famous attorney.

"Della...all those nights of dining in the finest restaurants, tipping big, mixing hot toddies at your place, holding you close while we danced—didn't that show you how much I cared? If I didn't say it in words you should have guessed; you weren't just a part of my life..."

Sometimes Lt. Tragg would drop by to shoot the breeze with Mason. He often reported the latest news about Della Street, whom he saw every day. Perry was wildly jealous of Tragg's access to her, sometimes to the point of hatred, but deep down Mason knew Tragg meant no harm, and that in his own gossipy way the police lieutenant was acting as a concerned friend. Besides, Tragg was somebody to actually talk to, somebody who understood his cues, non-verbal signals, and passionate devotion to the law, as Paul and Della once did. On occasions the two would meet at a bar for a night of boozy humor, legal jousting, and self-pity. Once Tragg toasted his legal adversary and himself by lifting his glass and

remarking, "To the last dinosaurs of the criminal justice system. May our sacrifices leave an imprint that legal archaeologists will discover and admire many centuries from now." Choked with emotion, Mason clinked his glass to the aging policeman's and tearfully responded, "Hear hear, Tragg, hear hear."

"Della...all those nights together...you and I, discussing legal tactics, tricks of the trade, how to talk without saying anything of substance, how to pick a jury, how to work a tough judge, and how to make prosecutors fall through their own little traps... I showed you my world, Della. A world where bureaucratic technicalities can be either circumvented or compounded, and presentation of evidence is the ultimate chess match. I showed you all I knew, all I cared about, everything I am. Now...you've gone...how could you do this to me, Della?"

The last six months had been the toughest. In order to meet his ever-burgeoning payroll and increases in monthly office rent, Mason had been forced financially to concentrate on his corporate law practice. Mason was, of course, an expert in all facets of the legal system, but corporation law was not as stimulating or personally rewarding to him as criminal law. He'd much rather discuss the legal merits of fingerprints on a knife in a courtroom than advise a wealthy conglomerate on how to knife a stockholder out of the boardroom. But things had changed, and Perry seemed to have come to the end of his winning streak in the courts of criminal justice. With his confidence shaken, Mason gratefully accepted the lucrative retainers offered by his corporation clients, though he knew that it was the beginning of the end of his career in criminal law.

Mason had expected to lose a criminal case or two along the way, but nothing like the torrent of failure that had overcome him in the last half year. Since the death of Hamilton Burger, the District Attorney's office had become smarter, hipper, and better prepared, and in return, Perry inherited his former rival's mantle of loser and goat. Eventually, as he witnessed the continual parade of his clients walking into the "Death House," Mason's zeal for the criminal justice system waned, a fire never to be rekindled.

"Della, Della...all those years of teaching, interacting, and loving, so much time between a man and a woman can't be so easily dismissed...have you forgotten me, my aspirations, and my feelings so soon? How could you have done this to me?"

As the building emptied and the city lights faded into moist darkness, the cleaning crew stopped outside the famous attorney's back office door. They listened ruefully as muffled sobs, as if from a head buried in crossed arms on a desk, wailed out to ears that could not possibly hear.

"Della...Della...oh GOD, Della..."

A member of the night crew asked his partner what was causing such unrepentant sorrow for such a prominent success story as Perry Mason's.

"Why, ain't you heard, boy? Ever since Della Street got elected as District Attorney, Mr. Mason hasn't been able to win a single criminal case in this town."

MISS MARPLE'S SUMMING UP

Detectiverse by Dana Snow
You may have wondered why
You've been gathered together,
At 2 AM, dressed up in
Your nightgowns and your leather.
I've found that it helps
To get the suspects in one room
So I can tell all the motives
And who did what, to whom.

Colonel Mustard was strangled,
With a twist of the wrist,
And so I had to strike him
From my long suspects list.
And it wasn't that woman who
Did "Murder She Wrote,"
Which is suspiciously familiar—
Wish she'd stayed on "The Love Boat!"

It wasn't Manson, Dr. Doom or Sting.
It wasn't Jason, Freddy or Emperor Ming.
It wasn't conspired by everyone here.
It wasn't the politico who made things
"perfectly clear."

If you can't guess now, then you must be
dense.

Perhaps I will further stretch the
suspense
Maybe I will tell you sometime tomorrow—
No, I will say the killer.

It was Hercule Poirot.

Multiple Choice

- a. entertainment
- b. society
- c. bills



SUPERIOR MUTANTS!

Vengeance on the Pink Bony, Medocriminal and
bombers who brought this crumbling technology is
provided by the anti-refuge of the future.
The Chameleon of the Chameleon is an empire of
"superior mutants" (including your abnormally
lame prehistoric evolution
and weird-as-propaganda \$1).

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The Reagan Years:

THE UNOFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY

PART TWO

by Larry Stolte

THE BAD GUYS

Moammar Khquaddafffi became the meanest guy in the world for awhile because he never got any mail. One day he awoke to find shrapnel where family members used to be and went into a Sugar Ray Leonard retirement. His biggest mistake was in not realizing that Ronald's pet peeve was state-sponsored terrorism, although it seemed to be okay in Florida's case.

The Ayatollah was a super bad guy in charge of a super bad country whose leading export was rocket fire and leading import was hostages. His understudy, the ubiquitous Lieutenant Ayatollah Oliver North, made sure that the Iranians had enough weaponry to find off any attacks by kamikazi oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz.

The next few guys on the list used to be drinking buddies with Ronnie. One even sacrificed a virgin in his honor at a Bob Hope party. But the president eventually had to turn on Ferdinand Marcos and Manuel Noriega. It just wasn't fashionable to be concordant with mass murderers and drug lords.

Ferdinand Marcos was first-class fertilizer who could check the oil with his dick. He achieved billionaire status by acuminous futures trading and a keen business sense. His lovely wife Imelda was voted by Filipinos as "most deserving of being eviscerated and force-fed her own entrails." Those jocular kids of theirs, Bam-Bam and Muff-Muff, were always partying with big stars like Bob Hope. Never were they without a Mr. Microphone, and their constant banshee wailing made Nancy Reagan sound downright euphonic.

Manuel Noriega, a.k.a. Mr. Pineapplehead, enraged after being told by numerous plastic surgeons, "You don't need me, you need a lathe," or, "Get used to it," invested his general's salary wisely and accumulated five trillion dollars, slightly higher than the average NBA salary. Some Miami law fellows were certain that Noriega was a crook and therefore indicted him or recruited him for their chief of police (the letter wasn't clear).

Eulogy rebuttals will be rife when these bad guys die. The absence of even one of these guys from hell would leave hell with a tremendous credibility gap.

THE RUSSIANS

One ex-bad guy changed his status during the Reagan administration. Mikhail Gorbachev, whom Ron used to call "Stalin with a funny red mark," was the General Secretary of the Soviet Union, which Ron used to call "The Evil Empire." Reagan simply couldn't stomach that in Russia the government was systematically oppressing, quieting, torturing, Steppordizing, and murdering people and making them stand in long lines without any gum to chew. The government should not do this, he felt—this was a job for big business.

In later years, RR and Smilin' Mike became doubles partners in their quest for the Nobel Peace Prize, which they felt would make handsome bookends for their Nobel War Prizes. No one can question the efficacy of their achievements: Ronald agreed to put a limit on pit bulls in space, and Mikhail acquiesced to continue the skin grafts from Lenin to Michael Jackson.

Glasnost and perestroika warmed the Cold War dramatically. Billy Joel's tour of the Soviet Union was labeled a success; the Bolshoi Ballet toured the U.S., also with great success, though many thought the leg irons should have been eliminated. All events were overshadowed, however, by the Don King-promoted Nancy-Raisa Superfights.

EVENTS AND ISSUES

The US-USSR rapprochement was only one event that shaped his-



"Star Wars" Delay Communist Fault

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (YU) — The Air Force is blaming "known communists, subversives, and Greenpeace fanatics" for its latest failure to demonstrate the feasibility of President Reagan's "Star Wars" program.

In twenty-five attempts to hit various space shuttle and unmanned missions with a low-power laser, the crack team of 1,300 professional hit-men assembled by the Pentagon has yet to come within 600 miles of the target.

White House spokeswoman Marlin Pisswater now suggests that previous announcements blaming the failures on "the inability of the target to be in the proper position" were the administration's way of giving the CIA more time to fabricate the true cause of the program's inefficiencies. YU News Service

EVERY PRESIDENTIAL LOSER BECAME A WINNER WHEN BRAINDEAU'S

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tory during Reagan's eight-year sopor. There were numerous events and issues to be avoided. The order is as unimportant now as it was then.

South Africa was always a hot issue. The president, when asked how he felt about a polity that is 80% or whatever black but manages to segregate and oppress those blacks, responded, "Gee, it worked just fine here in Washington for years."

Hostages were a soft spot for Ronald. The whole arms-for-hostages mess started when hostage Terry Anderson's captors sent Ron a photo which depicted a gun pointed at Terry's head. The next day another photo was sent; this time two guns were pointed at his head. The third photo showed three guns pointed at Terry's head. After a half dozen days, Ronald calmly panicked and went on vacation, giving the Air Force One keys to Ollie.

Resurfacing the Supreme Court proved to be tougher than previously thought. We soon learned that a guy who talks like God and looks like the devil won't be a Supreme Court justice. They put the kibosh on Douglas Ginsberg also. He was a pothead, and Ronnie's CIA was importing cocaine. Conflict of interest.

In August, 1981, Ronnie called striking air traffic controllers "wussies" and told them to pack their bags. Their bags were lost because they flew frequently and the airlines misplaced them. Ronald then fired them and replaced them with dyslexic spider monkeys because they "liked to push buttons and never went on strike." It is now safer to fly than to sit in your own bathtub on a plugged-in electric radio, though many would still prefer to do the Suzuki Samurai slalom than to get into one of those Hindenburg reincarnates.

October, 1983, was a busy month. Armed with chastity belts and disguised as wooden decoys, 241 Marines lost their lives fighting for anarchy in Lebanon. Two days later, our forces rescued the Grenada Philharmonic, saving them from a life of medical school.

Ronald Reagan remained firm on his anti-choice stand when it came to abortion. He felt the Constitution guarantees rights to all individuals up until their third trimester, but not after.

Ronald's welfare program benefitted a great many people, and such an odd program it was. Historically, welfare served the needs of the homeless, the poor, single mothers, and others of that ilk. Ronald's plan oozed brilliance. He wanted taxpayers to foot the bill for Star Wars, which he euphemistically called Star Police Actions, and other impractical defense systems. This keeps millions of conservative technocrats, engineers, Ph.D.s, military contractors, and the socially dead on the dole by paying them at least 100 Gs B.C. (before corruption) for skills that will absolutely never have any practical applications. Of course, after watching "60 Minutes" for the last fifteen years, it's a damn good thing their skills will absolutely never have any practical applications.

Ronald thought drug testing could keep the rabble out of decent businesses and put them in the CIA where they belong. Ronald volunteered to be the first person tested at the White House. When told he would have to furnish urine, Ronald said he always keeps a fresh sample of his over on the Constitution.

RR campaigned assiduously for Republicans in 1984. They promptly told him to campaign for the Democrats in 1988.

CELEBRATIONS

Other than Bob Hope's birthday parties, two major celebrations were foisted on us in the eighties. The centennial of Chrysler's Statue of Liberty graced the papers in July of 1986. Crowds swarmed to and around Manhattan; pedestrians and boats were everywhere. For the first time in ten years, there were more bodies on the East River than in it. The president flipped a switch and proved to the world that there is still one lady he can turn on.

In 1987, we celebrated the 200th anniversary of our Constitution by stomping on it and mailing it third class to Tehran and to the University of Moscow at Managua; finally, we shredded it. It survived.

The president's health (we're speaking physical health here) never really became much of a factor, much to the chagrin of the millions who were poking RR voodoo dolls with infected needles. Sure there were a few small problems. The president had a nosotriectomy and a minor operation for butthair cancer. Also, Dan Rather vouchsafed us a look at RR's colon on the 6 o'clock news, just as we were trying to eat. But the general population kept asking the question, "Why can't you be more like other men your age—dead?"

THE HOMELESS

There were no homeless people during the Reagan administration.

THE DEFICIT

There was no deficit during the Reagan administration, and even if there was, it's meaningless.

SOCIAL POLICIES

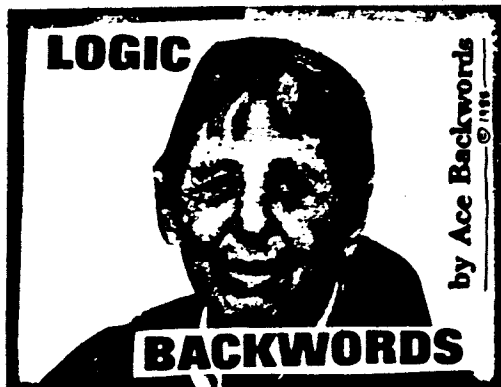
Reagan's social policies consisted of sending a team of crack psychologists to Ethiopia and furnishing free tennis lessons to welfare mothers.

LACK OF SOCIAL POLICIES

What now? How will Ronald Reagan's lack of social policies affect us? For hoi polloi, the only bright spot in our future will show up on an X-ray screen and be malignant.

THE CONCLUSION

There are perspicacious people who see things. They see superficially and they see right through it. They see problems with spending money they don't have. They see the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions. They see homeless people because they're there. They see the other side. They see. Call these people "sees." Ronald Reagan is a "not see." "Not sees" should never be president.



A LITTLE OLD LADY

She was only about 60, but when you're 25, as I was at the time, that seems REALLY old. She was this little old lady living alone in the middle of U.C. Berkeley. This little old lady surrounded by a sea of fresh-faced college students. Truly a stranger

in a strange land.

She lived above the Campus Textbook Exchange. She had burned her apartment to a crisp a few years back. Faulty wiring, she maintained. But there had been so many other near-disasters, the combination of drunken binges and lit cigarettes, that her explanation was dubious at best. Nonetheless, her landlord remodeled her place free of charge.

"I've been waiting all my life," she would say. What she was waiting for was never made clear. There she'd sit, on the edge of her bed, sucking in cigarette after cigarette, slugging down tall cans of Bud by the 12-pack. Watching "Wheel of Fortune" on the tube. Petting her two neutered Siamese cats Mish and Mash. Staring out her big window at all the eager-beaver pups scurrying off to class in hot pursuit of their lives. Waiting, waiting, waiting.

She never seemed to find her niche. She took a stab at psychiatry. Dabbled in poetry. Wrote a newspaper column for a local ("Saccharine Silhouette"—that always killed me!). Mostly she drank and smoked. And waited.

She looked like a little leprechaun. Her hair was chopped short, Napoleon-style. She wore baggy-ass pants and had no female curves to speak of. Her pinky had been bitten off by a raccoon (she said) and she had a nasty scar on her wrist from a suicide attempt ("I learned you slash your arm long-ways, not around the wrist.")

She was a nice person. She never hurt anybody. But boy did she kick the shit out of herself! How she treated herself bordered on the criminal. Something was missing from her life and she had not a clue. She couldn't be filled.

She couldn't help herself so she staged elaborate disasters where her friends were forced to come rushing in to help her. (She loved being helped, hated to have to do anything for herself; gradually she regressed to complete infantilism. She was the only welfare recipient I knew who enjoyed maid service even though she was quite capable of cleaning up after herself.) In the middle of the night would come the phone call—"I-I'm dying," she'd croak. And her friends would climb up the fire escape, break in her window, and call the ambulance for the zillionth time.

The docs would fill her full of oxygen and solid food and lecture her about her drinking and smoking. But nothing worked. Her lungs were shot from smoking and emphysema. Overnight her face shriveled up like a shrunken voodoo head.

And the pills. And idiot docs were supplying her with enough medication to fell a thousand fat Elvises. All washed down with delicious soothing Nyquil syrup. Green slop.

One time we snuck a Bud into her hospital room, and boy did that make her day. She greedily glugged down the booze with trembling hands as if it were the life elixir itself.

Why do people ruin themselves? Do they hate themselves that much? Is consciousness such a horrible burden that they'll go to any length to blot it out? And how does "Wheel of Fortune" fit into all this?

I was her last remaining friend, all the others having long since burned out on the pointless rescue attempts leading to further binges.

I'll never forget the last time they took her away. I watched from her big window as the ambulance parted through the crowd of students. They loaded her in, strapped down on the stretcher—this big, goofy grin on her face like a baby in the secure arms of Mommy. She looked not unlike Boo-Boo Bear. No shame or embarrassment at the public spectacle, just relief at relinquishing control of her life to the doctors and ambulance guys. Which was what she craved all along, somebody else to live her life for her. Off she went.

As the siren faded off into the background, I sat there in the emptiness of her apartment, the room filled with the remnants of her troubled spirit. About 20 empty and half-empty cans of beer were littered around her bed (she was too lazy to even put them in the garbage). Her bookshelf had been knocked over during an unsuccessful attempt to reach the bathroom. The books and papers that had been sitting collecting dust, unread for years, were strewn everywhere. Dirty, soiled clothes on the floor. Her two cats meowing amongst the chaos and clutter. It looked as if a great fight had taken place. And indeed it had.

When I visited the hospital she had all sorts of wires and machines hooked up to her frail body. She looked really scared this time. She begged and pleaded in a faint whisper for me to take

MasterMath Explains... The Perspective Universe

by William G. Raley

Let me introduce myself. If you already know me, just sit back and relax for a paragraph or two. I have a Master's degree in mathematics, whence the title MasterMath, conferred upon me by the Oriel Orator on the planet Aughton. If you don't believe me, ask him.

I am here to explain certain fundamental mathematical principles, which you cannot live without—why you're doing so well without them to this point is a mystery beyond even me. I'll have to ask the MUD (Master of Unexplained Data).

—GET ON WITH IT, MASTERMATH! EVERYBODY KNOWS WHO YOU ARE BY NOW. AND NO ONE WANTS TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL LIFE. WHAT'S THAT YOU'VE GOT THERE, FAN MAIL? REALLY? PERHAPS I'VE MISJUDGED YOU. I WAS JUST KIDDING. LET'S BE FRIENDS...HEY, GET AWAY FROM ME WITH THAT LETTER OPENER—

Today we're going to discuss the parallel universe. Okay, so it isn't exactly parallel, but I had to do something to attract your attention, didn't I? Even MasterMath has to consider the bottom line. The other universe can be termed coexistent, synchronous, *in situ* with our own. In other words, it is right under our noses, though slightly higher than the noses of mongooses. Anyone who thought the plural of "mongoose" was "mongesees" must go to their room or lose one turn, whichever comes first. Bonus points and a trip to Blythe, California will be awarded to anyone reminding me at the end of this broadcast not to add "mongesees" to the additional word list of my electronic spelling checker.

The point is that the parallel, ahem, other universe is one of perspective. Simply put, anything that is tangible in the universe with which we're most familiar, is intangible in the perspective universe, and vice versa. Thus, palpable objects here (including people, animals, and longshoremen) exist as concepts and ideas in the perspective universe. Conversely, our thoughts and dreams have their counterparts in concrete objects in the perspective universe, especially heavy thoughts.

Difficult to grasp? So is a moving subway or the last piece of fried chicken at Sunday dinner, but you figured those out, right? No? Okay, I'll explain the latter: Simply say, "But that's Fluffy's piece; she was pawing it earlier."

Perhaps some examples would clarify things. The San Andreas Fault is a crack, not something tangible, thus is translated into a millipede, albeit one two light years long, and very mean (it's been known to stare down, then swallow whole, large planets and fur balls). Were you paying attention? Planets in the perspective universe are not what we normally think of as planets: they correspond to the concept of TV game shows here, but only the ones involving cash.

The mortgage on my house is very long, quite mysterious, and cryptic in its wording. In the perspective universe, it is, of course, the album version of the song "Graveyard Train" by Creedence Clearwater Revival, with the bass turned up all the way.

The counterpart to broken-heartedness is a curious creature, which resembles a rottweiler, but with the head of a jack-o'-lantern, who is constantly going around to people's homes and scaring them, not to mention what it does to the drapes. Not something you'd want to run across in a state of mass confusion (the counterpart to a dark alley), but I hear it's good friends with my ex-girlfriend's attitude problem.

So who am I in the perspective universe, and who are you? Well, it all depends on two things: are you basically a good person, and how many people do you know named Joey (and have you played canasta with them)? Thus, if you're a convicted murderer, or a shoplifter of head cheese, you're probably a phrase similar to, "Enos, you dipstick!" On the other hand, if you're a living saint, or have lent cab fare to one, you're probably a phrase like, "And the winner is..." or maybe an opening monologue from Saturday Night Live when Chevy Chase was still on the show.

So that leaves me. At this point I must disqualify myself from revealing the lurid details of why I am the same in the perspective universe. Actually, all of the members of C.H.U.D. (the Cosmic Hall of Universal Deities) are. Suffice it to say that it happened long ago and far away, and involved some candid photographs of Halley's Comet and the Ring Nebula. Incidentally, this article is the same as well, although you have to hold it up to a mirror, and be drinking Dr. Pepper at the time.

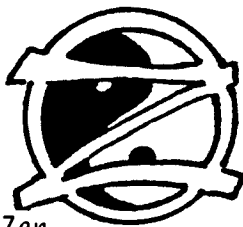
I'll return soon with another vitally important message on something vitally important, half of which will be vitally spent trying to convince you of its importance. Until then—embrace a passion fruit!

her home. "I want to go home." But the doctors said if she left now she would surely die. I left shortly.

Somehow she talked her maid into picking her up and taking her home. I came by that evening to check up on her. Her apartment door was ajar, having been broken earlier by the ambulance crew. The lights were out but I could see her on top of her bed, eerily illuminated by the gray glow of the television set, jammed between channels, hissing out gray static. "Can you hear me?" I asked. She was naked, on all fours, like an animal, shivering and vibrating. Vibrating.

Her wait was almost over.

Zenarchy STORIES



by Ho Chi Zen

THE BIG IDEA

Hui Leng: "What is the big idea of Buddhist teaching?"
Ling Yung: "Before the business with the donkey is over with, a problem develops with the horse."

AN ANSWER AT LAST

"When Pai Chang posed this question it was indeed very difficult to respond to. He said, 'Have all the sages since antiquity had a truth they haven't spoken for people?' If it had been me he asked, I would have covered my ears and left." —Yuan Wu

A RASCAL GURU CHRISTMAS ZEN STORY

One year in Paris near the end of WWII, Rene Zuber was, as he recounts, decorating a Christmas tree for Gurdjieff. "I had almost finished when Mr. Gurdjieff came in, glanced at our work, and going up to the tree signalled to me to hang it from the ceiling. I could not believe my eyes. 'But...Monsieur...from that hook up there? Upside down, with the roots in the air?' That was exactly what he wanted."

So Zuber undecorated the tree and did as he was told. "This story," he writes in *Who Are You, Monsieur Gurdjieff?*, "is perplexing. It is easy to say: 'This man has his own way of doing things. Stop wondering about him.' On the contrary, I always ascribe to him a precise intention in everything he did. What was the intention in that instance? He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

GETTING THE LAST WORDS

Zen Master "Senzaki lived out his last years in a flat rented him by Mrs. Tanahashi in Boyle Heights in east Los Angeles...He continued to meet with students almost to the end, and taped his last words before he died in March 1958. I vividly remember sitting in the funeral parlor and listening to him speak for the last time: "Friends in Dharma, be satisfied with your own head.

Do not put any false ideas above your own. Then minute after minute, watch your steps closely. Always keep your head cool and your feet warm. These are my last words to you.

"Then he added, 'Thank you very much, everybody, for taking such good care of me for so long. Bye bye,' and the tape ended with a little laugh," writes Robert Aitken in the foreword of *Buddhism and Zen* by Nyogen Senzaki and Ruth Strout McCandless (North Point Press, San Francisco, 1987).

OH, WELL!

Perhaps the most fascinating Zen book I've ever read is *The Empty Mirror* by Janwillem van de Wetering, who says that "even with stories one must be very careful. Some men are professional story-collectors. I met one of them, a writer, greedily gathering more and more stories, juicy bits. That way all you'll have is a book full of jokes."

Anybody out there heard any good ones lately?

A PRICELESS TEACHING

This Zenarchy Story is from *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha: The Teaching of Zen Master Seung Sahn*, compiled and edited by Stephen Mitchell (Grove Press, 1976):

Once a student came to Zen Master Hyang Bong and said, "Master, please teach me the Dharma."

Hyang Bong said, "I'm sorry, but my Dharma is very expensive."

"How much does it cost?"

"How much can you pay?"

The student put his hand into his pocket and took out some coins. "This is all the money I have."

"Even if you offered me a pile of gold as big as a mountain," said Hyang Bong, "my Dharma would still be too expensive."

So the student went off to practice Zen. After a few months of hard training, he returned to Hyang Bong and said, "Master I will give you my life, I will do anything for you, I will be your slave. Please teach me."

Hyang Bong said, "Even if you offered me a thousand lives, my Dharma would still be too expensive."

Quite dejected, the student went off again. After several more months of hard training, he returned and said, "I will give you my mind. Will you teach me now?"

Hyang Bong said, "Your mind is a pile of stinking garbage. I have no use for it. And even if you offered me ten thousand minds, my Dharma would still be too expensive."

Again the student left to do hard training. After some time he came to an understanding that the whole universe is empty. So he returned to the Master and said, "Now I understand how expensive your Dharma is."

Hyang Bong said, "How expensive is it?"

The student shouted, "KATZ!!!"

Hyang Bong said, "No, it's more expensive than that."

This time, when he left, the student was thoroughly confused and in deep despair. He vowed not to see the Master again until he had attained the supreme awakening. Eventually that day came, and he returned. "Master, now I truly understand: the sky is blue, the grass is green."

"No no no," said Hyang Bong. "My Dharma is even more expensive than that."

At this, the student grew furious. "I already understand, I don't need your Dharma, you can take it and shove it up your ass!"

Hyang Bong laughed. That made the student even angrier. He wheeled around and stomped out of the room. Just as he was going out the door, Hyang Bong called to him, "Wait a minute!"

The student turned his head.

"Don't lose my Dharma," said Hyang Bong.

Upon hearing these words, the student was enlightened.

A DIP IN THE PLASMAPOOL

by Dorian Tenore

A DIP AT 221B BAKER STREET

or, HOLMES, HOLMES ON THE FRAMES

My, my, we moviegoers learn something new about Sherlock Holmes every day—or at least a few times a decade! In 1970, Billy Wilder showed us that Holmes was actually a ladies' man in *THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*. In 1975's *THE ADVENTURE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES* SMARTER BROTHER, Gene Wilder probed the great detective's sibling rivalry problems. One year later, screenwriter Nicholas Meyer and director Herbert Ross brought in Sigmund Freud to prove to Holmes that things don't necessarily go better with coke in the film version of Meyer's novel *THE SEVEN PERCENT SOLUTION*. In 1985, Li'l Stevie Spielberg threw out Arthur Conan Doyle's original meeting betwixt Holmes and Watson (what did he know, he was only the author) and introduced our hero and his sidekick as English schoolboys involved in supernatural mumbo-jumbo in *YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES*.

This year Orion brings us a nifty new addition to the Sherlock-Holmes-With-A-Gimmick subgenre in the form of *WITHOUT A CLUE*. It's a one-joke movie, but what a great joke! Dr. Watson (Ben Kingsley) is the real crime-solving genius of the outfit, while "Holmes" (Michael "Sure-He's-Ubiquitous-But-Who's-Complaining?" Caine) is a boob. Watson had hired this gambling, boozing, womanizing actor as a front around which to build his mystery stories in *The Strand*, fearing that his hobby of crime-solving might diminish his status as a doctor. (It seems that doing anything besides breathing would diminish one's status back in Victorian England!)

Watson finally ditches the bum, determined to break out on his own as "The Crime Doctor" (who was, by the way, the hero of a 1940s movie serial starring Warner Baxter). But in addition to creating Sherlock Holmes, Watson finds he's created a monster: no one takes him seriously without his alter ego, and *The Strand's* publisher (a hilarious cameo by Peter Cook) isn't about to let Watson kill the goose laying all those lucrative golden eggs. And the British government has a juicy case—someone's counterfeiting

5 notes—that they won't let Watson touch without Holmes' brilliant deduction. Thus, Watson tracks down Holmes at his favorite pub (sneers the good doctor, "This is a clever disguise—a drunken lout!") and once again, the game's afoot. Of course, the boys' arch-enemy, Professor Moriarty (Paul Freeman, the villainous Bel-loq in *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK*), is behind the whole insidious plot. What's more, he knows Watson is the real brains, much to the cowardly Holmes' relief.

WITHOUT A CLUE is not without its moments of predictability (the minute Holmes starts deducting a stranger's background from his clothes—minus his usual coaching from Watson—you know the stranger will prove him thoroughly wrong), but it's not without style and plot twists, either. Its delicate balance of broad humor and subtle wit brings to mind Blake Edwards' best work, before he started churning out such smirking, unfunny comedies as *A FINE MESS* and *BLIND DATE*. But Caine and Kingsley really give the movie its sparkle. These two Oscar-winners (Caine for *HANNAH AND HER SISTERS*, Kingsley for *GANDHI*) work beautifully together and add just enough humanity to their comically prickly relationship to keep you laughing with them, not just at them.

Of course, in my opinion, Michael Caine can do no wrong, but Ben Kingsley's comic performance as the underappreciated Watson is a revelation. If Kingsley didn't model his performance on Daffy Duck, I'll eat my wedding veil! Think I've finally lost it? Take a good look in Kingsley's piercing, slightly crazed brown eyes; study those slow burns he does as Holmes wows their clients with deductive reasoning in which Watson exhaustively rehearsed him—slow burns that explode into hysterically enraged outbursts at Holmes' mistakes the minute they're alone. Then watch Daffy Duck in such 1950s Warner Bros. cartoons as *DUCK DODGERS IN THE 24TH CENTURY*, *DEDUCE YOU SAY* (with Daffy as another buffoonish Holmes and Porky Pig as his brainy, but far calmer Watson!) and especially the *HIGH NOON* spoof *DRIP-ALONG DAFFY* (the source of Daffy's famous line, "Give me the cheers! Give me the honors! Give me... give me one dozen roses," which I kept expecting Kingsley to blurt out any minute). Perhaps Kingsley was also inspired by his co-star's performance in the 1982 movie version of *DEATHTRAP*: Caine has been quoted as saying that his sly performance as murderous playwright Sidney Bruhl was modeled on Sylvester the Cat. Who says no one takes animation seriously?

The whole darn period atmosphere is beautifully recreated, from art direction to casting of extras, all of whom resemble Ronald Searle caricatures of British folk. The supporting cast members are terrific, too, especially Jeffrey Jones (*AMADEUS*), *FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF* as the pompous yet long-suffering Inspector Lestrade ("You can't go breaking into people's homes—that's Scotland Yard's job!") and the silkily sinister Paul Freeman as Moriarty.

Wax Ink

by Rory Houchens

CLASSIC GERSHWIN—Various Artists (CBS Masterworks)—Like the title says, this is a collection of classic Gershwin songs interpreted by fans and maestros with, however, varying degrees of success. The pieces by pianist Michael Tilson Thomas, guitarist John Williams, and flutist Jean-Pierre Rampal are capably performed, but lack enthusiasm and spark. A notch lower we have the glottal dissections of "Embraceable You" and a "Porgy and Bess" medley by vocal-terrorists Cleo Laine and Sarah Vaughn, respectively. Saving the best for last: the exquisite "Rhapsody in Blue" featuring George Gershwin himself caressing the keys (via a 1925 piano roll), jazzed up by the dextrous playing of the Columbia Jazz Band; and the New York Philharmonic's lush version of "An American In Paris." If you can sidestep a couple of larynx low spots, you'll get an earful of classic American music.

THE JOINT IS JUMPIN'—Fats Waller (Bluebird/RCA)—This excellent compilation showcases the considerable playing and composing talents of the often-overlooked Thomas "Fats" Waller. Starting in 1929 with some jangling stride pieces like "Handful of Keys" and "Smashing Thirds" on into the mid-30s and the songs "Lulu's Back In Town" and "S'posin'," and ending with the 1943 recording (one of his last) of the classic "Ain't Misbehavin'," there isn't one clunker in the bunch. A near masterpiece.


THE BEST OF THE MODERN JAZZ QUARTET (Pablo)—Considering that these guys have been around a long, long time and that the seven tracks here were recorded in '84 and '85, the title seems a little deceiving—but rest assured, the stuff here falls into the prime category. "Valeria" exhibits a bit of a bite coming from Milt Jackson's vibes, and "Connie's Blues" is a slow, smooth lope through a cool night. "Reunion Blues" applies a little pressure as it picks up the tempo, but everything stretches out for a long, silk trip on "Echoes." A cool bop hop!

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"Where Regularity is A Religion"

Been meaning to run this for a few years, & I finally make room for it

Dearest Little Friends,
Santa's getting lots of letters to answer's quite a chore.
Just when I think I'm finished here comes a whole lot more.
They come from boys and girls from places near and far.
They come by train, by bus, by plane, and even motor car.
I can't answer every letter for the toys would not get done.
But, I promise you on Christmas eve I'll remember every one.
Your friend
Santa

HAPPY
HOLIDAY
SEASON
from
INSIDE
JOKE



TESTS

by Larry Oberc

It turns to ultimatums, to get the test or else, to where do we go from here if there isn't give and take, I point out that I don't fall into any of the high risk categories, you think I do even though you don't have anything to back it up, you tell me that \$200 isn't all that much money to spend if it'll keep our relationship together, I tell you I'm not going to spend the money, that it's absurd, that it's all in your head, you tell me that you'd tell anyone else to get back, away, out of your life if they refused to take the test, I say fine, if that's the way you want it, you push harder, I tell you this isn't working, there are other problems as well, not just the physical, the mental, the irritations, personality conflicts, you claim I pull you down, destroy your picture of the universe, your wanting the world to be a garden, a place to grow in, my realities get heavy, drag you down, place too much weight in all the wrong directions, I'm not going to take the test I tell you, there are too many things wrong here, the test is just one of them, you sit there looking at me, looking for symptoms, waiting for the right answers, I look back, wondering what it'll be like, this new freedom, whether or not the girl at work, the one I've been watching, will take the test, will check out okay, after all, these days you can't be too careful...

Bobon Dooley (Bobon plays Rock Critic) (An Important Role)
This Global Concert to End the Woes of Mankind is great!
What can I do to help?
Dance!
An official Person-ose



Sure! Every Dance? time your favorite stars start to sing about an issue that is important to you, dance as hard as you can so all the world watching on TV can take hope in your concern + idealism!



Shouldn't I carry this is now! Nah that was then! Today we let sign or mount the stars do some the work, barricades Hey they care enough for all of us!



So who's The Internationl Disarmament Band featuring The Cali-Mackenzie Spuds Guccione Jr. Tasty Tim!
Whew! Sure! I hope my legs hold up!
Wood!




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THE BALLAD OF CLORIS LEACHMAN

by David Serlin

With the exception of David Letterman, my current life has lately been spared from the grip of popular culture. I have been so buried underneath classwork and Victorian literature (which, if nothing else, looks damn impressive on my bookshelf) that I haven't had a 20th century thought in my head for months—hence my hiatus from LJ. All things must end—all illusions must come clean—and so I have been escorted back into the quagmire of the collective American consciousness. I have been probed by the long, Vaseline-coated finger of Curiosity: is Cloris Leachman really dead?

Granted, I won't say this question merited a Descartesian meditation upon reality, but it was good enough. It presented itself while I was writing a song called "Ballad of the Network Stars," in which I portray dead and forgotten (nearly) TV personalities as vengeful gods. I thought of Freddie Prinze, Selma Diamond, Dolph Sweet, Scatman Crothers, Abe Vigoda, Jack Soo—and naturally Cloris Leachman. She is dead—isn't she?

Definitely not! asserted my roommate Laura. She claims to have spotted Cloris on a recent episode of The Facts of Life. Preposterous! I exclaimed. Cloris Leachman has been dead for years. This information wrestled with me; that particular show's title had always seemed ironic—so removed from reality that it should be called The Facts of the Strangely Limited World Ideology We Have Bought Into—but now, with our speculation upon Cloris' demise, even more so. According to Laura, Cloris had made either a regular or cameo appearance on the program (for few watch the show attentively, if at all consciously), and so she must be alive.

Impossible! I refuted. I remember hearing about Cloris' death (or so I thought) and how much of a shock it was; her roles in "The Last Picture Show," "Young Frankenstein," "High Anxiety," and Mary Tyler Moore—even an MTM spinoff, Phyllis—showed such promise...now she was lost forever. I even remember when I heard it—somewhere in the late 1970s, those halcyon years when one could get quaaludes by prescription, and people wore bell-bottoms without fear. I tried to re-create the scene—things were fuzzy and unclear. But I trusted my intuition, even though this intuition has, in the past, made me fly into walls at ice skating rinks and taste food that invariably burns all flesh in my mouth. Laura and I made a semi-attractive wager—for the rent was due in a week—and we endeavored to discover if Cloris Leachman was truly dead.

We started polling all of our friends—no one escaped without inquiry—and the results were fascinating. Some believed Cloris Leachman to be dead; some were absolutely certain she was alive; some did not even know who she was. The results weighed equally, and on one presumed to be more of an authority than anyone else. The difference of opinion reduced my absolute sureness to the uncertain success of a test-taker who realizes the answer to a question just as he/she lays the incomplete test on a teacher's desk; I couldn't decide anything exactly. Laura suggested we go to the library and research the subject. In the meantime, we debated the issue into the wee hours of the morning; and though we did not use the word "wee" once, we did perform it at intervals during the evening.

A few days later, our friend Jeff called with startling information. While Laura had been describing our controversial topic, and how it was based on my song about dead stars, Jeff attested that Abe Vigoda was not dead. According to Jeff, Abe Vigoda—the legendary figure of sarcastic disgust as Fish on Barney Miller and his own short-lived series—was not dead; in fact, the truth was that his brother had died, and poor Abe was the victim of disinformation. Abe attempted to retract the story, but the media ignored him. Now, except for the syndicated show that preserves him, Mr. Vigoda lives in obscurity—but at least he hasn't sold out to IBM (if I see Gary Burghoff or any other M*A*S*H alumni in a Yuppie cardigan, I can't be held responsible for my own actions). For all we know, Abe Vigoda is a land baron in California, or a guru in the Tibetan mountains; or perhaps he is actually Kirk Cameron with only five more years left until his pact with Satan expires.

These revelations upon death and obscurity, of media disinformation and the tragic careers of M*A*S*H regulars, unsettled me. They represented even a bigger threat than the potential existence of Cloris Leachman, which was still then unknown. The entire machinery of the celebrity system revealed itself to me; the way old stars drown in the shallow waters of obscurity; or how they are briefly allowed to ride the surface waves to collect residual checks. In television, everyone is alive simultaneously, but the assembly line of stardom is too rapid to maintain discontinued models—in what rehabilitation centers are Mason Reese and Rodney Allen Rippey drying out? The only time they are rescued from oblivion is when nostalgia calls, and attaches them to the identity of their most familiar character; I saw Sally Struthers advertising for correspondence schools, and I would have laughed if I hadn't felt so bad for her.

Whether Cloris Leachman was dead or not became a peripheral fact; the television industry has buried her without even using a shovel. Whether Cloris was paying therapy bills by condescending to appear on The Facts of Life was besides the point; there are new stars to replace her significance. All she had was a moment in history; and television preserves all its dead relatives on videotape, just like we do.

I went back to my song, and I rearranged the lyrics; it didn't matter whether the stars I mentioned were dead or not. The fact that these people had an integrity and depth that the faceless baubles of TV's current jewel box don't possess is a much more attractive ideal.

Ah, and what of Cloris Leachman's death? Laura won the bet.

THE SHOCKING LIFE OF...

by Susan Packie

Everybody's writing kiss-and-tell books these days. Usually they are about the rich and/or famous—movie stars, politicians, industrial magnates and the like. But what's to prevent these tenderfoots from writing about...

"She was always a little strange, beginning when she imagined her playpen to be a prison. In nursery school, she insisted on playing with the electric toy trains and the dump and lumber trucks, in spite of her teacher's repeated efforts to interest her in dressing and undressing dolls."

Even I have a dark side, speaking of which...

"While to all appearances, she is a Caucasian, at certain times of the year her skin turns almost black, leaving one with doubts as to her true hue. Possibly the dye she uses fades in the sun, and she must repaint."

Then there's my painting.

"While most people are content to visit art galleries, she feels the strange need to fabricate her own version of an art gallery in her apartment, covering her walls with paintings and needlework pictures which she has the temerity to create herself. Does she really imagine herself to be better than The Masters?"

Speaking of Masters—and Johnson...

"Her sex life leaves much to be desired, being confined to amorous gazes at muscular joggers (jogging is another of her failings, rendering her incapable of carrying out her womanly responsibilities) and reading about the reproductive habits of flora and fauna as described in the pages of Natural History. BORING!"

Boring, yes. That about sums it up. So why would a muckraker pick on a person like me?

"The juiciest tidbit is that she sleeps with—"

But I'm not going to give that one away. You'll have to read all about it in the bestseller I'm working on at this very moment. Just send \$25.00 to me, c/o INSIDE JOKE. Then I'll start on...you?

AS TO THE RIGHTNESS AND WRONGNESS OF A COURSE OF ACTION MOST PEOPLE THINK They are right and the other side is wrong. What they can't stomach is that both sides are wrong but that's the way it is in the search for peace. Send \$ASE to the world's ONLY RADICAL: J.C. BRAINBEAU Box 2243 YOUNGSTOWN — OHIO, 44504

NOTHING LASTS FOREVER

by Mary Ann Henn

At sunset there are churchbells a dong for each year I've lived but I'm tired of looking back. Do I really remember me? Do you? Dandelions have gone to seed again and it's only mid-May. Past my prime—another birthday!

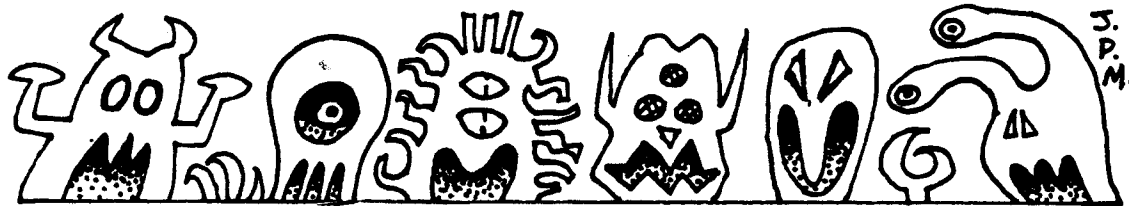
DISCOUNT POLITICAL MEDIA CONSULTING

by Todd Kristel

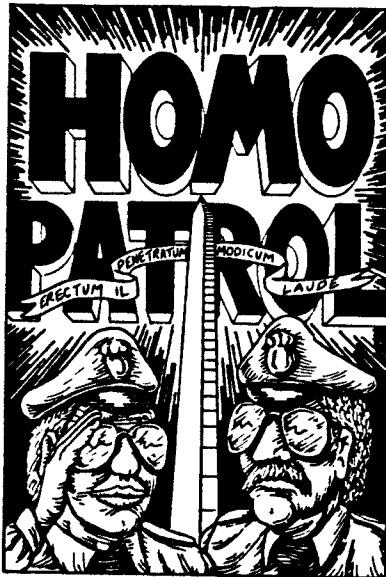
Listen, you can't win a Presidential election without a savvy campaign strategy. Here are some suggestions for the Democratic Presidential nominee in 1992:

1. Select Ted Turner as Vice-President: he's connected with the south, he has media influence, he has money, and he talks like a politician already. Warning: if elected, he might decide to colorize the White House.
2. Accuse George Bush of being a card-carrying member of the AAA who is soft on crime, soft on national defense, unAmerican, and outside the mainstream. Then accuse him of negative campaigning.
3. Use a leftover idea that wasn't fully exploited during the 1988 election: print up several million "Bush is a Weenie" stickers and post them in metropolitan areas across the nation. (This is called "issue-oriented campaigning.")
4. Change the liberal image of the Democratic Party by promising to appoint Morton Downey Jr. to Secretary of Education.
5. Talk about your family and family values. Take home movies so your family can practice acting spontaneous in front of a camera. If you don't have a large family, rent a few grandchildren for the campaign.

If you follow this plan you'll have a good chance of reaching the White House. The only question will be whether anyone will take you seriously once you get there.



QUESTION:
HOW WAS YOUR CHRISTMAS?
ANSWER:
With the holidays approaching I always like to take a bath. This one took me a good five minutes. The mat next to the bath tub was missing and the linoleum covered floor was wet. To exit the tub I placed my left foot on the floor and shifted my weight. In a split second my ten toes were pointing skyward and I was in a backward summer suit. Don't try it — if that happened in the bath tub I might still be there — I live alone. This Christmas I'm happy to be alive and in one piece. I had the exact same experience at least 79 years ago if you were listening to my pleadings and did something about them. Send SASE to arithmetically and spiritually sound
HERMAN REIN — Box 2243
YOUNGSTOWN — OHIO, 44604



TO HOLY GROUND?
by Mary Ann Henn
I'm running away
to join the convent.
I almost wish
it were night.
I see myself
reflected in all
the shop windows
of the world.
Slow moving breeze
stirs my hair.
Time is short
and I have
to move on.
I've walked
unhallowed ground
between two worlds
The Old The New
for longer than I care
to think. I'm running
away to join
the convent.

READING A CIG. PACK
WARNING, WHITE BOY
VISITS THE ATT. GEN.
TO REMIND HIM THAT
CARBON MONOXIDE IS
WHAT SUICIDES SUCK
TO DIE, BUT IS TOLD

1. people like the taste
2. it's relaxing to smoke
3. there's a certain sex validation involved
4. big business goes up in smoke

AS HE IS ESCORTED OUT
A BIG DOOR, WHITE BOY
IS GIVEN AN ASSORTMENT
OF ITTY-BITTY SAMPLES
- Paul Weinman

FRUIT
by Al ?
A fruit
is a house
for seeds
Sophisticated
breeding
creates
seedless
fruits
for
eating

The Dickinson Man by Andy Roberts

"What you opening your nose for? I'd shovel shit with a teaspoon for that money. All you want to do is bitch and moan, bitch and moan. Look at me—I've been on a NyQuil diet for eight and a half years, and do I cry? Wise up, sap!" Mr. Dorfmann whinnied a short laugh, showing horsey yellow teeth, his hectoring tones directed toward Al O'Small, the bullied-looking man at his side and the object of his derision. "You got to work, son, firm up. Look at you, that hair—sissy stuff. Tighten up. My father was wearing a crewcut the day I was born, and he was wearing one the day he died." Dorfmann paused to light the stub of cigar jammed into the slot of his mouth, while O'Small, following behind, dreamed of poetry. "I would eat evanescence," he dreamt, quoting Dickinson, ramming his nose into the small of Dorfmann's back. The clubfoot whirled, his cigar core cherry red and his eyes two bright dimes in a dead pie dough face. "You idiot! Wake up!" His furious face had drained of blood and taken on the complexion of lard. O'Small withered under the heavy fire of eyes and tried to speak but found he could make only animal sounds. Dorfmann's eyebrows climbed his forehead as the animal noises continued. "Get a grip on yourself, boy."

O'Small did. It only disgusted the clubfoot more. He slapped at the smaller man's hand. "Get your pants up, idiot. My God!" They continued on toward the brewery.

"I was born in a slaughterhouse, you know," said Dorfmann. "Spent my days swinging from a side of beer. Always cool in there... I liked that." It was a sweltering hot day in July and the tarmac bubbled beneath their feet as they walked. O'Small's small head filled once more with poetry and Dorfmann's with the anticipation of beer. "I ruined my arches cutting meat," he went on, unaware of O'Small's inattention. "My father was shortlegged, too. Best speedboner in the business, though, an artist with the knife."

O'Small's head filled like a sad balloon with sweet words of misery by Emily Dickinson. His thin lips began to move with the rhythms of verse and his hoarse voice gave vent to the beauty:

*This is my letter to the world
That never wrote to Me—
The simple News that Nature told—
With tender Majesty
Her Message is committed
To Hands I cannot see—
for Love of Her—Sweet—countrymen—
Judge tenderly—of Me"*

Overcome with emotion and his eyes rolled skyward, O'Small misstepped the curb and a tenor fart burst from his jeans, rousing Dorfmann from his memories of the abattoir and alerting him to the situation at hand. "Hey, hey you, you dreaming poetry again? Snap out of it, son. That's stuff's useless as tits on a boar." O'Small hopped along, massaging his stubbed toe with his left hand, and the men turned left into the courtyard of August Wagner's Old Time Brewery.

A brightly-painted, lifesize ceramic status of King Gambrinus, patron saint of August Wagner's Old Time Premium Draft Beer, raised a beveled glass in salute as they stepped through the entrance to the brewery and were immediately plunged into conditioned air. They waited for their eyes to adjust to the dark and signed up for the tour that was to begin in fifteen minutes. Dorfmann's mouth watered in anticipation: all the free beer he could drink—since he was in tight with Archibald, the tourmaster. He glanced anxiously at his watch, as though by constant observation he could will the hands to move.

"You again?" said Archibald, a lumbering, mean-spirited pest of a man, as his tram rumbled to a stop at the ticket office and he crawled out to release the safety chains on the passenger coaches. "Thought you had your fill yesterday, Hawk," he drawled, as he collected Dorfmann's ticket, and Dorfmann smelt the sweet beer on his breath. "See you brought your chicken with you. Haw haw haw haw!" his open-pored, W.C. Fields face filling with pink blood as he laughed. "The Chicken and the Hawk! Haw haw haw!"

"Can it, Archie, this here's O'Small."

"I can see that." Archibald squinted his cuts of eyes to the little dreamer in front of him. "Whadda you go, son?—five two, five three?"

O'Small blinked and cleared his head of sweet visions and smiled benignly at the conductor. "What?"

The tourmaster locked eyes with the midget, who didn't flinch under his stare and continued to smile. "Never mind. Get on."

"What's his game?" Archibald stage-whispered to Dorfmann as the last tourists dawdled aboard and he released the catch on his coaster brake. The electric motor hummed to life and the tram bucked out onto the course.

"He's a poet," said Dorfmann, "or wants to be." He cut a quick glance at O'Small in the coach behind. "He's all right."

They rounded the first bend of the tour and Archibald reached for his microphone.

Dorfmann's saliva-soaked tongue was nearly asponge with anticipation—a reel of television ads replayed itself in his mind: cool, sweating bottles of Bud; iced cans of Busch; the frosted mugs and gurgling foam of smooth-filtered Coors—as the last passengers debarked and he and O'Small followed Archibald to the back room for fifteen minutes of free beer.

It was amazing what Dorfmann could accomplish in fifteen minutes, and Archibald was no slouch either, but O'Small amazed them all with his ability. "Ah, sweet nectar of gods," he misspoke, grappling with the tap, and then getting the better of it, filled a twenty-ounce pitcher to the brim and drained it with ease. He

possessed outstanding technique: seemed not to swallow, but let it pass straight down his throat. Archibald and Dorfmann were dumbfounded. "I stand corrected," brayed O'Small, "'tis not wine, but sweet mead I quaff! or something to that effect." He filled another pitcher, drained it, and gave vent to a terrific belch.

Dorfmann, his puckish pride damaged—no one upstaged him when it came to guzzling beer—bypassed the formality of pitcher and fell straight to the tap. He seized it with trembling lips like a gerbil to the water bottle, and Archibald followed suit. At this rate all men were soon roaring drunk.

In his state of intoxication, O'Small considered quoting Dylan Thomas, but opted in favor of Emily:

*"Surgeons must be very careful
When they take the knife!
Underneath their fine incisions
Stirs the culprit—Life!"*

"What's your game, mate?" asked Archibald. He was feeling woozy and crapulous; it was hard keeping up with O'Small. "Who are you?"

*"I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you—Nobody—Too?
Then there's a pair of me?
Don't tell! they'd advertise—you know!
How dreary—to be—Somebody!
How public—like a Frog—
To tell one's name—the livelong June—
To an admiring Bog!"*

O'Small was pleased with himself—he had fit it right in—Miss Dickinson's most famous poem, and sure to gather a glimmer of recognition.

"It ain't June, son, it's July. Wise up!...And who you calling a bog, boy? I'm still in shape!" Archibald beat on his chest, puffed it out and strutted about the room. "Just you try me. I may look flabby but just you try me. Just you try me, son."

Dorfmann looked up from his stein of beer at the two near-combatants. "No need to get testy now," he said. "Come on boys, drink up." They quickly drained their glasses and filled another. "I told you he's a poet...Give him a break."

"Well, I don't mind no poetry," said Archibald. "Don't particularly like, but don't dislike it either, but you tell him to quit his lying now. You stop your lying, boy."

*O'Small saw his chance and took it—
"Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise."*

Archibald lunged for the quoting midget but Dorfmann intercepted, carried his man to the opponent's end zone and sacked him for a safety. Breathing heavily, the two men slumped while O'Small smirked and quaffed another pitcher. He was on a roll now. "I'm gonna kill that sucker," wheezed Archibald.

*"Because I could not stop for Death—
He kindly stopped for me—
The carriage held but just Ourselves—
And Immortality."*

Archibald was livid—his face was turning purple, he thrashed and scrambled to break Dorfmann's embrace, but the clubfoot held him tight. "Hey hey hey, come on now, come on. It ain't worth it now, is it? You might hurt the guy, Archie, and then you'd be up shit's creek. On the job and drunk and all. You better pick on someone your own size. And you, stop it with that poetry, okay? What do you think you're doing anyway?"

O'Small lounged against a packing crate and a wolfish smile split his face.

"Shhhh! Quiet! Get down, somebody's out there."

O'Small joined them on the floor. They heard footsteps. O'Small cupped his hand and stagewhispered into Archibald's ear:

*"I heard a fly buzz—when I died—
The Stillness in the Room
Was like the Stillness in the Air—
Between the Heaves of Storm."*

The tour conductor erupted. The packing crates went over. The two men went round and round on the floor, while a keg of August Wagner's Old Time Premium Beer tipped over, lost its tap and, with a loud pop and whooshing sound, spewed its contents over the walls and crates and three drunk, struggling men on the floor.

"That's it! That's it!" barked a startled supervisor rushing into the room to investigate. "Come on, break it up, break it up now." The keg expired with a sigh and died. The three men quit struggling. "What's this?" he gasped as he scanned the wet faces and tried for police blotter recall. "Archibald! On your feet! ...Good God, you're drunk!" His head spun like a gyroscope, he staggered and spit, then marshalled his composure and roared: "That's it, Archibald, you're fired! Immediately!"

Given the bum's rush, the poet and the clubfoot staggered home. They had ingested a tremendous amount of beer; their heads spun. O'Small had a cut lip and was flushed with the exertion of fighting; Dorfmann limped even more than usual. Both were silent, tending to their wounds and walking slowly. Eventually the silence proved too much for Dorfmann and, pausing to relight his stub of cigar, he asked: "Just tell me, why'd you do it, son?" He searched the little man's eyes for clues.

O'Small gloated. He felt fine despite how badly he was hurt—like a football player from the winning team. A wolfish smile split his lips as he spoke—

*"Emulation is the going
Of an island soul to sea,
Past the houses, past the headlands,
Into deep eternity!
Bred as we, among the mountains,
Can the sailor understand
the divine intoxication
Of the first league out from land?"*

Commercial McClue-In

by "Kid" Sieve

'Tis the season for Christmas commercials, and the 4CF and I are busy counting up Scrooge and Scrooge-related ads. He's of the opinion they proliferate; I think they just get run to death and that there aren't as many as one might think. So far we're up to two (a Randall/Klugman bit in which Jack says "Scrooge? Bah humbug," and a Hyundai one which makes no mention of how miserly the Hyundai corporation is to its South Korean workers, naturally). I've bet 10 or under; 4CF says 11 or over. We'll see. Listen, if you don't make it into a game or something, the ad season threatens to overwhelm you with nausea. What I like about the Scrooge spots is that they usually show a pre-transformation Scrooge and feed into the very mentality against which Dickens' book railed in the first place—commercialism, greed, consumerism, buy buy buy... it's not easy to promote that and a changed Scrooge simultaneously.

Everything's a new generation now, have you noticed? Pepsi, I believe, started it, but they kinda owned the market on the word "generation" anyway for a long while. Now the NY Daily News proclaims its "new generation" of fascist-leaning reporters (as former right-wing rival the Post is rumored to be swinging back to the center a bit now that it's raised its price to 40¢, and the NY Times caters to the old generation of right-leaning Republicrats), and even Oldsmobile is getting into the act with its campaign of "This is not your father's Oldsmobile." One wonders, then, what shoddily-made and horrid cars our fathers must've driven that Olds had the nerve to sell them then... Of course, even I am not stupid enough not to know that what they're selling is, as Adweek's Barbara Lippert notes, "rejection of the father and all that solid, middle-class steel and chrome" while at the same time "you're still buying into solidity and making some sort of compact with Dad." Dad can have his fucking Olds, for all I care; gimme a Firebird any day. Anyhow, I mention the spots because I always get a kick out of intergenerational plugs in any case, and it's interesting to see the scions of Shatner, Presley and so forth being the rich, useless heirs you always knew they could be. Yeah, they get a free car out of it, but do they really need the dough?

By the way, if commercials are starting to look more disjointed and surrealistic, blame it on what Adweek's Mary Huhn calls "The New Weirdness." This sort of thing has always attracted me to things in the past, but now that it's in danger of overkill I'd advise a caveat emptor here.

Speaking of cars, as I was a moment ago, is anybody else made just a tad uncomfortable with a currently-running Subaru spot? It features a gal calling her guy on the phone during a horridly stormy night, whispering, "My parents just left" as an invitation for him to come over. He hollers "Whoopie!" upon hanging up the phone, rushes to his Subaru and drives to her house, to the strains of "When A Man Loves A Woman." Upon ringing her doorbell, he's greeted by her and then by her father, right behind her. He gulps and exclaims, "Mr. so-and-so, you're home!" and Mr. s-a-s says, "Why of course, who would go out on a night like this?" Now before I thought about this one, it seemed fairly cute. And then I said, Now wait a sec. That girl called the guy knowing her parents weren't going out because of the storm! The proof: when her father opens the door wider behind her, she has a smirk on her face like, Ha, I've tricked him and now he has to deal with my parents, or whatever. Is this decept supposed to indicate a positive, healthy relationship? I would've been rooting for the guy to confront the lying chippy with her own subterfuge, then stalk off in his Subaru (the point of the ad being that the car can get through any kind of weather) on back home where he can get his shit together and search for a relationship based on trust and truth. Now that's what I'd call a happy ending.

While I'm up on my soapbox, it's time to trash the commercial I know you've all been expecting me to trash—the new diaper one. I think it's Luvs. Seems they've now come out with two different sets of diapers, one for boys and one for girls. I have no basic problem with this concept—after all, as their commercials correctly note, wet spots in girls don't exactly correlate with wet spots in boys (yes, they phrased it more delicately—"girls get wet in the middle, boys get wet up front")—although, presumably, they will allow us to point out that they both still poop in the same place, last we looked. In any case, as I say, that part's okay with me. Hard sell on a useless and redundant product, but okay for what they're pushing. What I have trouble with is that they've color-coded the product. I guess they think the buying public is too STUPID or something to LOOK AT THE BOX and read the word "BOY" or "GIRL," so they—oh, I can tell, you're ready for this aren't you?—made them PINK FOR GIRLS and BLUE FOR BOYS!

Well, gang, way back when I was but a budding feminist, this nonsense was one of the first concrete (albeit minor) injustices I was able to tackle with complete understanding of its inanity. Imagine, assigning arbitrary colors to gender, their association becoming so ingrained that most men can't even wear pink without withstanding a barrage of nasty innuendo! Anyway, by the time I finished high school that revulsion was spread widely enough that I guess I assumed the blue/pink schtick would be one of the first things to go by the wayside in a more enlightened society.

I know, I keep forgetting that we aren't in an enlightened society, at least not for the past eight years. When an ad for Good Housekeeping (reproduced in the November Zeta, if you're interested) extols the virtues of what they call "The New Traditionalist" (read: women rich and Republican enough to "decide" they'd rather be Housewives and take care of husbands and kids than dirty

WHITE BOY LISTENS AS A BANKER EXPLAINS HOMELESSNESS TO A CROWD OF THOSE GATHERED AROUND ONE HOT-AIR VENT AT AREA PLAZA

- soft real estate markets
- rise in adjustable mortgage rate
- starter-house slow-down

UNDERSTANDING THESE PROBLEMS BRINGS BIG SIGHS OF RELIEF IN BEING HOMELESS

- Paul Weinman

their hands with those man-type things like working in the Great Big Wide World to make ends meet), I guess I can't expect better from our "return to traditionalism" commercials. What astounds me, though, is that there are so many women in adland now, many of whom hold high executive positions, that none of them at this particular agency had the least bit of hesitation about this crap? "Sure, I make \$50 thou a year writing ads, and I think this 'pink is for girls, blue is for boys' thing is boffo, and there's nothing wrong with girls playing with 'Little Sister' dolls and boys getting the male-oriented 'My Buddy' ones, because goodness knows girls can't be 'buddies,' nosiree!" etc. etc. Most of these women grew up in a post-feminist age, where certain rights were taken for granted to the extent that they no longer feel any need to keep fighting for/talking about them. It's sad, and presages bad news as far as a backlash is concerned. Will our daughters be even less liberated than our mothers? Only time, and pink/blue diapers, will tell.

ODE TO A STAPLE

by Richard M. Millard

Oh, little piece of metal firm,
On which we heap abuse.
We push you in. And pluck you out.
With little thought or care.
We even curse and yell at you
When you but seek to stay.
And rarely do we stop to think
About the job you do.
You hold things up. You keep them shut.
You hold things close together.
Yet once we shove you in the gun,
Oh shiny piece of wire,
We lose all sight and mind of you.
'Tis pity, but we do.

The Kid Says - Don't miss the Clio Awards,
Wednesday, December 7 at 8pm EST on Fox
[Invited by David "Joe Izuru" Leisner]

THE GREGORY CALENDAR

JAN	FEB	APR	SUN	AUG	OCT	DEC
MAR	MAY	JUL	SEP	NOV		
1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
2012	2013	2014	2015	THE END		

Social Renegades!
Superior Mutants!
The NORMALS
form a vast conspiracy
against the
"DIFFERENT."

Thought you were "ordinary"? WRONG!
Tap your secret Abominably Potential.
Take control through liberated wordplay.
This one ain't for everybody.

Humans are trying to make you believe you're one of them. Don't slip back - become an Overthinker. Kick ass, and bag \$\$\$ through the Insane Subconscious. Penetration. Nothing like it anywhere.
Vanguard Publishing 11
The Subconscious Foundation
Box 40306, Dallas, TX 75214

THE BEST DREAMER IN THE WORLD

by Paul Beckman

"PAUL BECKMAN! TELL US YOUR DREAM!" screams the announcer as the light comes on in my sleep booth.

I have this recurring dream that I'm on the SHARE YOUR DREAM TV program where the best dream of the week wins a prize and that "DREAMER" gets to come back the following week to win more prizes.

I've won for twelve straight weeks and now I'm in the DREAM FINALS competing against two other DREAMERS who have also won 12 straight weeks for the "BEST DREAMER IN THE WORLD" crown.

We all want to win the crown but we also want desperately to win the "DREAM OF A LIFETIME" grand prize, even though we don't know what it is.

We are center stage now, we three DREAMERS, along with Chuckie "Mr. Sandman" Charles, the DREAM MASTER OF CEREMONIES. He introduces me, then Yetta "Lucy" Bromstein, and Johnny "Cat Naps" Williams. We shake hands and retire to our respective sleep booths.

The sleep booth have been individualized since the quarter finals. "Lucy" has a brass-railed double bed, goose down pillow, top sheet and two light wool blankets. Her musical choice for bedtime is Elvis' "Love Me Tender."

"Cat Naps" for his bed of choice picks a couch and elects to use the armrest as his pillow. The sports section from the daily paper does fine as his blanket. "Just put on any Wild Kingdom episode with Marlin Perkins and I'll nod right out," he instructs Mr. Sandman.

I enter my sleep booth with its queen size platform bed, three fluffy pillows and a silk comforter and when the first half dozen notes of "Round Midnight" are played I'll go off. I always do.

Each of us is escorted to our sleep booths by one of Mr. Sandman's "DREAM GIRLS." They're dressed, as we are, in a sleeping gown and cap. They are there to tuck us in. After tucking us in with a little good-night kiss on the forehead, the DREAM GIRLS hook us up to two machines, first the REM display and second the polygraph. The polygraph is necessary because once we're awakened we have only three minutes in which to tell our dream and this insures we won't be making a dream up.

Each one of us has our own video display above our sleep booth, and Mr. Sandman gives the DREAM GIRLS the high sign when the REM and polygraph indicators are on so they can exit the booth. As the door closes behind them, our lights go off and our musical selection comes on.

Just before my door closes I daydream that Mr. Sandman is crowning me DREAM KING.

"YETTA 'LUCY' BROMSTEIN! TELL US YOUR DREAM"

As always, Yetta dreams that she's Lucy, and wakes up smiling.

"In this episode," she begins, "I take a job in a resort hotel in the Catskills to spy on Ricky, my bandleader husband. Ricky, as always, is played by my real-life husband Murray. I'm working in this giant dining room as a waitress and my job is to serve potato pancakes to everyone. Everything starts off okay as I enter the kitchen and the potato pancake conveyor belt is going at a slow enough pace for me to fill four plates at a time and carry them out to the guests. The conveyor belt then starts to move a little faster with each trip to the kitchen. It gets going real fast and all I'm trying to do is catch the potato pancakes before they hit the floor. I don't make it and I end up covered with a mound of potato pancakes and I start to cry.

"WAAAHH! WAAAHH!" I'm screaming when a bus driver, having just delivered a load of senior citizens, hears my cry for help and digs me out.

"As I'm coming out of this mound I expect to see Ricky but it turns out to be Ralph Kramden."

"Lucy, one of these days..." Ralph bellows..."

As the applause and laughter trickle down the light goes on in Johnny "Cat Naps" Williams' booth.

"JOHNNY 'CAT NAPS' WILLIAMS! TELL US YOUR DREAM!"

"I dreamt that I got on this giant roller coaster and for three hours all it did was go higher and higher. We were passing building tops, hills and clouds and when we finally reached the top Mr. Sandman was standing there at the controls and asks for my ticket.

"TICKET? WHAT TICKET?" I yell.

"Mr. Sandman grins and says very calmly, 'If you don't have a ticket you'll have to get off the roller coaster and walk down.'"

"Then Mr. Sandman laughs. A real nasty laugh.

"Since I don't have a ticket I get out and start walking down. The stairs are real tricky and there is no handrail. It seems as if I'm walking forever when I come upon this door with a sign, 'EXPRESS DOOR.' I go through but there's nothing there and I start to fall. I'm tumbling end over end, passing parachutists, small planes, ski lifts and I'm coming up real fast on another door. As I get closer I can read the sign: 'RESTING PLATFORM AND ESCALATOR.'"

"With a sigh of relief I grab the door handle and manage to get on the platform. With a hard tug I open the door.

"Mr. Sandman is standing there with an outstretched hand.

"TICKETS PLEASE," he says.

"Of course I don't have a ticket and the platform turns out to be a trap door and I start falling again and then...well, the lights went on in the booth and here I am."

The audience loves it. They love "falling" dreams.

Now it's my turn.

"PAUL BECKMAN! TELL US YOUR DREAM!" screams the announcer as the light comes on in my sleep booth.

"I have this recurring dream that I'm on the SHARE YOUR DREAM TV program where the best dream..."

The Hunger

PART TWO

by Linda Calderone Wilson

(When we last left Amanda, her desk had developed quite an appetite for paper. This high-fiber diet, however, did nothing for the desk's attitude. In the meantime Poughkeepsie, the janitor's dog, mistakenly growled at the desk and bit it on the leg...)

Lucas, the janitor, was a very industrious worker, at least during the first half of his shift. Then he would greedily drink his dinner, and be fairly worthless for the second half. Even Poughkeepsie didn't like to be around him then, so the dog took to making his own rounds of the building during this time. Inevitably, his journey took him to Amanda's office, where the bottom drawer of the desk happened to be open. Although no one (including the author) would be able to come up with a reasonable explanation for why the dog jumped in the drawer, that's what he did. Anyone seeing Lucas' condition when he went home early that morning would not wonder why he didn't notice his sudden lack of canine companionship.

When Amanda entered her office in the morning, it was with a certain uneasiness. She was not one given to taking seriously such abstractions as "vibes" and "instinct," which certainly would have saved her a lot of problems. Instead, she entered and sat at her desk, sure there was a logical explanation for the potentially overwhelming anxiety she was feeling, which had increased as she got closer to the desk.

She looked through her desk, but found nothing amiss. When she reached for the phone to contact Kevin, the instrument was further back on her desk than usual. Again, she was unable to pull it closer. From years of practice, she had been able to reach for certain objects on her desk without looking, and it was because of trying to do this that she noticed the desk was definitely bigger. Not by much, but it was a little taller and a little wider. There was no doubt in her mind that something untoward was happening here, and that, unwittingly, she was a part of it.

The desk smiled in satisfaction. The lady knew, and the desk knew she did. Now the fun stuff could begin, because this might turn into a truly great battle of wits, and the desk knew it had much more at stake. It was also much more stubborn. Yes, this showed all the signs of being a really good time, at least for the desk.

Amanda could not think of a logical reason for her behavior, but she refused to put important papers in the infamous bottom drawer. Although she didn't know why, she recognized that papers placed there were never seen again, although the drawer was always full. At this point, she could still at least reach the phone, even if it was uncomfortable, so she called Kevin and induced him to find her some sort of filing cabinet. Although unwilling to admit she was afraid, she refused to open the desk long enough to remove the papers already in it. So at least for a while, the desk had plenty to eat. However...

A week later, while Amanda was at lunch, Kevin stepped into her office to find a copy of the McKenna file. He opened the bottom drawer, and was a bit surprised to note that the drawer was empty. He was even more taken aback by the fact that all the drawers were. He had noticed that his employer was acting a bit odd lately, and wondered if the empty desk were a portent.

He decided not to mention his suspicions and findings when the woman returned, but he did ask her if she knew where the file was. She acted rather distracted, and mumbled some incoherent nonsense about the desk. Then she just walked away. The secretary was really beginning to worry about her.

The desk was getting bored. It had run out of stuff to eat, and the lady just wasn't reacting enough. Deciding that it was no fun to play alone, the desk started formulating a new plan of action, something that would make a real impact.

Amanda refused to sit at her desk any more. Now she sat in her chair, as far from the offending object as possible, and she used her lap for a desk. The woman was clearly weirding out. She didn't have the sense to stay out of her office altogether, though, so she was able to witness her phone falling behind the furniture piece. This was not nearly as disconcerting as the fact that she didn't hear it land.

From where her chair was located, she got on the floor to peer under the desk. The phone was nowhere. She was no longer in any condition to panic when she heard the desk burp. She just sighed and went back to her duties—at least the ones she was still capable of performing.

Since Lucas was on vacation, it took him a week to come out of his drunken fog and notice that Poughkeepsie was not around. He was worried enough that he remembered to look for him when he got to the office that night to clean. He searched everywhere, but all he came up with was a set of dog-tags underneath the desk.

He wondered if Ms. Forrest had quit while he was gone, because there was nothing on her desk. Even the file baskets were off the top, and the desk had been moved partially across the room. Well, he decided, maybe she got a better job. Or something.

(What evil lurks in the hearts of desks? Only the author knows...)

NEXT ISSUE: News on the 1989
IT Party! Stay tuned!

Another Damn Space Opera

From the memoirs of
VIVILAN SUPERNOVITCH: INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR
by James MacDougall

LOG ENTRY #3 - ALL OUR PLAYERS ASSEMBLED

I concluded my business with the all-night outfitters as fast as I could; attempts on my life tend to make me hurry. My progress was slowed by the store's proprietor, who ran every test short of urinalysis on my charge card. I suppose I should have been more understanding of the security measures—not everyone has a line of credit from the richest being in the galaxy. But I couldn't think of anyone dumb enough to take something like that (well, yes, I did know of one person that dumb, but he'd exploded in the last chapter).

Once my credit had been verified things went smoothly; the merchant became all smiles and service. And salesmanship.

Avarice may not be the worst of the deadly sins, but I found it the most disgusting to witness, and this guy put on a performance that should have summoned a band of avenging angels. Unrestrained greed is something I find unforgivable. Unless, of course, it's my own unrestrained greed. I've never had trouble forgiving my own sins.

When I finally made it back to the *Idiot's Luck* my crew was already there. So was Hotwater Jones.

"Captain Supernovitch, I'm pleased you have arrived safely. We must hurry, there have been some, uh, complications."

"Somebody tried to kill you too, huh?" I asked.

She nodded. "Three of them. Local thugs, I believe."

"Whirr" "Skipper, is this that 'little something' you had to take care of?" "Click" I ignored the spaceship's question. I was a little miffed that they'd sent three goons after Jones and only one after me. "So you took care of all three by yourself?"

"I left them in a heap in an alley. When they regain consciousness they may be a bit worried about their manhood, but I believe they shall recover. I'm a 10th degree student of Pun-nere."

I was impressed, despite myself, and I hated that. No one who looked as good as Jones had any right to be so formidable. Pun-nere is the subtle art of breaking up things. Rumor has it that to achieve the 10th level you have to be able to leap through a plexiglass window without making any sound. I wouldn't know—I find it much more satisfying to make a lot of noise while breaking things.

"I'm glad you told me that about yourself, Ms. Jones," I said.

"Because we're going to need you as part of the ground troops."

Jones took her demotion from client to grunt without comment. I was disappointed. "We can't wait until first light. As soon as the handlers get the new gear stowed, we're out of here." I went inside to meet the troops.

My pilot met me at the hatch. "Skipper, I was just going out to check on a few more prospects. We've only got three recruits so far."

"Mef, if you're going to twitch your nose like that then please don't stand so close, your whiskers tickle." He always did that when he was nervous. Sentient rodents are like that. "And forget leaving. We don't have time to look up any more subcontractors, and we certainly don't have time for you to go get a quickie. Who have we got?"

I already knew two of them, Sprite and Brick (I can never remember their real names). Sprite was a human midget, a grown woman who would appear to be a 7-year-old for the rest of her life. But she had compensated; bioengineers had grafted a set of wings to her back. A woman of normal size would have been too large to fly.

Brick was a Huleg, an alien who looked like Marvel's Thing done by a Cubist sculptor or, more appropriately, like a brick wall. She could have gone home to her planet, where she would probably be just another pretty face. But Brick preferred to stay out here in the dregs of the galaxy, among aliens who thought she was ugly.

I wasn't surprised to see them. Brick and Sprite were always together, and they were easy to find on short notice. Between jobs you just had to look at the orphanage and children's clinic where they spent all their time.

"Hullo, Skipper," rumbled Brick. "We hear you plan to make us all rich."

"That's my plan," I said. Either that or get you killed, I thought. But it's bad luck to mention getting killed right before a job.

I noticed a heap of tentacles snoring loudly in a corner.

"This is the cook, right?"

"Yep," said Mef.

"When he wakes up will he know where he is?"

"Doubtful," said Mef, grinning. "When he comes to I'll let him read his contract, it should explain everything." One of the big advantages to working out of Gehenna was that by local law a contract signed under the influence of alcohol was still binding.

Then I noticed someone who was the exact opposite of a boneless pile of tentacles. "Well, hello," I said. Despite myself it came out in a low, sultry tone. Mef snickered.

"Greetings and felicitations, Captain Supernovitch. I am Hector D'Affronte," said the angel before me. "At your service," he added.

He was tall, and dark, and handsome. And he was wearing a sword. That, and his accent, marked him as a native of Royale, a planet where humans had reestablished a monarchy and chivalry. Uh oh...

"I see your blade and trust you're handy with it. But can you handle something a little more random and indiscriminate? You know, something from a less elegant age?"

"I am proficient with most small arms, both energy and projectile weapons. I also have a working knowledge of many shipboard weapons systems," said Hector.

Good, I thought, nice looking and competent. And since he'd introduced himself as just "Hector D'Affronte" and not "Sir Hector D'Affronte," and since he was in a not-particularly-honorable place like Gehenna, well, the man had obviously done something to dishonor himself back home so he couldn't be all bad. Now if only I looked a little better...

"I am sure it will be a pleasure to work with you, Mr. D'Affronte," said Hotwater Jones.

"Please, call me Hector," was the response. As I watched them appreciate each other, I renewed my resolve to hate Jones.

"Look, let's just launch this thing, all right?" I complained. Mef snickered.

"Whirr" "Gear's all loaded, Skipper, and we're cleared for launch any time." "Click"

Whirr, click, urrr! At least Lucky didn't snicker. "Then what are we waiting for? Strap in, I want to go while I'm still in the mood."

The launch wasn't bad by Gehenna standards; every now and then you get lucky and get a sober air controller. The trip was uneventful, except for when the cook woke up and found he wasn't in an alley back at the spaceport. He calmed quickly when we discussed terms. Hotwater Jones programmed the course. She was still playing it cagey; I figured it would be fun later when I told her I already knew where we were going. It was a routine trip until Sprite picked up something on her sensor screen.

"Captain, we're being followed," she said.

I ground my teeth. "Sprite, please tell me you're kidding."

Sprite disobeyed my direct order and told me the truth. "It's definitely a ship. And it's on an intercept course with us. It'll be with us in about three hours."

By "be with us" Sprite meant that the ship would be in close enough to blow us up. And to run an intercept course like that the pilot would have to know exactly where we were going.

"Oh, shitfire!" I hated that. (To be continued)

The Q-Team

by Rodney Lynch

Ever since the A-Team was cancelled, television has been lacking a really good adventure series. Well, I've taken things into my own hands. Here, for the very first time, I introduce my own "Q-Team."

The first member of the team is Bob "Castro" McTavish. McTavish is the group's leader and master of disguise. Bob has to frequently dress up as Anita Bryant to fool agents of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, who are hounding the team for a crime they didn't commit. Some members of the team have recently become worried over Castro's habit of dressing in women's clothing even when there is no assignment.

Next in line is D.A. Barbados, a former ballet dancer and Greek philosopher. Everyone is terrified of D.A. as he struts around quoting Aristotle, Plato and Socrates. In each episode he gets to spout off things like, "Death is just a beginning, you mangy fool!" as he pounds a thug's head into the pavement.

Barrison "Faceless" Peck is the group's comman. He must constantly wrangle planes, bazookas, ships, women's underwear and a multitude of other things useful to the Q-Team.

Finally there is "Scowling Man" Bunridge, the resident maniac. A former typewriter repairman and occasional stand-in for Jack Klugman, Scowling Man is a member of the team only as a comic foil for D.A.

The pilot of the show centers around the Mancuso gang, Las Vegas mafia biggies who want to take over the oyster trade in Lake Calhoun, Minnesota. Lisa Nesbit, a frightened but well-endowed oyster collector, enlists the help of the Q-Team. She is told to meet a series of characters (all of them Castro in drag—the bag lady, Mrs. Grimp at the 7-11) to test her sincerity. Convinced, the Q-Team introduce themselves.

"I'm Castro McTavish. That's Faceless. You'll undoubtedly fall in love with him. The guy with the toga and mohawk is D.A. Barbados." D.A. gives her a dirty look and continues memorizing Plato's final grocery list. "Now tell me, Miss Nesbit, just what is the trouble?" Castro asks, taking off his blonde wig and lighting a Virginia Slims.

"Well, it's like this: My family has been harvesting oysters in Lake Calhoun for the last 2,000 years. It's become something of a family tradition. But now Joey Mancuso and his boys are taking over the beach."

"Any reason why they'd want your beach?" Faceless asks. He runs a comb through his already immaculate hair.

"Maybe they like oysters," comes a voice from the shadows.

"This is Scowling Man Bunridge," Castro says. "A former typewriter repairman and occasional stand-in for Jack—"

"I know," Lisa butts in, "I heard the intro to the show." She continues on with her story.

When she's done Castro turns to her. "What do you want us to do?"

"I don't know. I just know I need the money from those oysters. It's paying my way through lumberjack school." Nearly in 19

Continued next page

tears, Lisa takes a deep breath, her bosom heaving, causing several members of the Q-Team to breathe heavily.

They agree to accept the case. And of course Castro has a plan: Scowling Man will disguise himself as an oyster to scout the location of the criminals' secret oyster warehouse.

"What!" D.A. exclaims, the hair on the middle of his head standing up. "That crazy fool's gonna be an oyster? He can't be no oyster. He's too crazy, always talking about typewriters and pen repair."

But Castro prevails and the next morning Buntridge sneaks onto the beach and takes his place among the other oysters. Before long he hears the voices of approaching humans.

"Geez, look at the size of that oyster, Skipper. It must weigh two hundred pounds! We get this one and we'll be set for life!"

"I don't know, Gilligan, it looks kinda suspicious to me. That big grey thing sittin' on the middle of the beach... Maybe we should get the Professor. It smells kinda fishy to me."

"Of course it smells fishy. Who do you think oysters socialize with?" Before he can stop, Buntridge has let slip his secret.

"Say, I ain't never heard of no oyster talking."

"That ain't no oyster, Gilligan, that's Scowling Man Buntridge, the Q-Team's resident maniac. A former typewriter repairman and occasional stand-in for—"

"Look," Buntridge says, "everybody's heard the introduction. Let's skip the gag."

"But it's a good joke. And anyway, Mr. Oyster, you shouldn't be complaining because you don't have much time to—" His words end abruptly when D.A. flies into his midsection. Out come Castro and Faceless, blasting away with automatic weapons they shouldn't be able to buy legally.

"Gimme that dynamite," Castro says. "We're gonna show those goobers they can't push around honest oyster collectors. We'll blow up this whole beach!"

"But Castro, isn't that a bit drastic? If we blow up the beach there won't be any more oysters," Faceless says, clutching Castro's arm.

"Yeah, but they won't steal any, will they?" Castro winks and chomps on his cigarette holder.

The end gives way to the obligatory scene that shows the team wielding machinery together. In the last ten minutes they win the beach. Then a quick dissolve to D.A. standing over Scowling Man, who is still dressed in his oyster suit. "Hey, man," D.A. says, "you tore my toga, man." He then chases Scowling Man down what's left of the beach, which is strewn with dead bodies, spent cartridges and anti-personnel mines. Lisa, Faceless and Castro all laugh. Cut to credits (and may Mr. T have mercy on my soul)...

CHAMPAGNE, THE BIRTH OF

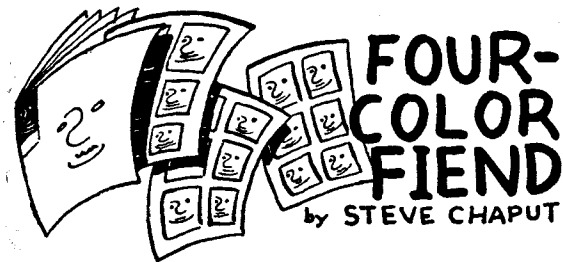
by Roger Coleman

"Monsieur Prefect! We've got to do something about Father Dominic," said Father Nesteadu, shop steward of the winery of Hautvillers. "He's getting so careless. I'm afraid he'll spoil a whole batch of sacramental wine."

"Amen, Father, there's nothing like toasting the host with bad wine. What's he done now?" asked the Prefect.

"His fingernails are always dirty. The last batch came out all funny with bubbles in it."

"But Father Nesteadu, everyone's raving about that batch. They're crazy for the effervescence. We've such a demand, we're producing a whole crû and naming it after him—Dom Pérignon."



Before we get to any comics reviews, I'd like to mention some news that we've received from Valentino: The bad news is that DC has decided to drop BROTHER POWER, THE GEEK, and the METAMORPHO series that he and DC had been discussing has fallen through. Apparently, Keith Giffen has expressed interest in the character. You will, however, be seeing Valentino's work at Hero Comics, where he's doing a lot of back-up stories in their CHAMPIONS title. More news next issue... J.P. Morgan has just completed a two-part FISSION CHICKEN story called "The Chicken Duplicators" which appears in issues #32 and 33 in CRITTERS (\$2 US/\$2.80 Canada), and upcoming he has another FC adventure called "They Came From Beneath Somebody's Garage." All you Fission Chicken fans might enjoy the cover of CRITTERS 33, which gives you a chance to see FC in color!

A couple of titles have been cancelled: JONNY QUEST will end with #31, on sale in December; in spite of all the good reviews, sales just did not warrant its continuation. Also cancelled with the current issue, #2, is THE BIG PRIZE from Eternity, which was Gerald Jones' initial installment of his TIMEDRIFTERS ODYSSEY. Here too, sales are the culprit, again in spite of good reviews. Also ending, but for a different reason, is CAPTAIN CONFEDERACY from SteelDragon Press. Will Shetterly has brought this great series to a successful conclusion, tying up most of the subplots but leaving enough loose ends for his planned sequel—and I, for one, can't wait!

Believe it or not, I actually have another review which may or may not have fit into my last column on "PC comics." From Tom and K.L. Roberts of HOMO PATROL fame comes ANTI-SOCIAL FOR THE DISABLED (available by mail for \$1.85 from Tom at 333 South East Ave. #209, Oak Park, IL 60302). I'm not sure how to review this book, since I can't tell whether it's a well-meaning satirical look at our perceptions of the handicapped or a 20-page bad joke. Which ever it turns out to be, there's enough humor and pathos in this book to make it well worth the price. Recommended.

I suppose I should say a few words about INVASION!, DC's latest multi-crossover epic. While the INVASION! title itself is well drawn and written by the likes of Keith Giffen and others, the various tie-in issues leave a bit to be desired. Since the second issue of INVASION! apparently shipped late, the second issues of many of the crossovers dealt with the aftermath of the series, which still has an issue to go. Even INFERNO at Marvel, which has been going on for way too long, is at least shipping on time.

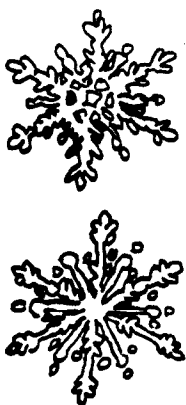
I'd like to apologize for the shortness of this column, but since Elaine is typing as I dictate, with the dreaded "deadline doom" hanging overhead, not to mention the lateness of the hour, it's time to cut and run. NEXT TIME OUT, I'd like to cover some of the war titles currently on the stands, including Marvel's THE 'NAM and SEMPER FI! plus THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER and SGT. ROCK specials from DC. If anyone has any suggestions on other titles in this genre that they'd like to see reviewed, please get in touch with me, c/o LJ, before the next deadline.

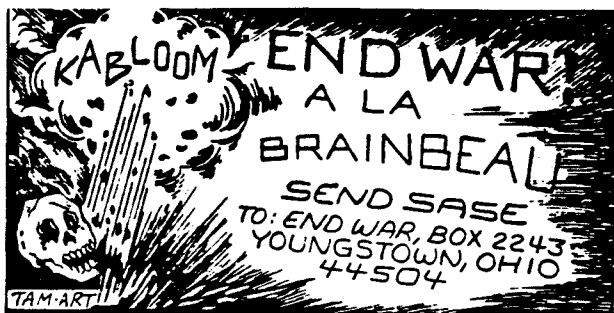
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for sale - send SASE c/o

INSIDE JOKER for list of available comics!)





Conjugal Bliss by Mark Rose

Weddings. We've all heard of them, and almost all of us have either attended one, or (gasp!) been in one, whether as apathetic usher or bridesmaid or as one-half of the nerve-wracked couple. I've been to enough of these events over the years to realize one thing: it's always something.

Of the six weddings I can remember fully (including my own), exactly one-third of them have featured the best man passing out. I don't know if it's me, the fact that churches are rarely air-conditioned, or due to some form of Earth's electromagnetism. The first instance of this occurred at my cousin Valerie's nuptials. She wanted a traditional Catholic ceremony, and the priest took this to mean a marathon of sermonizing. A nine-year-old girl was the first to go, with my cousin Joe climbing over the rows of pews to reach her side. The best man was soon to follow. He was kneeling on a prayer stand, and when he went, both the stand and he toppled down about five stairs. It was great. They escorted him outside, and later he gamely returned. All eyes were trained on him, and sure enough, in about ten minutes he began to waver and was once again taken outside.

The most recent example of this phenomenon took place this past weekend, as Janet Kansas and I wended our way to Oregon City, OR, to attend the wedding of someone who may as well have been a total stranger. Here the best man, a footballer named Mitch, collapsed against the groom's mother and had to be helped to a comfortable pew. It was simply not as riveting a performance as the earlier one, and the only other item of note that was misdated the guest register during signing, and spilled ink over our entry.

The reception held some brief interest. It was presided over by Larry of (I kid you not) The Lovable Larry Show. I always thought those tall, thin guys with the blue Porter Waggoner suits and metallic silver lapels sporting long, flared sideburns and platform shoes were just a figment of Hollywood's imagination. I didn't realize they actually existed. Lovable Larry came complete with a light show keyed to Kool & The Gang's "Celebration" and signs that begged us not to come up on stage with him. He was never in any serious danger.

Other weddings have been less intriguing. The first one I ever attended was my elder brother Ronnie's, who, in his own misguided way, chose me to be ringbearer. I spent the reception bumming champagne off some guy named Glenn (who I thought was the greatest) and eventually falling asleep (read: passing out) in a wing chair. There's a wonderful family picture of me as the little five-year-old alky asleep in the hotel lobby, covered with a tablecloth.

There were the weddings of my other elder brother, Dave. At one reception, his new wife's nephew of my age (say, nine) tried to scare me. Some adult accidentally knocked a glass out of my hand, and this miniature killjoy hounded me the rest of the day, stating I'd have to pay for all damages and would probably be thrown out. The second wedding (Dave apparently didn't like his first wife's nephew) ended in a slithering race to the reception through an ice storm.

With these standards, my own wedding in July was sure to be of interest. Besides the fact that on the videotape of this blessed event I have the grace and fluidity of a steel girder, and besides the fact that the taped music malfunctioned three times, and besides the fact that spoiled rotten kids cried and tried to gyp us in line for the cake, and besides the fact that Janet withdrew from a supposed friend's marriage the week before because the friend didn't like the fact Janet had a limp, things were pretty calm.

Well yeah, there was a little silliness. We were married in the backyard of my brother's house, which is thankfully about eleven blocks away from our own house. The best man, my best friend who had flown in from Pennsylvania, was helping me prepare with about twenty minutes to go, when it hit me. I had forgotten my dress shirt.

We bolted out the door, past the line of arriving guests, picked up the shirt at home, and returned. With five minutes to go, dress shirt and black socks on, I realized I had forgotten my shoes. We bolted out the door, past the line of arriving guests, now preparing to sit for the ceremony. I don't know, but if you saw the groom dashing frantically away dressed in white shirt, black socks, sneakers and green gym shorts, would you stop him to offer congratulations? After disentangling myself from these folks, I was able to get dressed and show up at the altar—sweaty, harried and late, but there.

Everything was and still is fine. During our vows to each other—and this is the truth—Sam's Good Humor ice cream truck came down the adjoining road, playing music from "The Sting." It figures. This is my first and last marriage. As for being a guest, sure I'd love to come; does your best man have health insurance?

I Bitch, Therefore I Am

by S. Gibson, the Princess of Panic
CLOTHES SHOPPING

I hate clothes shopping. I don't know why. I think there must be something genetically scrambled because I'm female and I hate to shop. Every spring and fall it's the same thing: my mother grabs me by the scruff of the neck and drags me bodily to the mall to buy new outfits. As if I'm not already depressed over my impending return to the concentration camp (i.e., school), Mom initiates the ritual.

"Honey, I think we better go school shopping now while we can still get clothes you like."

"We went shopping LAST year."

"Don't you start with me!"

So it begins. Now, even those of you who enjoy shopping must agree that having your mother along with you is hyper-embarrassing. I'm moving about normally and I think I've found something I like when I hear: "Sheila! Come here!" Weakly I flash my "No, I don't know this woman, really" smile to the people in the store (all of whom are staring at me now) and walk back to where she stands holding a skirt.

"Look at this. Will you try this on?"

"It's purple and green plaid, Mom."

"Just try it on."

"NO."

"But green is your color!"

"Purple and green plaid is NOT my color, Mom, and I'm sorry for the guy whose color it is."

"Please try it on!"

"I told you, NO."

"I just want to see how you look in it!"

"Mom, listen to me. It's purple and green plaid. Bowling shoe purple and electrovomit green plaid. They taught me way back in third grade art class that purple and green don't match. It's a FACT. Death, taxes, and purple and green don't match. Put it back."

"Oh, nobody's going to see it, really! You're supposed to wear it under this!" Triumphant she holds up a nuclear purple cable-knit sweater.

I give up.

Despite this evidence, I think I inherited my disposition from Dad. No matter how bored I look, he can look twice as bored, and pained to boot. After all, he's paying. And he's had more experience—two older sisters, and now a thirteen-year-old junior high cheerleader trendie from hell for a daughter. My little sister. This year's school shopping is still vivid in my mind. Originally Dad thought he would let us loose in the mall to choose what we wanted and come in to pay for it after the Red Sox game was over. When the Sox were through with getting creamed, I hadn't found anything (okay, so I went to the bookstore instead); my little sister, however, had been far luckier.

"Daddy, can I please have an Esprit bag for school? It's 16 dollars, but my old bag is all beat up and the zipper's broke and it won't hold enough stuff or anything so can I please? I won't ask for anything ever again!"

"I thought we were looking for school clothes," asks Dad.

"Oh I am but I want—I mean, I NEED an Esprit bag. Pleaseeease, Daddy? I won't ask for anything ever again, really!"

Jim and Tammy would have been proud. We went to the store and she got her beloved bag, as well as a heap of other ridiculously expensive things. As the haul is rung up, she scans the display beneath the counter.

"Oh look! They've got Esprit lunchboxes!"

"Couldn't you just get the Esprit brown bags?" I moan.

She frowns. "Can we go to Esprit Kids now?"

"Isn't that the same thing as this store?" Dad asks incredulously.

"Kinda, but, like, I saw something down there that I really liked that they don't have here."

So we go across the sidewalks, down the escalator, through the crowds and the lines and the pushcarts and the exhibitions and the displays, stopping at EVERY store along the way and finally arriving at the identical store. She personally inspects every item while Dad and I stand around looking bored, and then says:

"Can we go back to The Esprit Store? The thing I want must be up there after all."

Against severe protest of our feet, she leads us back through the displays and the exhibitions and the pushcarts and the lines and the crowds, up the escalator and across the sidewalks, stopping again at every store in between (in case we missed something) until we finally arrive back at the other store. She paws through everything again and turns to Dad clutching a black and gold jumper. "I like this."

"How much is it?"

"Er...120 dollars. Can I please have it? I know it's expensive and all that, but I really like it and I promise I won't ask for anything ever ever again really!"

Dad tries to protest, but it's too late, she's already propelled herself away. He leans against the wall, affecting his best "wounded father" look, glances down at me, and implores:

"Do you believe your little sister?"

I sigh and shift my weight. "Well, you know, Dad, this is all your fault. You had me, and you could have stopped right there, but you wanted to see what was behind Door Number 2. And you got zonked."

He laughs. "Let's go back to Mrs. Field's after this." Now there's shopping I can stomach.

Playing by the Rules

by Don Wagberg

For a long time during the war, I hid in the graveyard, listening to the trees overpower the sound of gunfire, because the wind is lovely, dark and deep in the willow. You can tell your teacher that, too.

I spent most of my time behind this 1855-1904 tombstone, sitting against a birch tree on top of a layer of dry leaves that I spread over these wet and mushy ones. Not more than fifteen feet to the left of me was a fresh mound of dirt, all damp and lumpy with patches of grass sticking out of it. A compilation of observations confirmed a skinny amount of said mounds all over the place. Accordingly, I pondered the tragic implications. It was the meaning of a good time.

I got back just before lunch. When I got there, Smuckers and Larry were dead and Durthmire was wounded, but they said Ward (that's sort of what we call him for short; his real name is Ish-mael) and Durthmire should've been dead. What I couldn't believe was that Larry got killed. Nobody on Ward's side gets killed if he can help it.

"Larry," I said, "how'd you get killed?"

"Where've you been, fag?" Smuckers yelled at me.

"I'm alive, aren't I?" I said.

"Yeah, but we haven't seen you anywhere."

"Neither've the enemies."

"You've probably just been hiding, faggin' out. I haven't heard you shoot."

"Ralph's out there somewhere firin' from a tree," Durthmire interjected.

"That's normal," I said.

"How come I haven't heard you shooting?" Smuckers kept on.

"I'm wounded," Durthmire interjected.

"You're gonna hafta kill Ward now, that's all," Smuckers told me, like he was dropping the whole world on my shoulders. "You better get out there now."

I was about to punch him when Ratt came up from behind with his cranial boom box blasting (and for those of you who don't get it or think I'm being cute, take five steps backwards and lose a turn). He's short and skinny and all shriveled up and has greasy black hair and a big grin on his face. He used to be bald.

"Larry and Smuckers are dead," Durthmire interjected, "and I'm wounded." Durthmire was the first to make friends with Ratt.

"What about him?" Ratt said, pointing at me.

"I'm still alive," I said.

"Yeah, but you ain't killin' nobody neither," said Smuckers.

"You're not even tryin'. You gotta play by the rules."

"Go play with yourself, Smucko," I said. Larry laughed. He laughs at that stuff, but I hardly ever hear him talk like it.

"Settle down, children," Durthmire interjected.

"Get out there," Smuckers said. "There's still twenty-one minutes to go."

"When Side B ends it's time for lunch," said Ratt. "I got it timed." He eats music, which in a lot of ways is better than what he eats for lunch.

"Yeah, no sense in riskin' it before lunch," I said, and Smucko shut up (this is so stupid, Mr. Wagberg, but we just want you to know we're all behind you and that we're portending you'll drag your splendid self somehow through it!).

Bit blue clouds filled up the sky and it started getting dark (quite the symbolism). We started yelling out to those guys that it was almost time for lunch. Ward and Jason were still mobilizing troops out there, and Ralph (c'mon, do you got these names straight yet?).

We'd wait until after lunch to finish the war. I had a premonition it would come down to Ward and Ratt. I knew Ralph would get throttled sooner or later.

Ralph is weird sometimes. He always finds trees to ~~perk off~~ hide in. He just stays there secretly and only shoots when there's two guys close together, otherwise he would have a chance of getting killed then. Everything Ralph does is secret. You'll loan (okay, so it's a noun! make me nauseous, already) him a dollar and he'll say he'll pay you back in a few days and then he'll avoid you for about the next seven months.

(Now, time to wake up the reader ((how presumptuous of me)).)

The ground convulsed. Dust and smoke rose swirling above the action. The air was alive with popcorn and the squeals of wild and wounded cattle. Waves swelled...ascended...crashed behind Willis, who writhed on his back atop a shallow crevice in the terrain, his body burning from gunshot. His blood-spattered torso stunned him. Tears spilled out onto his face (please, just give me a second to catch my breath).

Ward ate a cracker and some grapes for lunch. All he did was talk about the guys he shot and the ones he almost shot and the times he almost got killed. It didn't bother me (implying, for all you pundits, that just maybe it bothered someone else?). People like Ward make spoofing fun.

"I thought that one time you were blown outta the water, J," Ward said.

"What time? Oh, yeah," said Jason.

"Remember, Ratt?" Ward said.

"When? Oh yeah."

"Jesus," Ward went on, "Jason and I were crawling down makin' plans (got a pencil?) on the edge of this little sand cliff, and all of a sudden I saw Ratt—remember, Ratt?—I saw Ratt through the trees and he had a clean shot at J's back. At the last second I grabbed J's collar—like this—and pulled both of us backwards over the cliff and we cruised. Remember, Ratt?"

Ratt nodded.

"And you, Durth," said Ward, "you know I killed you. You're lucky I let you get away with it."

"There's no way," Durthmire interjected, shaking his head.

"You were too far away. And besides..."

"I had you in plain sight..."

"And besides, I jumped out of the way the second you started shootin'. How could you be so sure you had me?" (wouldn't you like to know)

"Guess what I saw," interrupted Larry (now for a little slapstick). "This thing that looked like a balloon nailed to a tree, but it wasn't a balloon."

"You saw what?" Smuckers laughed.

"Don't quote me, but I think it was a rubber," Larry announced. "A lubricated Trojan?" said Jason (it was all in the delivery; you had to be there).

"What'd it look like?" Smuckers probed (you know what I mean). "Just like a balloon, I guess." (you've got to give the kid credit)

"Show us where it is," demanded Smuckers.

"I suppose you wanna try it on," Ralph cracked (he really did).

"Prob'ly fall off," said Ward.

"Show us where it is," said Smuckers (what's the deal with this guy, anyway?).

"I don't care," Larry declared. "If you want, I guess." (sure, go ahead and play it down, even if you memorized the exact location for future reference)

(is this getting sickening or what?) Everybody was laughing.

"C'mon, let's see where it is," Smuckers said (this guy's fired up)

"How come you wanna see it so bad?" Jason said (but I'm not sure).

"Don't you?" Smuckers said, turning red.

We all went to look at the rubber.

"My brother told me that in the war he once saw one of his friends dead in the jungle with his penis cut off and sticking out of his mouth," said Ward (that's probably why he doesn't eat much).

"What!?" we all said together.

"Yep," said Ward, "stuck right in his mouth."

"Noooooooo," said Larry.

"With a rubber over it," Ralph joked.

"And he said sometimes after he'd get to be real good friends with someone the next day he'd see his head stuck in a tree," added Ward.

"Chopped right off?" I said (so maybe I'm a slow learner).

"No," said Smucko, "just stuck there on lookout duty."

"Must've been Ralph's brother," said Ratt.

"If I ever went to war," said Ward, "and I saw one of my friends laying (one more word out of you and we'll see what you think about a red-hot fork pressed against your gut) there with his organ in his mouth, I'd (this next part is really unprintable, even if you promise to close your eyes)... And then I'd tie her ankles to the bumper of a bus and prop her mouth open so her teeth would drag on the street."

"Ohhhhhh," everybody said.

We played our championship touch football game the day Ward's brother had to leave for war. Ward's eyes were red, but he still scored the winning touchdown (strike up the theme from "Rocky").

They drew a warm blanket over Willis. He didn't feel it. They hosted him onto a stretcher and slid him speedily and without grace into a helicopter. He didn't know, but he wouldn't have blamed them. The pilot flew his wounded machine away, hoping the spacious skies were much wider and deeper than bullets. The propeller whirred, sounding as though it rotated within a huge drum. Beach and trees and dwelling places below burned silently in dark red and orange. Willis didn't even think about it. He couldn't (makes sense).

Well, Ralph found a nice tree by the graveyard and blew me away, then he got picked off finally, and it turned out to be Ward and Jason against Ratt in the end (I swear, I didn't peek). They chased Ratt down to the beach and for a long time we just could hear the waves (no matter what, don't think about the sound of waves crashing on the beach; just block it out). After a pretty long time, Ratt came sprinting up over the cliff with that damn headset still connected and into the woods and into a tree (wait a minute, I'm sorry, that's what Jerry Lewis did—I mean, up into a tree). Pretty soon Ward crawled up over the cliff without Jason and ran in the same direction Ratt went (I suppose you're wondering how I can see all this. I'm not telling). Jason came up in a different spot, close to where they first went over, and wormed his way toward Ward until they had Ratt surrounded (are you following this on your map?). At first I thought that Ratt must've slipped on the tree's skinny branches when his gun fell to the ground. Ward and Jason came running to the sound (you see, they really weren't sure where Ratt was; they had the general area—what the hell am I telling you this for? you've got a map!), and I thought it was all over and Ward would put it in everybody's face again.

But I stood up and went wild when Ratt started yelling, "Da-da-da-dow! Da-da-da-dow!" and Jason actually tried to run away and the look on Ward's face. It was unbelievable. Ralph was laughing and doing high fives with everybody. When he got killed, he said, Ratt took his gun and hid it in that tree. I love Ratt. And if you think I'm gay you can just (expletive expletive expletive)... Jason was fair and fell, but Ward shot back anyway and just kind of staggered around a little without falling and tried to argue that he shot first but everybody was against him and we all patted Ratt on the back because it was his first time with us and he

jammed head. I hope this doesn't sound like we really think we're those fabulous GI ground forces fighting to preserve the democracy or something. We might act like it sometimes, but we're only playing.

Ward wanted to start another war, but it started sprinkling and we wanted to go home. He said he'd go against all of us. But we finally persuaded him to surrender. At the start of every war we always promise to wait ten minutes before we open fire, but Ward waits more like seven, because he's always so anxious to kill everybody (is this making sense?). Once Ward shot me and even after I fell he just kept standing over me and hollering, "Da-da-dadow! Da-da-dadow! Da-da-dadow!" and I wanted to laugh, but his face wouldn't let me (sounds like the perfect material for a made-for-TV movie of the week, don't it?). It felt almost like real bullets were going through me (okay, so the kid has a flare for the dramatic; leave him alone, already). But I know if I ever had to be in a real war, I'd want Ward fighting with me.

On the way back home it started raining harder and thundering. For me it was a pleasing development, because along the path we take to and from the woods there's this one spot we have to walk through where the weeds come up to our eyes and are always humming with pounds of bumble bees that hang on them like fat grapes. When the wind started smashing the rain all around we started running, but then we quit and walked after a while and got in one of our absurd moods that could be pretty scary to analyze (yeah, like I'm really scared). We were talking and Ward said that people don't know it but they actually like war. But I asked about his brother and why they had to draft him. And then I was sorry I said it, because his brother wasn't a chicken.

Ratt and Smuckers had grandpas that fought against Hitler.

Mouse Garden

by Eric Ewing

Mr. Diagonal painted both spatulas pink.

"Golly, Mr. Diagonal," exclaimed Billy, "I thought you'd paint 'em green or somethin'."

"No, Billy. This time I chose pink. Do you know why?"

The boy looked thoughtful for a moment. "No. Tell me."

"My middle name is Pink."

The two sat in Mr. Diagonal's front yard in the suburb of Stanstone. The sun shone hot and golden off the tops of the cars parked along the side of the road. The echoes of the morning's avalanche continued to ring through the affluent valley community.

Billy pointed skyward. "Look! That plane is about to crash!"

Mr. Diagonal looked up. Indeed, it appeared that a violent explosion would be the only logical outcome. One wing of the mighty passenger-carrying air machine was missing. Smoke billowed from each remaining engine. The tail was a bloodlike red color.

Without further ado, the plane slammed into the side of Mr. Limabeans. A ball of fire erupted from the wreck.

"Now let's go inside for lunch while we let these spatulas dry."

"Okay, sir."

They stepped up three wooden stairs, opened the door, walked across the porch, opened the inside door, walked through the hallway and into the kitchen, where they jointly prepared a couple bowls of macaroni and cheese, which they skillfully consumed.

"Gee, thanks, Mr. Diagonal. It sure was nice of you to feed me like that!"

"We both made the meal, Billy, so it was only right that we should eat it."

"You speak truth."

Billy looked around his host's kitchen. Aside from the many goats trotting happily around, this was Standard Kitchen #8. "I'll bet the garbage is under the sink," he mumbled under his breath. Butterfly magnets seemed content to waste their lives stuck on an old man's refrigerator. While Billy wasn't disgusted with this display of normalcy, he was a bit let-down.

"Well, Billy," started Mr. Diagonal, rubbing his hands together, "would you like to see me dance in a dumpful of dead cats while you throw flaming marshmallows at me?"

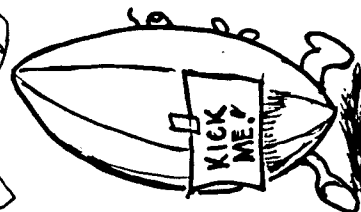
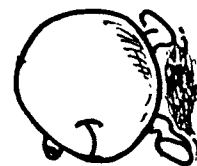
"Gee, would I!" he cried in unfeigned delight.

Mr. Diagonal suddenly looked like he had just remembered something important. Reaching under the kitchen table, he pulled out a small hand axe. He then hacked off Billy's head and ate it.

HEY, KIDS- A NEW TOY!



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DOPPELGANGER: UNIVERSE EDITION #4

The Fan Clubs of Gerry Anderson
by Doug "Rock Serling" Pelton

Love Gerry Anderson productions? Want to meet new fans, make lasting friends? Want to add or start your collection; got interesting things to say about UFO, SPACE:1999 or anything else?? Well, step right up here, Ladies and Gentlemen, for these clubs will well serve you!

FANDERSON, The Official Gerry Anderson Appreciation Society, the largest and most influential near-pro group, founded in 1981-82, has put on many well-received conventions for the whole of Anderson work. They have gone to specialized one-day events of late. Membership gets you four issues of magazine S.I.G. (Supermarionation Is Go), which is the world Anderson zine, and interim Fanderson newsletters all from Andrew Thompson, 11 Kedston Court, Norbury Close, Allestree, Derby, D3 2QF, ENGLAND. US rates available on request.

SHADO USECC is the world's oldest surviving UFO series club. Started in early '78 by Jim Main, it is now run more capably by Helen Weber, an original member. It has the advantage of many core members with huge UFO collections and convention-attendance experience meeting UFO stars. \$21 US paid to Helen will get you four NLS, neat membership goodies and special discounts; she's at 514 Delaware Ave., Lansdale, PA 19446. Don't wait; this one's a rare club.

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I recommend these clubs, in all of which I have been almost an original member. You won't be sorry...Until '89, I guess, have a happy holiday season this Xmas.

Cheers,

Your Impish Doppelganger!!!

The Poet's Diet Book

by Tamarina Dwyer

CHAPTER 4: JANET AND FRED BREAK UP

Previous to this chapter, Janet, the poet, and Fred, her lover, had been juggling jobs and a relationship in a fair fashion. However, either Janet's imagination and food theories or Janet's diet (be it a stimulant or depressant, steak, ice cream) is damaging her equilibrium. Fred throws out Janet and her poetry.

The next morning, the poet, cognizant of her step over a free verse boundary and having chosen to ignore Fred's judgement, persisted in turning out unmetrical composition. She was writing on weekdays to avoid Fred's over-the-shoulder watch, but she was getting bored and taking a lot of breaks. Daily fights with words inevitably led to the kitchen, where Janet put the jar of instant coffee back in the upper cupboard and took a bottle of scotch from a well-stocked shelf in the lower cupboard. Poetry and drinking seemed to be compatible for several weeks. As the days progressed the writing doubled; the drinking multiplied.

Janet began work at the desk. She was using a lot of adjectives and adverbs and, as the description increased, she moved to the sofa to relax her body and slow down her pen. "Animal Nature"—two lines had no verbs. Janet set her drink on the coffee table, picked up the felt-tip pen again, and inserted a word.

"forever rugged mountain, grassy knoll, and rippled stream, like moving mirrors of darker shades in nightly dream, a soft furred pet without a deed warily tastes the cream." The meter as well as the perspective of the poem changed.

The usually light room was somber and dreary. A cloudless, grey sky and the icicles which were hanging from the roof of an unfinished building across the street were distracting the poet. She set her pen down and took another drink. She picked up the pen again. White and black spots moved across the yellow page and the paper seemed to be dividing right down the middle. It was late so Janet decided to take a short break. She put the scotch back on the shelf and dinner on the stove.

The poet was drunk again, but she was still writing poetry. Janet set the pen down, blinked, and rubbed her eyes. Black coffee mentally appeared in numerous styrofoam and porcelain cups on a velvet background. The poet had to laugh for a minute. "What happened to the bright and sunny poetry?" she mumbled. But the cups were too alive to her and one by one they emptied their contents onto a mosaic tile which disintegrated immediately.

"The acidity in the coffee," muttered Janet, watching a black sea of coffee flow down a hill of bread as she turned over. Slices of bread in various shades of brown and white had also appeared on the back sheet of her poem and, as the coffee flowed down the hill, it soaked the bread.

The coffee sea began to pull the moistened bread slices apart as the sea increased in strength. Janet, entranced by the sea, felt the clumps of bread and black coffee pour off the paper onto her lap and down her legs. Janet sprang from the sofa and her arm brushed the poem onto the floor. She turned and picked up the poem and dragged herself to the kitchen. She poured half a glass of whiskey with a shaking hand, sat down at the table and drank the scotch, but Janet kept thinking that somebody was going to kill her. When the poet finished her drink, she leaned against the sink and laughed again. "All I want is a cup of coffee. That's all! Simple!"

The poet walked back to the living room. With trembling fingers, she picked up her poem. As she tried to read it, Janet became conscious of her shaking hand and dropped the poem back on the table. "Well, now what?" she asked herself. "Scotch or coffee?"

Still undecided, Janet walked back to the kitchen. The coffee water was boiling now and the poet turned off the burner. But she forgot about the coffee and fell into her food theorizing pit as she contemplated the ill effects of a cold steak or half a pint of chocolate ice cream. She just couldn't wait for dinner. "Steak, thick and juicy, is a refurbishing element like blood. Ice cream, light and cool, would be a balance for the steak if I could manage to heat it up." Janet crawled out of the pit and went to the refrigerator.

A cold steak, another drink, and half a gallon of ice cream were on the table. "The meat will make me part of the natural order," the poet theorized as she bit into the unheated meat. "Animals are violent and they use hunger to kill other animals to get meat. The meat weakens the intestines due to the inelasticity of the lining. Animals, killing me, are rebelling against society." Janet's food theorizing persisted as she finished the steak. "I have to rebel too," concluded the poet as she pulled the half gallon of ice cream toward her, but the chain of thought continued. Janet reached for the scotch before she realized that her balance was destroyed. "Steak and ice cream—heavy food and light food—but where does whiskey fit?"

The poet's question was replaced by the black sea of coffee again. It was calm now and she pushed her denim bag to the wall edge of the table to make room for the sea. No storm. Not even a wave. But it was there and Janet stormed out of the kitchen and collapsed on the sofa. She lay with her face down and her arms outstretched for awhile, but she was unable to sleep or cry. Within minutes, she was very sick and went to the bathroom and vomited. Then she leaned against the wall of the bathroom and tried to regain her senses. Her facial muscles tightened, she gripped the edge of the sink, and clenched the faucets a minute before she turned on the water to rinse out her mouth.

"Where is it going? My mind is outside. My mind isn't here. My mind!" screamed Janet. "My mind! My mind!"

Fred was coming in the door and ran to the bathroom. "Janet, what is it?"

"I can't think clearly. There's something wrong. There's a whole mess here. Fred, I can't even tell you about it. It's ugly. It's not real. I can't tell you, but my MIND!" The tears rolled down her cheeks and she clung to Fred. He didn't know what to say so he reached over and flushed the toilet. The couple stood together in the bathroom for a moment, but Janet soon relaxed and gradually released her grip on Fred. She backed away from him and walked into the living room; Fred turned off the light and went into the dining room. He spotted the bottle and dirty dishes and realized why Janet had gotten sick.

He wanted to ignore everything now and eat dinner as soon as possible and, as he moved into the living room, he planned a short, tactful speech. But he was immediately interrupted.

"You're attacking my mind, aren't you?" Janet accused him, arms crossed in front of her as she turned to him from the window. Fred, worn out by Janet's insufferable ambition, impatiently picked up the ski magazine without answering. "You want to kill me, don't you?" Janet continued as she approached Fred.

Fred's speech was ready, but he asked suddenly, "What's that?" And he dropped the magazine, frowning as he got up and hurried toward the kitchen.

"What?" echoed the poet.

"Janet!" Fred yelled from the kitchen. "There's food on the stove." He turned off the burner, dropped the pan of burned potatoes in the sink, and looked over his shoulder at Janet, who was standing under the arch. She grabbed the oven door, but Fred pushed her aside. "Janet, you're sick," Fred accused her, drawing water from the faucet and then, turning around, he asked her, "And what happened to your hand?"

Janet looked down at her hand, but couldn't remember what had happened. "I don't know," the poet stuttered, on the edge of hysterics again. "I don't know."

"Janet, I think we'd better have a talk. Come with me," said Fred, and he took the poet's hand and guided her into the living room. "Janet, I'm worried about you. I know you work hard, but—"

Janet hastily pushed Fred's hand off her lap, stumbled over the coffee table, and ran to the kitchen. She grabbed a slice of bread from the loaf on the counter, but it slipped from her fingers. Janet bent down, picked it up, and held the slice between her hands as if she was making a sandwich out of the bread and her fingers.

Fred was drumming his fingers on the arm of the sofa and wondering how to control Janet, wondering if she would be more stable without him, and wondering how to control his own irate thoughts. She had been gone for several minutes and he began to worry again. Fred was exhausted, but he lifted himself off the sofa and traipsed across the room to the kitchen.

The poet was crouched near the floor. "Janet," Fred called softly. "Janet?" He stood in the archway and shook his head. She was acting like an animal. Both hands were pulling small chunks from the slice of bread to her mouth in rapid, squirrel-like movements. Janet was also repeating monosyllables while she munched on the pieces that she ripped from the middle of the bread slice. The poet looked up at Fred.

"Crime ill," Janet muttered through a smile. Then she laughed with a little girl's voice, turned away, and dropped the outer edge of the bread.

"Janet, what is it now? What's wrong?" Fred asked fretfully, reaching down and pulling her up from the floor.

"Crime ill. Crime ill," she kept mumbling with the steady rhythm of a machine as he steered her back to the living room.

"Sit down, Janet," Fred calmly advised. The poet still clutched the bread and Fred opened her fingers, pushed them back against her will, and withdrew the bread from her hand. He set it in an ashtray on the coffee table and they sat together quietly. Janet leaned back against the sofa.

"We should curtail abnormal drift despite the winter recession and feed our tired minds with those flavorful, enticing sea creatures from a more sympathetic climate. What is your reaction to that suggestion?" Fred asked hopefully. Putting his hand on Janet's knee, he turned and, waiting for Janet to reply, watched her slip her fingers into his.

"When?" the poet asked, barely catching Fred's question as she tightened her grasp of Fred's hand.

They planned a Wednesday night splurge because Janet had to work both Saturday and Sunday nights and she agreed to rest until then.

The Wednesday night air was below 0, even though the calendar predicted spring. Janet and Fred bundled up and rode to a small restaurant in the city.

"Are you staying up again?" Fred asked Janet in the dimly-lit dining room. "Even in this quixotic atmosphere, your eyes are too bloodshot," he explained.

"Maybe I need make-up," Janet offhandedly commented, waving her lower arm and hand from the table into the air. Her fingers bent slightly and Janet looked curiously at her nails.

"Ken thinks your natural appearance is more attractive," Fred said as Janet continued staring at her nails. "Ken's everyday smile and your everyday deeds are too much idealistic hypocrisy," Fred said, his face stonelike and his words suddenly cold. "You aren't sleeping, are you?"

Janet, absent-minded and unconcerned, said nothing.

"You're no longer a student, dear, and I'm sitting too close to

Continued next page

you to ignore your dull communications," Fred said sardonically.

Janet smiled guilelessly across the table to Fred, turning her head, and lifting her eyebrows slightly. "I'm hungry and I just don't have anything to say."

Fred lowered his head, turned his gaze onto the carpeted floor, and thought for a moment. She's been staying up again and for sure she's going to start missing work. Then he turned his attention to Janet again.

"How much sleep did you get last night?" Fred asked her, "and put your arms and hands in your lap," he ordered her. Janet glared, but obeyed, and Fred continued as the waitress set clam chowder in front of them. "I'd like to read your last flower poem. 'Queen Anne's Lace,' if I'm not mistaken?" Fred asked inquiringly, a tenuous inflection to his voice.

"Certainly," agreed Janet, letting the soup cool as she reached for a package of crackers with one hand and moved her fingers across her drawn-back hair with the other. The poet, holding the crackers in her hand and staring out the window at the deserted street, tried to forget how many mistakes she had made at work the night before.

"Janet, although I'm not employed as an English professor, I intend to read 'Queen Anne's Lace' before we go to bed," Fred said emphatically, trying to get Janet's attention.

A long leisurely meal was spoiled by Fred's continual attempts to draw Janet into conversation and her incessant evasions. He was convinced that she wasn't sleeping enough and considered taking her to a doctor for a physical checkup. She was playing with her food and she was probably drinking a lot of coffee again. His thoughts depressed him a bit and he suggested they leave without having dessert.

Janet kept trying to remember the lines of 'Queen Anne's Lace,' but they appeared and disappeared on a chalky white background before she could read them. As she climbed into the car, the unusual, heavily-falling snow, which was settling on her eyelashes, frightened her, and the poet rubbed at her eyes furiously.

"What is it?" Fred asked, his hand on the car door. Without answering him, Janet whipped her door open and grasped the back of the car seat. Fred automatically opened his door and, reaching across the front seat to Janet, asked, "Are you going to be sick?" She shook her head and Fred helped her into the car.

On the ride back to their apartment, Fred tried to ignore Janet's fidgeting, but she kept twisting her foot in a circle and when they stopped at an intersection, Fred had to rebuke her again. "Janet," he began as calmly as possible, "your consistent method of self-denial is becoming too noticeable. Either you sleep more or give up poetry."

The poet said nothing. The light changed and the car moved cautiously down the slippery road of a hill. Fred's concentration was torn between safe driving and concern for Janet. Her foot stopped moving, but then Fred noticed that her eyes were blinking. She's completely out of focus with reality, he thought as he tried to watch her and the street.

A twenty-minute drive had completely tired Fred out and he asked Janet to fix him a cup of hot cocoa when they returned to the apartment. "You seem better now," he remarked as she hung up his jacket.

"Better?" she echoed. Fred smiled, checked doubts about Janet's expressive personality, including all the mannerisms that had attracted him in the first place, and waited patiently for the cocoa. I won't even mention a doctor yet, he thought. I'll just make damn sure she's in that bed after work.

Janet stood in the kitchen in front of the refrigerator and she couldn't decide whether to turn on the kitchen light or leave the refrigerator door open and make the cocoa by the light of the refrigerator. Finally, she opened the door and took the milk from the shelf. Reading the contents of the product in the faint outline of the light, the poet, still trying to remember the lines from 'Queen Anne's Lace,' thought her mind was slipping into a bottomless gulf of food theory. She had read the words on the milk carton many times, both to amuse herself and Fred, and she suddenly began to realize her own philosophical tendencies. The poet managed to get the cocoa made and she stubbornly evaded theories about milk for poetic reproduction.

The first of April was a stable, even day for Fred, but the termination of food theories was not enough to satisfy him. Janet wouldn't see a doctor when she missed two days of work and the subsequent argument inhibited compromise. Fred asked Janet to move out and she was too weary to dispute the matter.

Now, with Janet gone the previous day, Fred was cleaning out the desk because the poet had left behind some of her papers. Fred glanced over the pages of unrhymed diet verses and illogical theory and laughed at himself for having put so much faith in the woman. He was a little bit surprised that he felt no remorse and, without any more hesitation, Fred dropped the absurd poems and theories in the basket. (To be continued)

Thermostats by Curtis Olson

Back in elementary school we had these thermostats on the wall of each classroom. They were these little metal boxes, two inches long, maybe an inch and a half high, and an inch thick coming out of the wall near the door. Each one had a little thermometer on it, and a few other mysterious markings, and the name of the manufacturer. You couldn't adjust the heat or the air conditioning in the room with them. They just sat there and did whatever they did

and you couldn't do anything with them except hit them with a ball once in a while when you played silent speedtoss in the classroom on days when it was raining outside at P.E. time. They never seemed to have any purpose, except that they would, every once in a while, hiss...

You could walk by, and you would hear the thermostat hissing—just this little rush of air coming out of this little hole in the bottom of the thing.

Now this was a great mystery to a little elementary school kid. There seemed to be no logical reason for these things to hiss, but every once in a while, walking by one of the things, walking in or out of the classroom or whatever, you would go by and hear this little rush of air—ssssssssss—very small and quiet, but definitely there.

Sometimes it was louder than usual, or the classroom was quiet, and everyone could hear the hissing, and everyone talked about it in little whispers.

To a little kid, a mysterious little piece of technology making this strange hissing noise could be the cause of no small fear. Think back—imagine what it was like when you were a little kid. For the first eight or ten or maybe twelve years of your life your mother and father and teachers and big brothers and sisters told you about all of the dangerous things in the world: this stove could burn you and that truck could run you over and if you tried some dangerous thing you would probably break your legs and this thing here could fall on top of you and squash you flat like a pancake and of course there was that certain unmentionable thing—there was no end to the trouble that that could cause. It seemed like everything had some sort of danger to it, and all in all, it seemed like the whole world was a very dangerous place.

When your mind is like that, then a hissing metal box on the wall of your classroom could really make you nervous.

All you knew was that some sort of air was coming out. (You never would have used the word "vapor" or "gas" when you were a little kid. It would have been "some kinda air" hissing out.)

It was leaking out of this little box, or maybe it was being pumped out through a bunch of pipes from some dark place you'd never seen, like down in the boiler room, or some locked closet in the principal's office. And after going through all of those pipes and stuff or whatever, that air might be dusty or polluted or something. And that air might be poison or something, like car smoke, or maybe it could give you cancer. Maybe it wasn't good to breathe and you have to hold your breath in school but they forgot to tell your class.

Maybe that temperature thing was—what was the word?—atomic, radiowhatever, and maybe it was broken and the air was going to kill everybody like on that Star Trek episode. Maybe somebody oughta report the hissing before it was too late.

One of the more intelligent or more conspiracy-minded kids might have come up with the idea that it was a weird gas coming out, like novacaine or whatever they give you when you go to the hospital, and it made the class calm and quiet and easier to control.

When you're in first or second grade, you don't know words like "pressure" or "overload" or "release valve," but you can figure out that if the air is rushing out of that little hole in the bottom so quickly it must be pretty tight up in there and maybe one day it would be too much and it would be like a balloon and the little metal box would explode. It was a pretty sure bet, of course, that it would happen just as we were lining up to go outside, or just coming in at the beginning of the day, or someone would be right by it when it blew up, and that thing was on the wall about four feet up, which is just about head-high to a little kid, so the thing would blow up right in someone's face and his brains and stuff would go all over the place.

That's why we were all totally horrified one day when the thermostat in our classroom was hissing really loud—I mean, really LOUD. Usually it went "ssssssssss" when it felt like hissing, but this one day in second grade it was going "ssssssssssssssss" very sharply, and we were all taking a test so it was very quiet in the room and everyone was looking up from their little tests and eyeing the hissing metal box on the wall near the door with increasing fear, and finally this one kid got up and went over and gave it this brave, stupid smack on the side and the thing went from "ssssssssssssss" to "FFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF!" We all ducked like the thing had exploded, and the kid scampered back to his desk. For the rest of the day it went "FFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF" and after a while we got used to it and went on with class and went home at the end of the day and nothing ever exploded.

I'm older now, and a bit smarter. I got through high school and college with those thermostats on the wall of every classroom I was in and I was never killed by one.

Lucky, I guess.

A few weeks ago I was doing some research work in this office downtown. I was in this old government building which had these boxy, institutional, metal thermostats on the wall near the door of each room, just like we had in school. I didn't notice them, of course; I'm used to them now. I didn't notice any of them, that is, until I was walking out of this file room and I hear one going "ssssssss" very quietly, and I ducked away from the thing like it was a ticking bomb.

I really feel stupid. I'm 24 years old, I have a college education, and I still don't know why those damn things hiss. And I'm still afraid of them.

If you find out what it is that makes those things hiss, please tell me. I'll be at home, laying on my bed, curled into a fetal ball, sucking my thumb, because the world is a dangerous place, and I think we're all a little bit uptight about it.

LITERALLY SPEAKING

by Michael Buller

Let me explain.

I used to think like you. Sometimes I still do. But I never admit it. I tried that once and the powers above, or below, or to the left, or whatever, whomever, and wherever they are, showed me a lesson, so to speak.

You doubt me. And you wonder what the lesson was. Well, I can alleviate your doubt. I did once think like you. I did think phrases like "stops on a dime" were silly because I thought (note past tense) no car can really stop on a dime. Hell, it can't even fit on a dime. I wondered why something was six one way, half a dozen the other when it was really three miles in either direction. I knew there was no blood in a Bloody Mary, nothing for a nympho in Sex on the Beach, nor in an Orgasm (not even a screaming one), nor even a Sloe Comfortable Screw. I knew that the only time a Fuzzy Navel was either was when it was spilt on a wool sweater somewhere just above the waist. A Screwdriver would be as absolutely useless to a carpenter as a Rusty Nail. A Kamikazi couldn't fly a B-52, could it?

But after working myself up, I consoled myself that at least a beer was a beer. Then I consoled myself with a couple of them, just to reacquaint myself with reality, of course. And sometimes, I still wonder why—no, I'm kidding! Never! I hate literal speech. I like metaphors, and clichés, and euphemisms regardless of how much sense they make. Really, I do! Really, wherever you are, you must believe me.

I don't mean to sound paranoid, but after what happened that day, the long day...See, I'm now convinced that days are not all twenty-four hours long. There can be short and long ones. There can be.

See, I was kinda depressed about the political situation. I got to thinking: why the euphemism of an "election?" One, we don't elect presidents, we elect images, movie stars. Two, we don't elect them, the media does. So then I kinda got to thinking some more. I started thinking about language and how no one says what they mean (funny how that thought came after thinking about politicians) and I said, out loud, "Wouldn't it be nice if everyone said what they meant, if everything meant what it meant?" I sighed, audibly, but a cold bottle of beer took care of everything and I went to sleep, unsuspecting.

My first cause for alarm came the next day, as Wayne and I were leaving work. As we waited for the elevator, I told Wayne, "I'll meet you downstairs. I have to go to the men's room."

"What for?" Wayne asked me.

"Because I gotta go," I told him, slightly annoyed at his sarcasm.

"Why?" he persisted.

"Because I gotta take a shit there, all right?" He was annoying me.

"Well, John, I don't know why you want to take a shit in the men's room but I'll meet you downstairs."

He sounded offended and there was something strange in his voice, but before I could respond, the elevator had arrived and I was not about to discuss my bowel movements with a crowded elevator.

My next surprise came at the men's room. When I walked inside to look for an available booth, I found none. Not that they were all taken, but there were none in the room. There were no urinals either. In fact, there was nothing in the room. Nothing but men, that is. Nope, just a lot of men milling about in confusion. I actually thought about trying the women's room but figured it would be the same. Then I thought about it again and remembered that Wayne would be waiting for me downstairs, so I decided to suffer.

When I got downstairs, Wayne was looking at me kinda funny, so I decided not to bring up the subject. Wayne let it slide as well and we concentrated our attention on finding a bar to go to. He told me he was feeling a little depressed and suggested McGeary's, a restaurant/bar with a good happy hour. I agreed on the choice and we were off.

HAPPY LIKE CROOKS

by Sigmond Weiss

Dear Friend:

Let us be happy like crooks
looking sideways, backwards
for too many lives

confounding our passion to become rich
wherein we can employ expensive lawyers
to lie for us

with their perspicacity of spit
confounding minds
who reason their dogmas
like herrings dragged out of water
where they like to ramble
without the interference of nets
entrapping them.

But if not let us look for those sureties
that confound the weak, the strong, the
laws of nations
ever scalping the herrings of their
bones.

We were greeted at the door by a jovial bouncer/host. "Good evening, gentlemen," he said exuberantly. "So nice to see you. How are you today? I'm glad you could join us. Really glad you could make it." He took our hands and shook them warmly, a smile beaming continuously from his face. "Can I find a table for you?"

"No thanks," I responded, warmly enough, but gruffly by contrast. Feeling as if an explanation were necessary, as we passed by him into the bar, I said, "We're just gonna toss back a couple of beers."

No sooner had I said this than two bottles of beer—I didn't catch the label—came flying at my head. I ducked and they smashed into our effervescent host. He didn't lose his smile for a second. I glanced at Wayne and then at the bar to discover the culprit, then back to Wayne. The happy hours that I knew of consisted of good drink prices and free food. Here, there were no advertised drink specials and never had I seen a brighter collection of smiles. Even Wayne's face had lost that sullen Monday look and was now graced with a Friday smile.

"Wayne, what the—" My question stopped in mid-phrase as I saw that idyllic grin on his face. Something was going on, but I didn't know what. And I wasn't in the mood to deal with it straight. Seeing my luck with the beer and not exactly wishing to deal with an overly grinning bartender, I cursed myself for not having any of those funny little cigarettes on me. "Man, I wish I had some pot!"

The next thing I knew, I was feeling even more out of place than ever as I stood there, not smiling at all, with a large crockpot on my head. Hey, if that's the way the game is played, fine! Let's see how far this wish-fulfillment thing can go.

Carefully, I worded my speech. "I wish I'd meet a beautiful blonde female nympho."

Sure enough, this knockout blonde appears before my eyes. As she rubbed against my body and purred into my ear, saying, "I want to make wild, passionate love to you all night," I was thinking, among other less clean thoughts, just what you are; that night-mares like this weren't bad after all.

Well, it was only 7:00 but, with an invitation like that, I was willing to call it an evening. So I said, in my oh-so-romantic way, "Hey, I'd love to jump your bones too. Let's get out of here."

It's a very depressing thing to watch a seductive smile directed at you turn to a vengeful hate, but that's what happened.

Maybe it was the end of the happy hour. Anyway, this nympho responds, "Oh, you're sick!! I'm not into necrophilia!" And she proceeds to dump her beer over my head.

Now I'm beginning to wonder why beer has this strange attraction for my head this evening. But before I come up with any answer, Wayne returns from his sojourns into happy world. He is no longer smiling. He looks depressed again.

"You look like you're ready to leave," he observes correctly.

Now, I could have simply said, "Yes, let's leave," or, "Sure, let's go somewhere else," but unfortunately, trying to revive my crushed or maybe drenched spirits, I offered one of my stupid alternatives. "Yeah, let's make like geese and get the flock out of here."

The moment I said it I was sorry, and not just because it was so stupid. "Now look what you've done!" Wayne yelled, or should I say honked, at me. He had to yell. When you're a couple of hundred feet above the ground and flapping your wings, there's a lot of noise circulating. I've never been big with flying, or heights for that matter, so I had no time to figure out what was going on. Even if I did know, I couldn't follow the rules. It was like playing a drinking game where you know what you're supposed to do, but you only remember after you make the mistake. In that frame of mind, I reacted to my distance from the ground.

"SHIT!" And I did. Then realizing the predicament, I quickly recanted my desire to be geese and found myself firmly planted on the ground below. My relief was only momentary, as I soon found myself the recipient of my former actions and was now wiping the second foreign substance of the past few minutes off my head.

Again, my slow mind reacted after my fast mouth, which yelled at Wayne, "Hell, what's going on?" And soon I felt my skin sizzle like bacon in a frying pan. Blisters began instantly forming on my exposed hands. "I mean, 'Earth, what's going on?'" I tried desperately.

I checked my hands; blister-free. My skin; sweaty, but not abnormal. I looked at Wayne. I looked back at my hands. I never believed in heaven and hell. But then again, I never believed that...well, I always thought that...I mean, who would have thought that there was a reason for metaphor, for simile, for euphemistic expressions, for figurative language in general?

I didn't say anything else that evening. Wayne was kind enough to drive me home silently. I don't believe in god. Or at least I didn't think so. But now I'm not so sure. After all, I didn't believe in a lot of things that happened. Regardless, I prayed, sort of, that night. Really, I confessed. I told whoever might be listening that I loved figurative language and that literal language was dull and boring. I said it with conviction.

Since then, I have tried to use as much figurative speech as possible. I figure, besides the writing field there are lots of other ballparks where I might try to land a job. Hell, there's the advertising game, which might be enticing just because membership has its privileges and they "take care of their own." Besides, isn't advertising the heartbeat of America? I could throw my hat into the political arena, the opportunities there are endless. I can think of at least 2,000 points of light that are available to me. I don't know. If I just want to be confusing, maybe I'll write instruction manuals.

...OP NOT TV

by Elayne Wechsler and Steve Chaput

"You're the only TV reviewer I read!"

—Marvin Kitman, TV critic for NY Newsday

We thank the Writers' Guild for being considerate enough to delay the start of the fall season to coincide with the release of this IJ, so our reviews won't be too dated; even so, schedules are still so confused (and shows themselves so lackluster) that we've not yet seen MURPHY'S LAW, TV 101, ALMOST GROWN, MIDNIGHT CALLER, KNIGHTWATCH nor PARADISE, so it's possible we'll have a Part II if we actually sit through any of the abovementioned offerings... And while Brooklyn is STILL The Land That Cable Forgot, we do see syndicated shows (often overlooked sources of great profit to network and non-network affiliates), which we'll review before the Saturday morning "kids" lineup and regular programming. Reviews from Ye Editrix are in Script and from the Four-Color Fiend in Artisan typeface; arbitrary ratings range from a low of 0 stars to a high of 4 stars (purely personal opinions, of course):

THE DR. FAD SHOW—Some Asian nerd hosts this teen-oriented show featuring kids and their wacky inventions. A cross between a bad version of Mr. Wizard, Let's Make a Deal and Beyond Tomorrow; I can't see any kid not crazy about stupid inventions getting into this. But it's probably cheap to produce. **

FREDDY'S NIGHTMARES—If you're a fan of the NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET films, as I am, you may be a little disappointed by the lack of real terror. The TV show goes for the same type of watered-down suspense as TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE and FRIDAY THE 13TH: THE SERIES. Occasionally the dream sequences are confusing, and you could always use more Freddy. **

GUMBY—The first installment of this new go-round was so putrid we thought of packing it in then and there, but we stuck around to tape the second one and found ourselves not only pleasantly surprised, but fascinated and delighted at Art Clokey's emerging social consciousness and subversion—not to mention the psychedelic clay effects, the "Gumby Universe" theories of book-jumping and, hey, just the fact that clay animation is done this well at all. New shows are now being mixed with old Gumby's from the past three decades, so we get a kick out of seeing formative characters, but unfortunately some asshole has cut up the old stuff to make two cartoons out of one original, fucking up plotlines and coherence in a greedy attempt to push in more schlock toy commercials. ****

MONSTERS—The first one I saw was great; unfortunately, I can't say as much for the others I've seen. This, more than FREDDY'S NIGHTMARES, goes the way of TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE. While the special effects are good, the stories seldom support them. **

THE MUNSTERS TODAY—Maybe I'm not the biggest fan of the original show anyway (always preferred The Addams Family), but if you can imagine something bad enough to make that look good, this is it. John Schuck is hopelessly miscast as a flinging, George Bush-ish Herman; Lee Meriwether's Lily makeup and acting are fine but she's not really given anything interesting to do; God knows who plays Grandpa—it's sure not Al Lewis—and Eddie and Marilyn have become \$05-sitcom-smartasses. I could go on but why give these people publicity? *

MY SECRET IDENTITY—As bad as SUPERBOY is (see review below), this Canadian gem is on the opposite end of the spectrum. The joy and wonder and, above all, the humor inherent in the old SUPERBOY comics are to be found in this tribute, where a young comics fan actually attains the powers of his favorite superhero. Starring Jerry O'Connell (from "Stand By Me"). ***

STARTING FROM SCRATCH—Bill Daily. Connie Stevens. Zany hijinks ensue. Need I say more? 0*

SUPERBOY—As bad as the last two SUPERMAN films were, they stand as classic interpretations of the superhero when compared to this dull, overpretentious dud. *

WAR OF THE WORLDS—As science fiction, WOTW isn't even on a par with SOMETHING IS OUT THERE (see review below). The idea of the Martians reawakening after 30 years amounts to little more than a rehash of THE INVADERS and INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS—and even THE INVADERS was original at the time. *

BEARLY & CECIL—Unceremoniously cancelled after 4 weeks (with the Clampett folks given one day's notice), this must have offended some higher-up muckymucks, and it's a shame you'll never get to see why. It was hilariously self-referential, and it had everything the old B&C had plus more (a very Bakshi-like animation style, done by many of the same folks who worked on NIGHTY MOUSE—aha, now I sense a conspiracy against these cartoon bad boys!), and that's high praise coming from someone who still counts the original as one of her all-time favorite cartoons. I hope this gets renewed or something, somehow, soon. Honestly, to replace it with the "Just Say No" Flintstone Kids? Uggh. **** (sob)

WINNIE THE POOH (ABC, 8:30am)—Is this a trend, for the only worthwhile cartoons to be remakes/updates of those we loved years ago? While these aren't technically remakes (the only Pooh toons Disney did till now were infrequent shorts used to introduce movies, etc.), most kids, young and old, are familiar with the adorable Milne characters, and I think the author would be proud of how this is done. It's gentle without being immature, amusing without being cloy, and touching without being sloppily sentimental. A lovely hour to watch along with your kids, if you can get up that early. ***

GARFIELD AND FRIENDS (CBS, 10:30am)—Jim Davis and Mark Evanier are an unbeatable combination. This show is sick! It features Garfield plus the characters from U.S. Acres, and is a thousand

times funnier than the respective comic strips. ***

A PUP NAMED SCOOBY DOO (ABC, 10:30am)—Vinnie says this is wonderful, but we've watched it and we can't see how; to each his own, I guess. After awhile, Casey Kasem's voice is grating. The 60's beach motif is cute, but wears thin quickly. Plus, it's a prequel for god's sake, one step worse than a sequel. *

THE MISADVENTURES OF ED GRIMLEY (NBC, 11:30am)—As much as I adore Martin Short and his SCTV cohorts, I was skeptical about an entire cartoon show based on this one-dimensional character, but it works superbly, mainly due to the situations (fast-paced and surrealistic), regular "guests" like two strange animated scientists and the live-action antics of Count Floyd, and the voices of Jonathan Winters, Catherine O'Hara, Joe Flaherty and Andrea Martin. This is the closest to SCTV we non-cable people can get. ***

HEY VERN, IT'S ERNEST (CBS, ??)—Okay, I admit it, I hate Jim Varney to begin with. All the clever graphics in the world aren't going to endear me to him. I think I saw one or two amusing sketches featuring other members of this bare-bones cast, but they can't erase the taste of Ernest from my mouth. 1ck. *

NOTE: Not sure of the time the above is on; the networks have already started juggling schedules. Evenings I can understand this, but for Saturday mornings? Then again, they claim B&C was cancelled for "low ratings." Sure.

Dates and times for the reviews below (times are Eastern pm) vary; they're still trying to confuse us! Worst trend this year—those ultra-annoying "real people" yupsters who talk over a show's closing credits about the upcoming program while "living their lives."

Enough to make you beg the networks to bring back Mr. Voiceover!

SATURDAY: THE REPORTERS (FOX, 8:00)—Right. Like I'm gonna waste good time watching this, or USA TODAY: THE TV SHOW or PEOPLE: THE TV SHOW, or Maury Povich or Oprah or Phil or Mort? Please. Tabloid television, they call it, and rightly so. 0*

RAISING MIRANDA (CBS, 8:30)—A thoroughly unremarkable sitcom with unknown semi-actors about the trials of a single father raising a daughter. ZHE (Zany Hijinks Ensue). Yawn. *

DIRTY DANCING (CBS, 8:00)—Not sure whether this is on before or after MIRANDA, to tell you the truth. Don't care, either way.

I'll wait for the tour, thank you. 0*

BEYOND TOMORROW (FOX, 9:00)—The ads for this are cute (in fact, all of Fox's ads are pretty sparkling, especially the ones for DUET, which for all intents and purposes now stars Chris Lemmon and Alison LaPlaca), but I sense it's a cross between DR. FAD and the Home Shopping Club. Bigger and more expensive toys for grown-ups. Consume and die, yuppie scum. *

EMPTY NEST (NBC, 9:30pm)—A nice name cast (Richard Mulligan, Dinah Manoff, Kristy McNichol believe it or not, David "Joe Isuzu" Leisure), credible banter, funny lines, and an absolute find in newcomer Park Overall (what a great name!), who plays Mulligan's character's nurse. I like it. ***

SUNDAY: THE MAGICAL WORLD OF DISNEY (NBC, 7:00)—Back on NBC where it seems to belong, this show's attempt to recapture some of the quality that gave Disney such a good name in the first place is admirable. Michael Eisner can buy his own planet, but he makes a nice successor to Uncle Walt. The remakes of old Disney live-action classics are pretty decent so far, and the animation is, as you might expect, top-notch. ***, if you're into this sorta thing.

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE (ABC, 8:00)—I find it hard to believe that I enjoy this show as much as I did the original. I know it's not Politically Correct, and I know the plots, or should I say plot, was overused even then, but this is a lot of fun; and it's always nice to see Peter Graves (and, for one episode, Greg Morris, whose son Phil plays a regular role) saving us once again from the Fourth Reich and Latin American despots. ***

MONDAY: MURPHY BROWN (CBS, 9pm)—This is so enjoyable we watch it despite its star, Candice Bergen. It's strange when a series is so well put together that the main character is more interesting than the person who plays her! Nice ensemble acting; might be the next MTM or TAXI or M*A*S*H; too bad Bergen stars, though. ***

TUESDAY: ROSEANNE (ABC, 8:30pm)—My favorite new sitcom; all the critics were right on this one! Roseann Barr's and John Goodman's characters, to put it bluntly, are us (or at least, will be us when we have kids); it's eerie. But unlike watching a yupster nostalgia show, this is like watching role-model unromanticized reality—it's great! One only hopes Barr is able to maintain the creative control over this for which she has fought. ****

THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE (PBS, 9:00)—I hope lots of schools are assigning this for homework assignments—it's a great series of historical analyses. The "Rosie the Riveter" one was terrific. See, I watch educational tv too, so there! ***

WEDNESDAY: THE VAN DYKE SHOW (CBS, 8:00)—Expectedly mediocre, this doesn't disappoint. Dick and Barry Van Dyke are okay actors, the plots are unmemorable, the supporting cast hangs around—nothing to write home about. *

ANNIE MCGUIRE (CBS, 8:30)—Mary Tyler Moore's next Lucille Ball—doesn't know when to quit her perennial comebacks, each of which makes her look lazier and tarnishes her once-bright comedic reputation. MTM in HoBoken? Ooh, I'm dyin' again... *

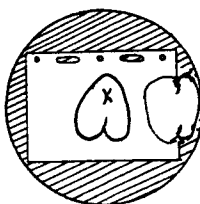
BABY BOOM (NBC, 9:30)—You know the plot from the movie, right? Kate Jackson plays J.C. as well as Diane Keaton did, I guess, and the kid's cute and all, but this is pretty amoral pandering to, you got it, yuppie scum. I had high hopes for an episode where J.C. starts rethinking her hectic superwoman lifestyle, but does she quit/gain a social conscience/change in any significant way? No; it's just fodder for another insipid plot. **

TATTINGER'S (NBC, 10:00)—Also for the scum set, this one features the very blonde Steven Collins and Blythe Danner; lots of violence (in a restaurant setting!!); folks with lots of money, —

* We forgot to review the new SUPERMAN cartoon. Eh... */2

none of which they deserve; and an ambiance of Quality, in the sense used by Donald Trump. Upper-class twit deck. **THURSDAY:** DEAR JOHN (NBC, 9:30)—Take Judd Hirsch (please!), put him in yet another Everyman situation (PLEASE, someone tell him Bob Newhart cornered the Everyman market decades ago!) with stereotypical 1D characters, and this is the result. To call it predictable would be higher praise than it merits. **FRIDAY:** SOMETHING IS OUT THERE (NBC, 9:00)—I have less trouble believing aliens look like Robert Hays (at least STARMAN had the catch of the alien cloning a human body; it was never implied that the Starman looked humanoid) than like a beautiful (in the Hollywood sense) blonde bombshell. She doesn't even peel off her skin and eat rats! She supposedly reads minds, but still can't communicate with her partner—oh, did I mention this is yet another variation of yet another cop show? Whoop-dee-do. 0"

There you have it. We'll be watching ROSEANNE, STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, BEAUTY AND THE BEAST and the new episodes of TWILIGHT ZONE; reading a lot; and renting lots of videos. So, until the next new season starts (in January), stay tuned!



ANIMATION UPDATE by Jed Martinez

FILM
REVIEW:
On tap
this
time,
three
animated
anthologies.
Firstly,
"THE

21ST INTERNATIONAL TOURNEE OF ANIMATION," the latest offering from Expanded Entertainment. Sporadically showing in cinemas across the country, this show contains more than a dozen shorts from eight nations, the highlight of which is Frederic Back's Academy Award winner "The Man Who Planted Trees" (from Canada), which I'd predicted to win in spite of the fact that I hadn't seen it. Now that I have viewed all thirty minutes of it, I'm truly glad that it won the Oscar. Based on a true story, this pictorial endeavor (narrated by Christopher Plummer) tells of a man who breathes new life into an otherwise lifeless region of Europe, despite two major wars that go on around him. Cleverly presented as the finale piece, never has a cartoon like this made one feel so good upon leaving the cinema. Other shorts worth mentioning include "Pas a Deux" (Holland), a look at different styles of dancing with the oddest assortment of partners (including James Dean and Marilyn Monroe, Tarzan and Olive Oyl, and a solo breakdance by the Pope); "Quinoscopio" (Cuba), a series of very funny blackouts by Juan Padron; "Augusta Kneading" (Hungary), the latest adventure of Csaba Varga's plasticine heroine; "Living In A Mobile Home" (UK), a jaunty music video; a new collection of commercials from Richard Williams (UK), capped by an encore of the "Long Life Beer" advert (from "Animation Celebration") that was the inspiration for the opening scene in "Who Framed Roger Rabbit;" and "The Cat Came Back" (Canada), a slapstick rendition of the folk song, brilliantly directed by Cordell Barker (who's assisted by Richard Condie, the man behind the Oscar-nominated laugh-fest "The Big Snit"). Of the three American works, the best one is Bill Kroyer's "Technological Threat," which combines old-fashioned animation styles with computer graphics to tell the age-old story of workers being replaced by state-of-the-art upstarts; Craig Bartlett (who'd animated some of the Penny cartoons on "Pee Wee's Playhouse") offers "Arnold Escapes from Church," where our hero daydreams during services, and slightly distorts phrases from the 23rd Psalm ("My cup runneth over" is an obvious visual gag); "Candyjam" is a confectory fantasy, where different animators (including Bartlett and Marv Newland of "Anijam" fame) pixillate pieces of candy in several sweet segments. Although this Tournee is not the best one to date, it's certainly not the worst one, either. It's simply an alternative from the usual Saturday morning fare, and definitely worthy of at least one viewing...A more unique anthology for experimental film buffs is "STREAMS OF CONSCIOUSNESS: NEW AMERICAN ANIMATION" (also from Expanded Entertainment). This collection of independent works opens with Sally Cruikshank's "Face Like a Frog," a bizarre cartoon about illicit pleasures, enhanced by the music of Danny Elfman (of Oingo Boingo), who sings "Don't Go In The Basement." This is the sort of film Max Fleischer would probably make if he were alive today (in which case, he'd be well over 104 years old). This festival's closing piece is "Suspicious Circumstances" by Jim Blashfield (who proceeded afterwards to make the highly talked-about Talking Heads music video "And She Was"). This collage-animated film is most unusual in its presentation, as it explains the mysterious disappearance of a suburban husband (who loses his ears and nose to a pair of floating hands that are joined at the wrist). In between, the remaining shorts are questionable, as some are relatively hypnotic and others will put you to sleep. Among the better shorts are "Voices" by Joanne Priestly (a humorous self-portrait), "Nine Lives" by Karen Aqua (a mystical look at human personalities displayed through tarot cards and cats), "Dissipative Fantasies" by David Ehrlich (a metamorphosis of visual delight), "Thicket" by George Griffin (who also directed "It's an O.K. Life" from "Animation Celebration"), and "Parade" by Joey Ahlbum (who is also responsible for the animated tags on Nickelodeon and MTV, as well as cartoons like "Super Sam and Spot"). The third anthology goes to the other end of the cartoon spectrum, classic animation from Hollywood. Unfortunately, "QUACKBUSTERS" is another one of those Warner Brothers cartoon festivals that is

"BACK TO PHILLY, AL"

by Al?

Here I is in the ring
Sparring: I know I got to lose:
In the cards—bastards
You make mistakes: I know

Someone in the crowd yells

"BACK TO PHILLY, AL!"

Dumb clucks take it up

"BACK TO PHILLY, AL!"

I get mad, lash out, start fighting

Don't think about it,

Pumme! the bum: he's down

For my trouble

I'm given a knife in my back

linked by new animated segments. Instead of Chuck Jones or Friz Freleng, Greg Ford and Terry Lennon try (and I do mean try) to present a continuous story with a horror movie scenario—with very little success. The only saving grace for these two newcomers is that Daffy Duck stars in two totally new shorts directed by them ("The Duxorcist" and "Night of the Living Duck"). Otherwise, this feature-length compilation just barely ranks superior over its predecessor, "Daffy Duck's Fantastic Island" (directed by Freleng). Messrs. Ford and Lennon are also responsible for the new animation sequences from the recent CBS-TV special "Bugs vs. Daffy: Battle of the Music Video Stars." These two directors hope to keep the spirit of WB cartoon humor alive, even though their work is nowhere near the caliber of veterans Jones and Freleng, not to mention Clampett, Avery, Tashlin...but they're trying. As for "Quackbusters," if it came and went in your town before you had a chance to see it, don't worry; it's bound to come out on home video. And please, don't wait for it to debut on cable tv; it'll only get edited like previous anthologies ("1001 Rabbit Tales" and "The Bugs Bunny/Road Runner Movie" are two mutilated casualties).

BOOK REVIEW: Steve Schneider has put together, in my opinion, the best book to date on the world of the boys at Termit Terrace and their various creations. "THAT'S ALL FOLKS! THE ART OF WARNER BROS. ANIMATION" (from Henry Holt & Co., \$39.95) is an excellent book, chock full of illustrations of characters on cels and model sheets, as well as those lavish background scenes (painted by artists like Richard H. Thomas and Philip De Guard) from cartoons like "What's Up, Doc?" and "Duck Dodgers." Several photos depicting the directors and other associates at the studio are strewn throughout the book's 252 pages. Divided into two parts, it begins with a historic look at how this establishment came to be, and of the many triumphs and conflicts that the art staff went through in order to turn out quality animation. The latter part of the book deals with the mini-biographies of the characters born in the fertile minds of the animators. (It's interesting to learn how Bugs Bunny really came to be—who first directed him, how he got his name, and how he had developed those familiar traits for which we know him today.) Besides all that, there's a filmography of every Warner Bros. theatrical short ever released, a one-page chronology that spans nearly forty years, a glossary of some catch phrases that stemmed from radio shows (i.e., "What's all the hub-bub, bub?" came from the character Titus Moody when he used to refer to Fred Allen as "Bub"), movies (like the classic one from "Of Mice and Men," "Which way did he go, George, which way did he go?") and World War II ("Turn off that light!"), and even a foreward by science fiction writer (and one helluva cartoon buff) Ray Bradbury. This is informative reading for all, even if the info isn't 100% accurate (among the errata: the model sheet of Pussfoot and Marc Antony on Page 105 is from "Kiss Me Cat," not "Feed the Kitty" as mentioned). That's All, Folks! makes a great companion piece with Will Friedwald and Jerry Beck's "The Warner Brothers Cartoons" (which is presently out of print, but Will and Jerry hope to rerelease it with all previous glitches removed sometime within the next year)...

ANIMATION FOR SALE: The latest edition of Gallery Lainzberg's catalog is out, with a wide assortment of cartoon art from which to choose. Besides animation cels (both production and limited editions), there are many pencil drawings, model sheets, and even oil paintings (the latter provided by Chuck Jones) of characters from Disney, Warner Bros., Filmation, Ralph Bakshi, Jay Ward, Don Bluth, Hanna-Barbera, and many other studios. For a copy, send \$3.95 to Gallery Lainzberg, 200 Quaranty Building, 3rd Ave. and 3rd St. SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52401 (or call 319/363-6136 or 800/553-9995)...Here's a follow-up to last issue's report on calendars for the cartoon buff. If you liked using the 1988 Claymation calendar, then you'll love using the two new ones for 1989. One of them has the California Raisins, and the other has the Noid (both from TV commercials). Both calendars sell for \$8.95 each.

OBIT: Animator Eric Larson, one of Disney's "nine old men," succumbed to a blood disease on October 25. He was 83. Larson brought life to such classic Disney features as "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Alice in Wonderland," "Fantasia," "Lady and the Tramp," "Sleeping Beauty," "Cinderella," "The Jungle Book," "101 Dalmatians" and "Pinocchio" (his personal favorite). His last assignment with the studio was "The Great Mouse Detective" (1986). To fully appreciate this man's work, look for some of his illustrations in these books: Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life, Too Funny For Words: Disney's Greatest Sight Gags (which I reviewed in IJ #59) and Treasures of Disney Animation Art, all from Abbeville Press. Of the original "nine old men," only Ward Kimball, Ollie Johnston and Frank Thomas survive...



IS YOUR LIFE DULL?

Who do you blame? If it's everyone's fault by yours, send \$1 to The Subgenius Foundation, P.O. Box 140306, Dallas, Texas 75214. You'll never have another dull moment.

Sayz-U!(Letters)

[I appreciate all the responses my queries/suggestions regarding freeing up more IJ space received from readers, and I will hold my replies until the end of this letter column on that subject.]
Dear Elayne,

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, there's no Snide Critic column this time, my goodness gosh; ol' S.C. refused to see ALIEN NATION on account that it was a dumb cop/buddy-druggie flick with aliens. Of course, he does wonder about "Kid's" reply to his last column. Now, Kid, we both must certainly know that I was not writing about the likes of A FISH CALLED WANDA when "Big Summer Films" came under attack...come on now, do you really want to go on record defending the likes of HARRY AND THE HENDERSONS or RAMBO III? Those are the type of bloated shit-flicks that I was castigating...or how about BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED? No, it's not a Summer movie, but the criticism still applies—man oh man, did it ever SUCK when I saw it on tape: bloated, swooshing background music; stupid, one-note characters (was the punch-drunk boxer who only spoke in commercial jingles supposed to be cute??? My god, that's horrible when you think about it!); and dopey-cute flying saucers that reproduce...bluck. And, I gently remind you that the "great disservice" remark you made earlier was about my scorn directed at commercials...don't go changing it to a defense of crappy films, now! And why do you say I go off "half-cocked"? After all, my critic's sixth sense told me that ROBOCOP and THE LOST BOYS were junk, and when I finally did see them (on TV), all my suspicions were confirmed. So you see, the Snide Critic is quite a perceptive fellow, yes? (The Kid replies, in order: 1) Since you didn't specify which Summer Films you were castigating, and since, in my opinion, there were just as many the caliber of WANDA or UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING as there were of RAMROD III, I thought it obvious I was criticizing your sweeping generalizations. Since I cannot defend movies I have no intention of seeing (and since I'm not a movie critic, I don't see why I'd have to see any of the movies you mentioned if I didn't want to), I can't tell you whether I would've liked HENDERSONS or BATTERIES; pro'lly not. But I loved ROGER RABBIT! 2) Okay, it was a cheap shot to use the "great disservice" remark in reference to movies; I still think it's a great disservice to the artists who take part in commercials to shoot down a clever ad just because of its bottom line. Hell, movies are also intended to sell, albeit not as directly, but that doesn't mean they're garbage because of it. 3) Your sixth sense aside, I still think a critic should review movies after he's seen them and without preconceived notions. I know quite a few people who liked LOST BOYS and ROBOCOP, by the way; you have a very broad definition of "junk," it seems.)

And about STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION—who needs it? It's not STAR TREK at all, you know—it's just some substandard yuppie/computer nerd show, with a funny-looking spaceship (that resembles a foreign compact job) also named Enterprise. Well, you can't fool me! STAR TREK has Spock and Kirk and McCoy and came out 20-odd years ago...and when it was new, they didn't call it CAPTAIN VIDEO: THE NEXT GENERATION, now, did they? No, this new show that calls itself STAR TREK is just some new-age technic attitude pulp—one episode had this bad wicked tar-like alien that evidently represented Bad Thoughts, and the whole thing seemed so obvious that I kept expecting the "actors" (if that's the applicable word) to turn and address the camera directly. The bridge is supposed to represent a living room with a great big TV screen—perfect for the videot audience to identify with. The android Data character looks like they forgot to bury him! SubGenius Jay Harber reports that in one episode, the computerized holo-figures come to life, but nobody seems really surprised—after all, computers can do anything, now, can't they? ST:TNG is just a "proper-attitude" implant show, much like FAME and 21 JUNK STREET. Bah! (The Kid again: Sorry JP, didn't realize you had no actual hard criticism of ST:TNG and that you were just pulling my leg. I'm sure that if Roddenberry had written CAPTAIN VIDEO, the first STAR TREK may indeed have been renamed differently. While I think TNG does tend to be too "eighties Establishment" sometimes, so was ST the First too "sixties Establishment." I won't get into debating the relative acting merits of Patrick Stewart vs. William Shatner—come on, JP. And if computers can do anything on TNG, the number of episodes that show their inherent fallibility [especially through Data himself, who'd rather be human than machine and who looks a heck of a lot less undead than, say, an Orion from the original ST] is notable. Sure, some shows are manipulative and naive about reality [they did a terribly heavy-handed anti-drug show last season, but no show I've seen can do anti-drug nonsense and not be heavy-handed], but I think it holds up just as well as your now-nostalgically-idealized original.)

Well, enough about that. IJ #53 was another swell issue, with an especially nice back cover from Phil! Different shading techniques, and heavier outlines to separate the shapes—not to mention the Rock Fiend tribute! Now I'm out of room and time (typing this on Halloween), so guess I'll see you later. Yeah, yeah, not if you see me first, I know...

Hold on tight to your dreams,

J.P. MORGAN
185 Seabreeze Ave. #4
East Keansburg, NJ 07734
October 3, 1988

Hi Elayne,

I was going through my collection of old IJs. Some neat stuff. The layout was much thinner. Why do you print 35 pages anyway?

Why can't you just limit it to 24? (Because then everyone who sends me stuff wouldn't get printed, and nobody's less valuable than anybody else for me to make that kind of determination.) Anyway, there's all this IJ nostalgia in the drawer to go through. Remember Church of the Latter Day Punks? or Crawford's Dookey cover from #13? Remember that numerology rag TRUTH? Weird! I found a letter from Deborah Benedict, Sue Rosner, Rory when he started doing the record reviews. Now I remember how I first heard of IJ. I did a live performance on WFMT. John Scharff heard it and sent for the tape. Steve heard it from John and started to write and told me about IJ. I'm pretty sure that's how it happened...These days, I run a small printing press, do graphics work for friends, play in the band [the re-formed PSEUDO-REALISTS] and go to school. I never got a real degree, so I'm plodding along. My employer pays for most of it. That's nice. The "routine" is pretty good...Oh yeah, I'm also reading LOVE & ROCKETS. Jaime Hernandez is the comic wiz of the 80's—so human.

Bye,

BRIAN CATANZARO
7 South Warren St.
Dover, NJ 07801

10/17/88

#62 is an impressively large, dauntingly dense zine, in "tiny print" as Stang says—more of a minor literary journal than a rantzine, in my opinion. (Ours too.) I get the feeling, particularly from the letters section, of suddenly walking into the middle of a large but closely knit family which has been carrying on a long, involved conversation for years (confirmed by Ackner's observation that half the letter writers are staffers already), into which it is very difficult to intrude with no knowledge of the characters or background. Worse, I get the feeling that it's the kind of group which jovially greets newcomers, "Why, you just come right on in and make yourself at home and tell us all about yourself," without realizing what staggering difficulty I have in doing precisely this, and what a horrible dread I have that eventually someone will say, "Oh, stop mumbling all that intellectual drivel and tell us what's really on your mind," without realizing that intellectual drivel is precisely what is on my mind.

There is, however, one point on which I might break into the conversation, partly because it seems oddly dissonant with most of the rest of it: Deborah Benedict's extraordinary diatribe on bigotry, and her auxiliary letter. Being "older" (and although 37 may very well be older than most of the readers and other staff, it is not, alas, older than I), or being classically educated (and reading all the philosophers she lists certainly indicates infinite patience at least as much as it does a classical education), or even being a cripple (whichever one of several possible meanings that may have in her case), may entitle one to a certain piquant contentedness of tone, but not, I think, to shrill, screaming vituperation, particularly regarding a topic whose basic premise—that bigots are dumb shits—seems so unarguably obvious that one hardly sees the need to defend it at all, far less to stomp and yell about it. I can only assume charitably that this represents Benedict in less than optimum form, and hope that her next contribution will represent her in a pleasanter, more classical frame of mind. If this is the sort of ranting which is supposed to characterize rantzines, I suggest the scholars leave it for the dumb shits to do.

GEOFFREY FOURMILE
P.O. Box 419
Lafayette, CO 80026

(While I agree with Geoffrey to a certain extent, there's a thin line sometimes between ~~light~~ intimacy and insularity, and I would hope IJ contributors, especially letter writers, bear in mind that I'd rather stay on the inclusive side of that line. However, as our title suggests, an inside joke takes a little time to get used to, so we hope Geoffrey sticks around.)
Dear Elayne,

So, you want a referendum...or at least a few suggestions. I like the best-to-worst list (granting, since I'm not the one doing the work, that IJ needs to be cut back a bit, dammit) and hope you go with the first idea and limit word length. If you do want to cut syndicated art, please keep Baboon Dooley!

Didja ever notice the absence of "End Drug Free School Zone" signs? I mean, how do you know where the invisible line is drawn? Could this confusion be deliberate?

I missed Anni Ackner's column in #63, but other things almost made up for it, notable Larry Stolte's well-researched nutshelling of the Ronald Wilson Reagan (six letters in each name...666...any questions, class?) years. Little Remembered Fact: Raygun once promised to end draft registration because it was an example of big government intrusion. Needless to say, this 1979 campaign promise was conveniently forgotten, even perverted (there, I've said it all anyway). Late days to bring this up? Just wanted everyone to know whom to thank for giving them the opportunity to learn Spanish as it's spoken in Nicaragua, circa next year as George "You die, I fly" Bush takes office as President-for-Life. Okay, jeez, I'll shut up now, I know nobody cares about this political stuff anyway...

Mr. Four-Color Fiend: I hesitate to ask this because I somehow managed to miss the first 7½ years of IJ's existence, but have you ever reviewed the First Comics line (Badger, Grimjack, now Team Yankee, etc.) or Dark Horse, Nicotat, Kitchen Sink and New Eternity Comics? Just curious; I'd like to see some opinions on Boris the Bear, The Tick and The Return of Megaton Man ("All right! So I'm back! Now I quit again!") besides those printed on 29

their respective letters pages.

Halloween Greetings from the Undead,

DAVE McLAUGHLIN
1070 W. Main St.
Stroudsburg, PA 18360

P.S. Steven Scharff was right about Canada. Great place to visit, and it's looking better all the time as a place of permanent residence. Okay, these really are my last and final words. Really. (Sokay, Dave, it wasn't that long a letter! How good Canada will look now that Mulroney [Number Two Son of Reagan] has won reelection is anybody's guess; perhaps a subsidiary of USA Inc.? As far as F-C F goes, since I buy his comic books and type his column I can tell you he has reviewed BORIS, THE TICK [will there ever be another issue?] and MEGATON MAN [WOO!—great last issue], all of which we read and love, but other than LONE WOLF & CUB we really don't get anything I recall vividly from First. And I don't know how you missed 71 years of IJ either, which is my egotistical way of segueing into offering back issues for sale, still \$1.50 each!) Dear Elayne,

October 22, 1988

In regards to the six options mentioned in your Acknowleditorial about publishing INSIDE JOKE: Limiting the maximum word length (Option 1) presents further questions: will you chop up the piece for serialization, will you edit the piece if it is close to the maximum word limit, or will you reject it out of hand? Serialization is perhaps the most fair for alternative writers, editing the most realistic and acceptable (we do live in the real world, you know, and editing is one of your strong points), and rejection out of hand seems too arbitrary. Option 2 involves putting the staffers on a voluntary rotation basis, requiring a piece every certain number of issues. To tell you the truth, I thought this was already the case, since all the staffers don't appear in every issue. This seems to be very reasonable, but will this policy encourage a flood of submissions from non-staffers, will it alienate staffers (would think not, due to considerations of time, but you never know), or would there simply not be much change from the way it is now? I think it more than likely that you would continue to be facing the over-32-page barrier just as often as at present. However, if the staffers agree, it is probably the least painful of remedies. Option 3 opts for the deletion of syndicated art, and accepting art made only for IJ. Though the cutting of Homo Patrol would not be missed by me, deleting Overheard (only 2 panels in #63) might not save enough space. In addition, the art serves to break up the tiny print and make things more attractive to read. Could enough art be solicited that is strictly for IJ? Option 4 proposes to suspend serials. The best idea so far but what about Prudence Gaelor? Uh oh. Hmm, now what? I like the idea of having writers stay within the guidelines of a short humorous piece on one subject, but Gaelor's work in its present construction would not stand that way. It would also inhibit quality work which may be at its best when written in serial form. Option 5 is bad news. Real bad. If one cuts off the option to accept work from readers, one soon loses those readers who cannot contribute to the direction of the publication, and/or communicate to others (the magazine is for the readers). Yes, they can publish their own zine, but the money they spend in doing that will certainly not go into IJ coffers. In most mainstream publications (there are exceptions), it is theoretically possible for any reader to contribute to the magazine. Eliminating this possibility would do nothing positive for IJ. Option 6 might sound harsh to those who write only for zines, and I fully realize that my pieces might be the first to go, but there seems to be no reason you cannot step up quality requirements. Rejections should be accompanied by a note explaining the reasons for not publishing the piece (you are publishing a zine, not Harper's), and it should provide for a more readable IJ. Some writers will be offended, some will not care, some will be encouraged.

By the above comments, it seems obvious that I am not in favor of any of the six options. Why not change the price to \$2 and go to 36 pages, accepting the growth, and passing the resultant costs onto the readership? (Gee, I hope the others don't lynch me for that.) (Others have suggested the same, but the point is, I don't want to go 36 pages because then I'd lose about \$400+ in printing and postage instead of the almost \$300 I lose now every six weeks. A price hike of 50 cents for non-contributing subscribers would hardly dent that. In order for IJ to actually break even now it would have to cost over \$5 an issue. So you see, since I've no desire to expand, the problem becomes how best to contract. Also, we were \$1 for almost 8 years before we raised prices, and as I mentioned a few issues back I'm loath to double them so quickly!) Well, one way to shorten the length of INSIDE JOKE is for me to end this letter here (though actually, now I look back through it, it's not very publishable anyway). Before I go, however, I must compliment Tamarina Dwyer on her extraordinary THE POET'S DIET BOOK. Very sad, touching and disturbing in a subtle fashion. Bob Blundell's CROSSROADS is written in a grand fashion (couldn't resist) and has really piqued my interest; can't wait for the next installment. (There isn't any; Bob's story was complete in itself. When I have a serial, I always write "To be continued.") Stu Newman's THE GIDEON FLICK and Curtis Olson's letter made me chuckle...That's it, the red wine has run out, I'm tired, and Mothra is destroying Tokyo...

MARK ROSE
9807 Palatine Ave. N.
Seattle, WA 98103
October 27, 1988

Dear Elayne,

30) Yes, I'm all for 1500 word limit (me short attention span,

ya know). 2) No, too confusing...well, if they volunteer, fine, but I like every-issue schedule, keep in a rhythm. 3) No...uh, Homo Patrol I could do without as I follow it in another pub, but Dooley and Tuli add a helluva lot to the IJ ambience and I'd miss 'em...and besides they don't take up much space. 4) Yes. 5) No, IJ always needs new blood. 6) YES! YES! YES! Get rid of all the "questionable" writing!...WHOOPS! I might be the first to go...On second thought...

I dunno...I really like IJ the way it is, and chopping it up would be like pulling teeth, but then I'm not paying for it either...Maybe "quality control" is the answer...When I was putting on shows, this club owner warned me against booking unknown bands with no draw..."they just use the club for a practice rehearsal." It's great they get a chance to play, but if they're not pulling their weight at the gate the club just can't afford to book 'em...Same with writers. If they're not pulling in some readers then what's the point, other than massaging their egos at seeing their stuff in print?

Luck,

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

(Well, perhaps because I don't consider myself akin to a nightclub owner, and I never cared for psl anyway, I don't see our situation as analagous. One of the reasons the small press—and, one might surmise, the small club—exists in the first place is to give unknowns a chance. And I for one would like to keep it that way.) Dear Elayne,

As to how to tighten up IJ, I mostly agree with your proposals. I think "not accepting anything from new writers" is a totally wrongheaded idea. Also, I have a problem with suspending serials (and it's not what you think). The Prudence & Pink Bunny stories are serialized!!! No, you can't take them away! And I want to point out that without the syndicated short (art) stuff you will have extra work making the pages visually interesting (can't have just huge blocks of print—gotta break it up). And why is number 6 (quality demands) #6 and not number 1? I have enough trouble trying to figure out editors—an editor who doesn't edit is beyond me!

Cheers!

JAMES MacDOUGALL
3220 N Street NW, Suite 333
Washington, D.C. 20007
October 27, 1988

Elayne,
Rather than telling you my likes and dislikes of the last two issues, I want to comment on your ideas for constraint. First of all, the maximum word length is not one of my favorite and I'm kind of surprised that it was your number one space-saving idea. I'm also a little confused with your positioning on the rejecting of more "questionable" writing, i.e., stepping up quality requirements. You put this as your worst idea. Personally, I would rather read one well-written 3000-word piece than 3 shitty 1000-word pieces. Maybe a combination of these two, i.e., the longer the piece, the stricter the quality requirements. The restriction of all new contributors also seems harsh, or at least overly broad. Who are "new contributors?" I mean, I've contributed one piece but I would still consider myself, when and if I send things to you, as a "new contributor." Besides, to cut off the new contributors of today you may eliminate the staffers of tomorrow.

I can't comment on the syndicated art. It's not the reason I look forward to IJ, no matter how great it may be, but I'm sure there are those that consider it of primary importance. The "volunteer" rotating staffers might work but you might run the risk of sacrificing quality. As for the suspension of serials, I'm torn. On the one hand, six weeks (as you said to me in your initial correspondence) is a long time over which to carry a story. Yet at the same time, some of the best writing seems to come out of the serials. So on that one, I'm completely middle of the road.

I don't know, Elayne. For me, quality control might go a long way to helping you out (even if it might eliminate such pieces as the one I've included). But I think the best shot would be to combine tighter quality requirements with what you mentioned last time or so, tighter content—i.e., comedy—restrictions. Well, this has probably confused more than helped. So let me conclude with some cheery notes regarding IJ.

I too like the editorial asides. I too am mad at the US postal system. In other words, I missed Anni's column. The political column was hysterical, even the stuff about the candidate that I support (he shall remain nameless)...

Sincerely,

MICHAEL BULLER
11 Columbia Ave., #B1
Hartsdale, NY 10530

(As promised, my turn. The reason Option 6 is my least favorite, as many of you are starting to discover, is because [contrary to Mark's observation, although I am flattered he thinks so] I'm a rather shitty editor, at least when it comes to determining the quality of IJ submissions. Invariably pieces I really like get negative or even hostile feedback in this column and to me personally; conversely, stuff I may feel is pointless or rambling or MTINTK usually garners the most positive commentary from everyone else. So you see, in quite a few cases the judgement of ye editrix runs almost diametrically opposite your own, my readers. And since I therefore can't trust my own judgement insofar as picking and choosing what does and doesn't get in IJ—and more importantly since I believe in giving everyone who can string sentences together competently a chance at appearing in these pages—I don't want to reject, and I'm not sure I even want to be called "editor" any more! "Editor" implies too many things to a lot of you, and I never set out to be any of those things. What I am here at IJ is

typist, layout person, snide commentator at times, occasional columnist, mailer and receiver of mail, subscription service—that sort of thing. I DO NOT EDIT in the conventional sense. Sometimes I'll snip out a WITNTK phrase or clean up grammar, but that isn't really editing. I rarely censor or reject, stuff in which "real" editors often take delight. //Option 1 seems quite logical to me—remember, we've always had a maximum word limit. For a while it was 2000, then 1900. The operative concept here should not be censorship, but sharing [oh no, here comes her pitiful commune analogy again!]—we can't afford to add on to this house, but we have more people moving in, so everyone has to give up a wee bit of room to accommodate the new folks. //The few staffers who have responded to me personally are quite opposed to the idea of only contributing every other month; as this option was always contingent upon the agreement of staffers, it is herewith dropped. //I agree with you folks—seeking to limit new blood is a bad idea. Sue me, I'm desperate. Seriously, seeing as how I don't even advertise for subscribers anymore, it still boggles my mind how many new folks we tend to pick up, but that's all part of our evolution, and far be it for me to stop that. //You're right, I can't cut out syndicated art; unfortunately, most of our art is syndicated except for our covers, and art space isn't the problem that writing space is. //I'm still pondering serial suspension for non-staffers [don't worry, Pru's stuff is safe!] and will have a decision perhaps next issue. This won't affect serials currently being run! //In conclusion, it seems Options 1 and 4 are our best bets so far, but what do you think of Option 7, asking folks to refrain from writing letters to this column if they've got a written piece in this same issue, also on the theme of sharing space? Again, let me know your feedback.)

WHAT SOCIOLOGY IS AND SO FORTH

by Wayne Hogan

Never mind how, but I've concluded that most people don't know what sociology is. Or why. Or what kind of person it is who'd do sociology. Not to mention where it came from, or when.

Perhaps most significantly, many with whom I speak say they feel vaguely uncomfortable because they don't know as much as they think they probably should about sociology. This obvious divot in our nation's intellectual hairpiece needs retufting, and not a moment too soon.

First, let's consider what sociology isn't. It isn't baseball, though, admittedly, the two do share some striking similarities. More about these later. Sociology also isn't a place in northern California, though in the early '50s some town fathers there briefly considered it as the name for a little municipality of theirs that still sits unnamed a few miles west of Yuba City.

Sociology also isn't economics, though, somewhat curiously, most of the people I've talked with seem to know this. Still, for those who doubtless don't, it's worthwhile saying it isn't. Someday, it might be. But right now, it's not.

There's also no factual basis for the frequent perception that sociology is some sort of game—like, say, badminton or horseshoes or 3-card-stud-poker-jacks-and-9-of-spades-wild, even.

Sociology isn't a newspaper, either, or a set of squeaky bed-springs or a pair of rose-colored glasses, though some chroniclers of its history think it may have had early tendencies toward all three of these particular phenomena. But however tempting the ribaldly humorous aspects of that story, it's not something there's either time nor space for now.

Another thing sociology isn't is poetry. No. Definitely not poetry. The truth of this assertion is not easily demonstrated. It's just the sort of thing one can instinctively and in no other way know.

People also wonder if sociology is something they can benefit from, which, it just so happens, it is, if used in recommended doses and in conjunction with a low-cholesterol regimen of polyunsaturated sodium glucose low in tar and orange juice. Since so few people seem to be aware of this utilitarian side of sociology, it appears to signal a pressing need to have it be a part of the educational curriculum of ever-lower levels of instruction. Perhaps some form of it should become a part of every baby's playpen experiences, with there also being sociology balloons, say, and sociology teething rings and sociology mobiles and sociology blankets and sociology diapers and...

Of the questions raised at the outset of this discussion, the one asking who'd do a sociology is perhaps the most difficult of all. It's just so darned touchy dealing with people's psyches and such. Everything becomes so easily, so quickly F-r-e-e-u-d-l-a-n, so Rorschachian, so Mummy Dearest. Best to just let it be.

As to where sociology came from and when, well, in reverse order, it came, some now think, to the United States at just about the time of the Great Potato Famine in Ireland. (Parenthetically, it's curious how so very much of American history seems tied to this one event.) While debate still lingers on which caused which there is substantial agreement on where sociology originally came from—secreted away in the cargo bay of a whaler sailing from an anonymous reef off the Lesser Antilles.

It's appropriate to conclude, then, that sociology is assuredly something that lots more people need to know lots more about. It's a presence which must be reckoned with if we're ever to know and enjoy all we'd like about baseball, small California towns, economics, bed springs, poetry and the like. So much to know. So very, very much.

ADDENDUM: The phenomenally striking similarities between sociology and baseball alluded to at the beginning of this discussion number three: 1) if we're not careful, they may be with us always; 2) they both require hip-pads for utmost safety; and 3) they both get soaking wet when it rains.

Detector

by Michelle Marr

"Junk," Milton declared as he unpacked the box and stacked the books and papers methodically on the dusty floor beside it. "Mindless drivel at its worst."

When he had purchased the boxes of books for just a few dollars at a local auction, the elderly man had fancied that he had made a wise business transaction; there had been numerous best-sellers in the first two boxes, books which he could sell almost immediately. But the last box was filled with dog-eared science fiction novels and "true" books concerning UFOs and other such nonsense.

It wasn't that he felt that he had been cheated; the books from the other two boxes would give him an ample profit. It was the fact that he, Milton Gerrolds, had paid good money for that flying saucer nonsense that disturbed him. No one but children could possibly believe in such rubbish.

With a disgusted sigh, he shoved the books haphazardly back into their box and returned to his stool behind the counter at the back of the used book shop. It had been a slow day, but as long as there was enough profit to pay the rent and keep himself fed, Milton enjoyed the solitude.

The pleasant privacy gave way to utter boredom and, with an hour left before closing time, Milton tried to select a book with which to pass the time. The big, glitzy best-sellers were definitely out; he couldn't stand the things. All of the familiar classics suddenly seemed unbearably mundane. Almost without realizing it, Milton suddenly did the unthinkable.

He picked up one of the tattered magazines from the scorned box of science fiction and began flipping through it. Within a few minutes, he was actually so engrossed that he read until well past his usual closing time.

Finally looking up at the clock, he snorted in disgust. Imagine being caught up in such nonsense. But the concept of beings from other worlds was an intriguing one. After a moment of deliberation, he picked up the box of books and loaded it into the back of his battered pickup.

Driving out to his house in the gathering dusk, Milton glanced nervously up at the darkening sky. Suppose that there were alien beings out there. What guarantees did he have that they would be friendly?

Over the next few days, he devoured every piece of literature that he could find on the subject, even driving into the next state to search through book shops while his own, once his pride and joy, was left sadly neglected. His scorn of science fiction had been replaced by an irrational fear.

If any aliens ever did come to Earth, he decided, it would hardly be for a social call.

Finally, after a week of sleepless nights, he found what seemed to be the perfect solution to his fears. In a mildewing magazine was a set of directions for a "UFO detector."

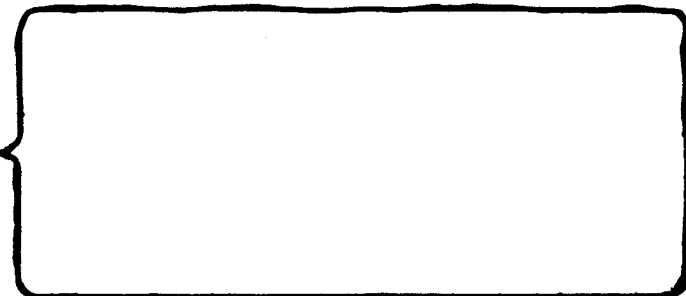
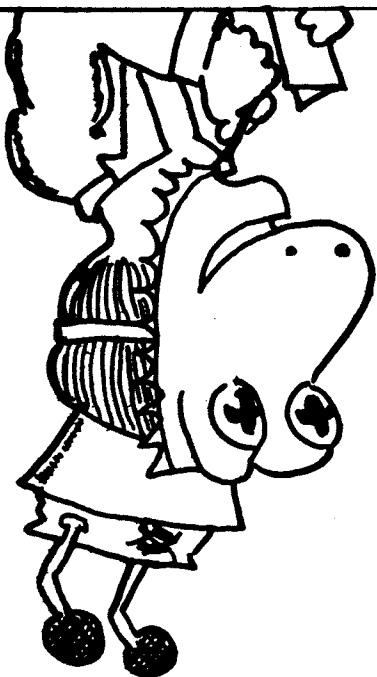
Milton wasted no time in gathering the materials that he had at home and rushing to the local hardware store to get those that he lacked. The completed device consisted of a plywood box surrounding a magnetized needle wired to a bell which would ring if an unidentified flying object were present.

With the box nailed to the house outside of his bedroom window, Milton was able to sleep peacefully for the first time in a week. He had tested the volume of the bell more than enough times to be certain that it would awaken him from even the soundest sleep at the faintest chance of an alien presence.

Much later that night Milton awoke with the uncanny sense that something was very, very wrong. Squinting in the darkness, he was able to barely discern the shadowy outlines of three figures standing around his bed. Faint moonlight gleamed off of a metallic object in the hand of one of the figures.

As a beam of light emitted from a weapon and extinguished the life of Milton Gerrolds, a bell rang loudly just outside of his bedroom window.





INSIDE JOKE
40 ELAYNE WECHSLER
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