

Inside Joke

issue # 77

\$1.50



*"A Newsletter
of Comedy and Creativity"*

MARY ANN HENN

M863

Upcoming Events

- JUNE 30 - DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO IJ #77
 JULY 1 - Canada Day
 JULY 2 - Hermann Hesse (b. 1897)
 JULY 3 - AUGUST 15 - Dog Days of Summer
 JULY 3 - Tom Stoppard (53); Kafka (b. 1883)
 JULY 4 - Aphelion; Rube Goldberg (b. 1883)
 JULY 5 - P.T. Barnum (b. 1829)
 JULY 6 - Beatrix Potter (b. 1866)
 JULY 7 - Shelley Duvall (41); William Kinster (71)
 JULY 8 - WILLIAM "MasterMath" RALEY (32)
 JULY 10 - Arlo Guthrie (43); Rainbow Sinking ('85)
 JULY 12-22 - Just-for-Laugh's Festival in Canada;
 Milton Berle (82); Buckminster Fuller (b. 1895)
 JULY 13 - Harrison Ford (48); Roger McGuinn (48)
 JULY 14 - VINNIE & DORIAN—I Year!; Bastille Day;
 Woody Guthrie (b. 1912); Jerry Rubin (52)
 JULY 16 - Barbara Stanwyck (b. 1907), Ginger Rogers (68)
 JULY 17 - MAX NUCLEAR (32); Nelson Mandela (72)
 JULY 18 - Hunter Thompson (51); Red Skelton (77)
 JULY 19 - Philip Agee (55); George McGovern (68)
 JULY 20 - Diana Rigg (52); Vaughn Bode (b. 1941)
 JULY 21 - Solar Eclipse; Robin Williams (39); First
 Robot Homicide ('84); Marshall McLuhan (b. 1911)
 JULY 22 - Albert Brooks (43); Spooner's Day
 JULY 24 - Muslim New Year (1411); Ruth Buzzi (54);
 Simon Bolivar (b. 1783); Amelia Earhart (b. 1898)
 JULY 26 - Gracie Allen (b. 1905); Aldous Huxley (b. 1894)
 JULY 27 - Gilroy Garlic Festival; Norman Lear (68)
 JULY 28 - PHREDD (5); PHIL PROCTOR (50)

(continued on page 4)

INSIDE JOKE is put on hexaweekly by Elayne Wechsler-Chaput 'n' bunches of friends and cohorts and emanates from beautiful Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, where we're gearing up to go to the park and celebrate Welcome Back To Brooklyn Day, where they're crowning Lou Gossett King for a Year!
 CONCIERGE.....ELAYNE WECHSLER-CHAPUT
 PRODUCTION ASSISTANT.....STEVE CHAPUT

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 SUSAN PACKIE=====WILLIAM RALEY=====KATHY STADALSKY
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Front Cover by VERNON GRANT

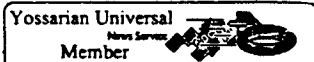
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Thanks Owen!

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ACKNOWLEDITORIAL

So many good folk have left us between last issue and this one that I had been morbidly joking about our usual IJ dedication taking up too much room on this page. Jim Henson and David Rappaport are gone; so are Jack Gilford, Susan Oliver, Sergio Franchi, Vic Tayback, Dexter Gordon, Ralph Abernathy, Rex Harrison, Sammy Davis Jr., Jill Ireland—the list of famous faces, some rather young, has sadly been totalling up these last two months. But one death hit hardest of all: On April 10, longtime IJ contributor and a man who shared my birthday, Michael Polo, committed suicide. Michael was one of the five people who had been so generous and enthusiastic about IJ that I had put him on my "IJ-For-Life" list. He had seemed so happy in his new life in Texas, working in community theater, that I never thought that phrase would come to mean his life rather than that of IJ, so close to our hiatus. Michael was very special to many of us, and his IJ contributions are being gathered by his sister-in-law and put into an album for Michael's mother. I am sending Ermalinda Polo this issue as well, so that she and her family may know how very much we loved and will miss Michael's wit and imagination, and that we would like to dedicate this and our "final" four issues as well to his memory.

Lots of thank-yous to share this time around, especially as I neglected to appreciate many folks in print last issue. Much gratitude to Mario Acevedo, J.C. Brainbeau, Elliot Cantsin, Roger Coleman, Dick Freeman, Vernon Grant, Mark Henkes and Jim Middleton for their generous donations, and to B.Z. Bullen and Ken Wagner again for their ads (remember, business card size ads will be printed for \$5 each, including the cost of the IJ in which they appear!). I also printed Anni's business card within, and do urge readers of fine children's literature (as opposed to the stuff they usually push in mall stores) to patronize her emporium in person or by phone. Many thanks as well to the people buying up INSIDE JOKE back issues, now that I've restocked them for your reading pleasure—they're still on sale for \$1.50 each!

Welcome to our newest contributors--Clinton Gustavson, Dave Kocher, Jack Little, Ralph Sharanga and Brian Skinner--and sorry we're closing shop so soon after you've joined us (specifically, with IJ #80 in December, one issue after our official 10th anniversary). Aside from Tom Deja (still writing his book) and Steven Scharff, all staffers are present and accounted for (even Kathy, who remains under the impression that she's always late when she's not), as Pru and Dorian get set to wind up their respective chapters (although the Pru & Bunny story goes on), Anni weighs in with one of her best in a long time; and, in the non-staffer section, Tammy Dwyer wraps up the Poet's Diet Book and Sergio Taubmann starts another multi-parter. Please, folks, try to limit your serials, as we only have four issues remaining!

The deadlines for the "last" IJs are as follows: June 30 for IJ #77, August 15 for IJ #78, September 30 for our 10th Anniversary Issue, #79, and November 15 for our final issue before our indefinite hiatus. IJs usually print about a month after announced deadlines, so if you're doing topical material such as holiday tie-ins, please bear that in mind (i.e., no Thanksgiving material for #80, but Christmas material would be good). If there's an X by your mailing label, it's time to renew. Issues of IJ are \$1.50 each, limit three per person since I only make 150 total, and you can subscribe clear on through to the "end" for a mere \$6 (make checks payable to "Elayne Wechsler-Chaput"). You can also buy IJ at SohoZat, but please don't write me there. Send away for the Writers'/Artists' Guidelines if you have questions about contributions--all contributors and letter writers may, if they wish, get a discount on their IJ by sending me a 65¢ stamp instead of the \$1.50 cash/check/money order for the issue in which their work will appear. Donations are always welcome; subscription requests, writing, art, letters and everything else should be sent to

P.O. Box 1609, Mad. Sq. Station, New York, NY 10159-1609
 Remember, that's Madison Square Station, not Garden, and they've been bugging me about that 9-digit zip lately, so please try to remember the extra four digits, same as the box number...

P.S. For those of you who've asked what I'll be doing after IJ folds, I'll be mostly resting then probably having a couple kids, which is how I'll be spending any extra time and money!



DIARY of The ROCK FIEND

by
Anni Ackner



Lightly Depressed, Heavy on the Starch

I'll have you know—and really, I can't stress this strongly enough—that the basis for this column was absolutely no idea of mine.

It came—if such a prime example of exquisite poor judgment can be said to perform any action this mundane—directly from a very young friend of mine, a young man who, it might fairly be said, is to the gentle art of patience roughly what Dart Man is to the gentle art of dealing with women; a young man who once—and I was there, so I can attest to the veracity of this—upon being told that, if he wished brown rice with his vegetable stir fry it might require an extra ten minutes' cooking time, wasted no time at all in striding into the kitchen and stamping boldly on the instep of the chef, so you see. Bear this in mind, then, when I tell you that the young man in question delivered himself of the basis for this column one evening when he very much wanted—for obscure reasons—my company at a showing of Robocop II set to begin in 45 minutes, and I informed him, in no uncertain terms, that I could not possibly gratify this peculiar desire of his because I had a column—this one, in fact—to write.

"Oh, nuts to that," he said, in not precisely those exact words. "What makes you think that anybody even reads your damned column anyway? I'll bet you could publish your laundry list at this point and no one would even notice."

Well, naturally I was furious. I mean, wouldn't you be? It wasn't so much the direct insult to my writing style—after nearly a decade of bumbling through the nether reaches of the underground press, one learns to deal fairly well with anything not actually written in crayon and tied to a peanut butter jar filled with gasoline—but the direct insult to you, my cherished readers, I found crude, uncalled for and, I like to assume, entirely untrue. My readers, I know in my heart of hearts, are intelligent, aware, discerning people who are, I have no doubt at all, perfectly capable of telling the difference between a column of humour and a laundry list at the most casual of glances. The more I thought about this obnoxious comment, in fact, the madder I got—so mad, finally, that I determined to make this impolite and foolish young person learn a good lesson in humility and thinking before he spoke. To this end, I first not only went with him to see Robocop II, but made him buy the tickets, the popcorn, a large Diet Coke, coffee and cake afterwards, and forced him to listen to me discourse on the twenty ways in which sequels are always worse than the originals (a little lecture that, in its unexpurgated version, can run, with footnotes, up to 45 minutes). Anyone else might have left well enough alone after that—my young friend had developed a decidedly repentant glaze over his eyes—but I was bound to make the point stick, and stick permanently, and so, in order to prove my contention once and for all, to everyone's satisfaction, I present the following. I'm sure you won't have any difficulty at all telling what it is from what it isn't—I know you won't disappoint me.

ANNI ACKNER'S LAUNDRY LIST

or, *The Laundry List of Anni Ackner*

1. One set of beige sheets, two pillowcases. Peculiar stain in more or less the shape of a profile of George Bernard Shaw on

upper pillowcase. (This is either the result of That Horrible Cat's disgracing himself on the bed one evening when I mistakenly purchased Purina Premium Turkey and Giblets instead of Whiskas Kitty Stew or else—and I shudder to even think this—it stems from the weekend that The Sister To Whom I Do Not Speak and That Man She Married dropped in unexpectedly and set up camp in my bedroom; I'm afraid to look at it closely enough to find out.)

2. One black contour sheet, shocking pink cabbage roses in foreground. Two holes cut in centre. Black leather carelessly basted along hem. (Bought on sale at Sears for \$2.89. Borrowed by friend Tapper for use at costume party—he went as the ghost of Divine.)

3. Six dark blue hand towels. Light dusting of short black and beige hairs. (Get your mind out of the gutter—That Horrible Cat got into the laundry basket.)

4. One dozen face cloths, assorted colours. One knotted seven times. (I have no idea how that happened or what on earth it could possibly mean. Honest, I don't. It's a complete mystery to me. I mean, maybe The Sister and That Man did it, or something. Yeah, that's probably what happened. Suer, that's it. Of course.)

5. One faded red plaid flannel nightgown. Cigarette burn in middle. (With all the warnings the Surgeon General's office has issued about smoking over the years, you'd think they might have mentioned that it's not a smart idea to smoke at 3:00 in the morning while attempting to make it through a showing of License to Drive, now, wouldn't you?)

6. Unmentionables.

7. Unmentionables.

8. Unmentionables.

9. Men's unmentionables. Jockey. Black. (Again, I haven't the faintest idea how I came by these. That is to say, while I number among my male acquaintances at least one or two in, shall we say, a position to leave their unmentionables in my apartment and, of those one or two, one who I'm fairly certain is capable of rolling up his unmentionables and leaving them behind the toilet—which happens to be where I found these—I do like to think that no male of my acquaintance is the sort to wear black Jockey shorts. If you have some notion of to whom these belong, I wish you'd let me know—they give me a scare every time I look in the laundry basket.)

10. White t-shirt, picture of cable car, lavender lettering reading "My best friend when to San Francisco and all I got was this lousy t-shirt." (My best friend went to San Francisco and all I got was this lousy t-shirt.)

11. Black commemorative Woodstock t-shirt. Various stains caused by cleanser, Windex, Formula 409 and Top Job. (A Christmas present from a neighbour of mine with a dubious sense of humour, who finds it both amusing and unbelievable that I am old enough to remember Woodstock. I wear this when I do housework. Sometimes I get up in the middle of the night and pour cleaning products on it even when the house is spotless.)

12. White t-shirt. Sylvia speaking to man. Man: Can you imagine a world without men? Sylvia: Yes, no crime and lots of happy fat women. Huge smear of mustard defacing cartoon. (This is my favourite article of clothing. It was somewhat less appreciated by a fellow eating a soft pretzel as I walked into the snack shop.)

13. Tie-dyed t-shirt. Size 6X. (Suitable for wearing after visit to Chef Alan's West Reading Breakfast Buffet and House of Cholesterol.)

14. Oversized bath sheet. Logo from the play Cats. Peculiar stain roughly in middle. (I know how that got there. I know

(continued next page)

ROCK FIEND cont'd.

why that got there. I am under no obligation to say anything else about the matter.)

15. Dark blue bath mat. Teeth marks. (That Horrible Cat periodically takes it into what passes as his mind that this harmless piece of bathroom decor is not only alive, but vicious and aggressive, and it is his job to subdue it before it murders us in our beds. I would find this delusion a whole lot cuter if, on my worst nights, I didn't occasionally share it.)

16. Unmentionables.

17. Unmentionables.

18. White lace unmentionable, size 34AA. (Unless this has been hanging around since I was eleven years old, there's no possible way that it belongs to me. What worries me is that it might conceivably belong to the guy with the black Jockey shorts.)

19. Black and white striped rugby shirt. Interesting tan blotches. (Smartest thing in the world, until you realize, with a sickening sense of the order in the Universe, that the nice counter girl at Codi's Coffees hasn't quite got the hang of putting the plastic lid on the take-out cup.)

20. Hot pink terry cloth pullover. (Worn when I have a real need to have complete strangers ask if I'm coming down with something.)

21. Black cotton pullover. Just generally dirty. (The default option as far as my clothing goes. Someone once remarked that I somehow reminded her of Richard Lewis, a comment I am still trying to figure out.)

22. Gray and red plaid polyester skirt, elastic waistband. Runs, pulls, teeth marks, hair. (Gift from my delightful Aunt Sarah and her dear friend, Jack Daniels. Excellent garment for wear while transporting feverish cat to veterinarian.)

23. Nine black socks. (Tenth black sock eaten by rogue Speed Queen dryer several months ago. I hang onto its grieving mate out of sympathy, and also on the grounds that, eventually, said dryer will come down with indigestion and belch up a suitable second husband.)

24. White lace handkerchief. Sodden. Chocolate stains. (I'm a Kleenex user, myself, but was presented with this article several years ago by a slightly unimaginative gentleman caller who also lurked about the Guinness Book of World Records under the heading "Last Man in the World to Seriously Wear Sleeve Garters." Article was called into play recently when my friend Barb dropped by to discuss her divorce. Variety of stains mark transition from "Fred, the Angel Straight From Heaven" to "Fred, That Unmitigated Creep, I'm Glad I'm Rid of Him.")

25. Black sweatshirt. Extra-long, size 4X. (Preferred garment for those charming afternoons out in the garden, lunching on worms.)

There, you see how easy that was? I just know you all passed my little test with flying colours, and my young friend is going to be so absolutely mortified that I don't think there'll be any problem at all in getting him to take me to see Quick Change, even though there are religious differences (I think Bill Murray is God; he does not).

And after that, perhaps I'll publish my dry-cleaning list, and we'll really get him.

HAIKU AND ALMOST-HAIKU

by Wayne Hogan

To some of us, "poetry" comes darned close to not making any sense at all, with that by Shakespeare, the near-consensus master-poet, mayhaps making, to some of us, the very least of any. What else may'st, I ask, we make of the following? "O then vouchsafe me but this loving thought—/Had my friend's muse grown with this growing age/A dearer birth than this his love had brought/To march in ranks of better equipage'."

UPCOMING EVENTS cont'd from page 2

- SEPTEMBER 21 - KATHY STADALSKY (31); Chuck Jones (78); Bill Murray (40); Leonard Cohen (56); HG Wells (b.1806)
 SEPTEMBER 22 - Hobbit Day; John Houseman (b. 1902)
 SEPTEMBER 24 - "Rocky & Bullwinkle" premiere (61); Jim Henson (b. 1936)
 SEPTEMBER 25 - Christopher Reeve (46)
 SEPTEMBER 26 - T.S. Eliot (b. 1888); G. Gershwin (b.1898)
 SEPTEMBER 27 - LARRY OBERC (34); Thomas Nast (b. 1840)
 SEPTEMBER 28 - Confucius (b.551BC); Al Capp (b. 1909)
 SEPTEMBER 29 - Jerry Lee Lewis (55); Gene Autry (83); Madeline Kahn (48)
 SEPTEMBER 30 - DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO IJ #79 (Our Tenth Anniversary Issue); Truman Capote (b. 1924)

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.

Even a leisurely read of most anything by down-home-Americana Robert Frost leaves some of us gasping for a breath of intelligible air, as per this sampling: "Something there is that doesn't love a wall/That sends frozen-ground-swell under it/And spills the upper boulders in the sun/And makes gaps even two can pass abreast." Hmmm.

And lest you think today's poetry is any easier to read and understand than that penned by our forebears, well, you can't have read much of what's called the avant-garde stuff that's in the seemingly thousands of what's called "small-press" literary publications. Take this one, for example: "A-Billy, a-Billy-/bob, a-chasin' in the/glen. A-shufflin', a-/lopin', a racin' through/the dew again. O Billybob/Billy, a-je vous silly/ninny, you. Heah?" I ask you now, what are we to make of this? I know I don't know, and I wrote it.

No, to some of us, poetry has always been, and remains so, still, a real hard read. Sound and fury, signifying what, some of us know not.

But beyond Shakespeare, beyond Frost, beyond today's avant-garde, there's "haiku." H-a-i-k-u. It may sound, to the ears of some, a bit like another of the many martial arts. A little like "tai chi," maybe. But no, "haiku" is very much a poetry genre, though its form does bear striking similarities to the classically abbreviated, similarly Oriental-in-origin, thrusting, jabbing, chopping essence of karate, say. Crisp. Compact. A veritable font of highly circumscribed yet somehow fully purposed energy.

What essentially sets haiku apart from other poetry forms are two characteristics: (1) it contains three, and only three, lines with classically-set numbers of syllables in each, and (2) within its three lines it manages to express two abruptly disjuncted, yet somehow ontologically related, thoughts which represent the very essence of some part of life at its deepest, most all-embracing level.

As, of course, with most "absolutes," the "absolutes" of haiku vary somewhat from culture to culture, time to time, writer to writer. With the number of its lines remaining invariable, the numbers of syllables within lines can and usually do vary fairly substantially from the traditional definition of what's haiku and what's not. For example: "Just now the sound/of a fisherman's song—/the quiet shore." (Anon.)

But there's (somewhat loosely yet recognizably traditional) haiku, and there's "almost-haiku." The latter conforms okay to the conventional three-line structure, varies from the ideal in re the number of syllables within each line, then simply goes off and becomes quite another creature altogether. To wit: "Freeze! up against/the wall you mother! empty stirrups/on a dead horse." And though haiku's often not titled (another facet of its minimalist nature), this particular one, being an almost-haiku, is: "A Great Big Haiku Howdy Part 12," I named it.

If forced to choose between haiku and almost-haiku to avoid serious bodily injury, I'll pick almost-haiku every time.

A Dip in the Plasma Pool

by Dorian Tenore-Bartilucci

Eccentrics On Parade:

One Critic/Fan's Semi-Objective Guide to
the Best Celluloid Performances of Jeff Goldblum

PART 6: The Conclusion!!

THE TALL GUY ON THE SMALL SCREEN:
Jeff Goldblum's TV Appearances (Part 2)

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow (1980 TV-movie): This production marked the first time a Classics Illustrated production was nominated for an Emmy (for Outstanding Children's Program). It's pleasant enough, even a cut above most of the pabulum that C.I.'s television division usually churns out (remember, these are the people who turned Poe's THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER into a dorky second-rate melodrama starring Robert Hays, Charlene Tilton and a pre-Oscar-nominated Martin Landau when he was still in his "Wooden Boy" phase). Jeff Goldblum is absolutely perfect, in manner as well as looks, as timid, lovestruck schoolmaster Ichabod Crane, and Dick Butkus makes a boisterous Brom Bones. Cat-eyed Meg Foster is properly enchanting as Katrina Von Tassel, the damsel they both love. However, this squeaky-clean version (complete with happy ending) is still pretty much tailored to the kiddy-winkies -- grownups may start squirming pretty early on. It was first telecast on NBC as a Halloween special, with cornball framing sequences featuring Steve Allen and then-hot smartmouthed child star Gary Coleman watching the special in a nice Middle-American living room and commenting on how scary it was (maybe they were watching the old Disney version?).

Rehearsal For Murder (1982 TV-movie):

Directed by David Greene, written and produced by veteran TV mysterymeisters Richard Levinson and William Link, this is a tense, witty and cleverly structured backstage whodunit. Goldblum is one of several cast members of a Broadway show featuring movie star Lynn Redgrave in her stage debut. On opening night, Redgrave plummets from the bedroom window of her Manhattan townhouse. Did she commit suicide over the play's negative notices? Or was it...foul play?

Since the ever-urbane Robert Preston, who wrote that ill-fated play, was engaged to Redgrave, he's determined to get to the truth. Several months after Redgrave's death, he assembles all those involved with the production -- Goldblum, Madolyn Smith (before she started billing herself as Madolyn Smith-Osborne and appearing in such recent TV fare as *The Kennedys* and *The Rose and The Jackal*), William Daniels (*St. Elsewhere*), Patrick Macnee (as dashing as in his *Avengers* days), Lawrence Pressman -- in the theater where the play had been produced. With Preston is police detective William Russ (*DISORGANIZED CRIME*). Then the cat-and-mouse game is afoot... Excellent acting -- especially from Goldblum when he thinks he's being fingered as the killer -- and quite a few surprises. Goldblum would be reunited onscreen with Smith in...

Ernie Kovacs: Between The Laughter (1984

TV-movie): Once you get over the shock of seeing tall, slim, neatly-groomed, energetic Jeff Goldblum playing short, stocky, vaguely disheveled, laid-back Ernie Kovacs, the actor's portrayal of the late comedian/television pioneer is pretty darn good. Seriously, Goldblum's look may not be totally on the button, but his wry manner is. Directed by Lamont Johnson and written by April Smith, this biopic recreates several of Kovacs' sketches, doing an especially good job on Percy Dovetonsils, Poet Laureate. However, the film's emphasis is on Kovacs' attempts to track down his two daughters, kidnapped by his slatternly first wife (Madolyn Smith, who shows us the woman's unhappiness as well as her more hateful side) after he was granted custody in their divorce. (Keep in mind that in those days, the 1950s, it was quite unusual for the father to get child custody.)

Goldblum is funny and touching, especially in his scenes with the girls (one of whom is played later in the flick by Soleil Moon Frye, not yet possessed of her cutesy *Punky Brewster* qualities). Melody Anderson makes an appealing Edie Adams, the second and final Mrs. Kovacs (the real Edie appears briefly as Mae West!). Cloris Leachman is nearly unrecognizable as Kovacs' nutty Old World mother, who is as hilarious as she is gratingly addled. This woman has no inhibitions about tearing off an overly-warm dress in her resigned son's presence, and her antics include bringing over a Charlotte Russe cake -- for dinner. (Goldblum hands her money to "get dessert...how about a sirloin steak?") Keep your eyes peeled for Murphy Dunne (*THE BLUES BROTHERS*) and David Garrison (*Married...With Children*) as cast members of Kovacs' show.

The Race For The Double Helix (1987 TV-

movie): This British production, first shown on the Arts & Entertainment Network, is what you'd call "hard science fiction" -- hard to follow and hard to enjoy, that is. Based on the true story of the scientists who took the credit for discovering DNA, this British production is one of those "vitamin" movies that you don't watch because it's particularly entertaining, but because it's "good for you." The script is terribly earnest, and the acting by Jeff Goldblum as the brilliant but socially awkward Dr. James Watson and Tim Pigott-Smith (*The Jewel In The Crown*) as his partner is beyond reproach. However, there's no real fire or spark here that makes us care about the scientists' fierce competition to be the first ones to prove their genetics theory. It's the sort of film that only a rather stuffy science teacher could love.

The Three Little Pigs (1985): As in his cinematic hit *THE FLY* and the forthcoming *THE TALL GUY*, Goldblum gets to wear F/X makeup as the Big Bad Wolf in this segment of Shelley Duvall's acclaimed cable series *Faerie Tale Theatre*. Though Billy Crystal, Valerie Perrine and Donovan Scott play the pigs, it's Goldblum who hams it up -- he's obviously having a great time huffing and puffing and blowing the scenery down.

(continued next page)

IT'S SUMMER MOVIE TIME

with Todd Kristel

1. The Cartoon World of Bob Clampett

This is a travelling retrospective of new 35mm prints (which look REAL good) of cartoons directed by Bob Clampett, who directed 82 cartoons for Warner Brothers (1937-1948) and later supervised Beany and Cecil. The retrospective consists of two different programs of approximately 75 minutes each. Program One opens with two classic black & white cartoons from 1938, "Porky and Daffy" (featuring a crazier and more sympathetic Daffy Duck than would appear in later cartoons) and "Porky in Wackyland" (a "reflexive" cartoon like "Duck Amuck," only much more surreal). The remaining eight cartoons, all color, consist of seven good Warner Bros. cartoons (including a Daffy Duck spoof of Dick Tracy called "The Great Piggy Bank Robbery") and one lame Beany and Cecil cartoon ("Beanyland"). Program Two is similar: two black & white and eight color cartoons, including the Bugs Bunny cartoons "What's Cookin', Doc?" and "Wabbit Trouble."

2. Dick Tracy

Well, this doesn't set any new standards for screenwriting, but it's better written than Batman (of course, so are most cereal boxes). And much as I hate to belabor the similarities between the two films, let's compare, shall we? Both films were declared hits before they were even released (doesn't the audience have a say in this?). Both films emphasize visual elements over character development. In both films an actor playing a major villain upstages the actor playing the main hero (I'm referring to Jack Nicholson and Al Pacino, in case there was any doubt). And in both films the hero is a dark-haired white male, the villains tend to be physically deformed, and the most prominently-billed female actress is a blonde sex symbol. But Dick Tracy has more charm than Batman, perhaps because its visual elements seem more original (compare Batman to Outland and Brazil), perhaps because it's refreshing to see such a corny film in these cynical times, perhaps because nobody is claiming that Dick Tracy has psychological depth (despite claims to the contrary, the characters in Batman are about as simplistic as the characters in Dick Tracy), or perhaps because the cartoon "Roller Coaster Rabbit" is included with the price of admission to Dick Tracy.

3. Speaking Parts

This is the best new art film I've seen so far this year (i.e., the first half of 1990). It's directed by Atom Egoyan, a Canadian filmmaker who emigrated from Egypt with his Armenian parents when he was a child. His previous feature film was Family Viewing, which might have been a partial inspiration for sex, lies and videotape (at least that's my suspicion), although Family Viewing is less readily accessible (i.e., it's more arty and there's less titillation). Speaking Parts is more accessible than Family Viewing (although you might not believe this during the confusing first few minutes), but it's still not quite ready for the shopping mall theatres. There are some really...interesting scenes, such as when a couple has "sex" by speaking to each other through a video phone. But it's a fascinating, provocative (if somewhat pretentious) film about people for whom images hold more meaning than "real" life. Also: Cinematographer Paul Sarossy does an excellent job, and while some people might be unhappy with the absence of a typical film ending, I prefer this ending to the contrived "thirty-something" conclusion to sex, lies and videotape.

4. Total Recall

This film is directed by Paul Verhoeven (Robocop) and it shares some similarities with the first Robo film: it features a physically strong male hero with an acute identity crisis, it criticizes corporate greed that flourishes in the face of urban decay, and it features plenty of violence. Indeed, the film itself seems to suffer from an identity crisis: Is it an intelligent science fiction film about people alienated from their own "real" lives or is it a commando movie about some muscular guy who kills lots of people? Unfortunately, the action sequences aren't as exciting as those in The Terminator, for example, but it's still an interesting film. And yes, the special effects are grand.

AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

by Susan Packie

The perfect society is finally within reach. The truly good person is poised on the sidelines. The catalyst for this miraculous transformation is, quite simply, the execution of all juveniles for their peccadilloes.

A slap on the wrist or the fanny is no longer sufficient. It is about time we realized that these half-hearted reprimands only encourage the young offenders to sharpen their techniques. We keep telling the brats that practice makes perfect, but that kind of perfection we don't need.

Rather than locking up the youngsters and throwing away the key, an expensive proposition, we should be eradicating the trouble spots. We must blot them out. No bad person would ever feel comfortable in the perfect society we so desire.

We are certainly very far from that utopia now. Heinous crimes are committed daily, and those under the legal voting and drinking age are most often involved.

Check it out. Cars are stolen for joy rides. Penny candy is slipped into seemingly bottomless pockets. Subway turnstiles are crept under. Radios are played loudly enough to be heard in their point of origin - usually Japan or Hong Kong.

To all this, we cheerfully shout: "Off with their heads! Give 'em the juice! Mark their identity cards 'Termination.' Just get them out of this nation, the Land of Liberty, Equality, and Justice for All."

Unless you're a juvenile. After all, somebody has to pay the price for peace. What better way to achieve it than through capital punishment? When all the evil is wiped out, we good people will have the world to ourselves.

That is, we would if it weren't for those rotten, low-down left-handed snakes in the grass. Let me tell you what we plan for them...

PLASMA POOL continued

Sesame Street (1990): Jeff's a riot as

"Minneapolis McGrath," Bob's fedora-clad archeologist/adventurer brother. Not only do we and the kids get a lesson in how different siblings can be, but we get a nifty INDIANA JONES spoof as the brothers take Big Bird and Mr. Snuffaluffagus on a wild and woolly search for The Golden Cabbage of Snuffertiti.

Space doesn't permit me to go into our hero's guest shots on Laverne and Shirley, It's Garry Shandling's Show and Starsky and Hutch. However, those of you with cable should watch for Jeff's new HBO movie, Framed, a comedy/mystery in which he plays an art forger. It premiered on June 24th, just 16 days shy of my birthday. In the meantime, you can get your Goldblum fix at a theater near you with THE TALL GUY. Remember, no matter where you go...there he is!

Ru Story ~~MS~~ Prudence Barker

THE CRAMPING TRIP *Part Five*

"Uncle Pat," Ian said, poking his curly red head between the driver and passenger seat, "I'm hungry. Can't we eat here?"

"Ian, look behind you. See that bag tucked under your seat?"

"Which one?"

"The brown paper--"

"The one that has 'Giant' on it?"

"Yeah, good. Now look inside and tell me what we see."

"We see food."

"No, not quite. We see dinner. Once we set up camp, I'll build a fire and we'll cook out underneath the stars just like cowboys."

Prudence interrupted. "Can't we just call in a pizza like the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles?" Prudence hated eating outside, had always considered it barbaric. Here mankind had evolved thousands of years, had moved inside caves, built houses, built houses with dining rooms and then went one even better and built houses with eat-in kitchens equipped with conventional ovens and microwaves--why revert back to primitive status by taking food outside, sitting on the ground surrounded by millions of swarming and biting insects of which only a small fraction are actually interested in eating your dinner, and trying to enjoy your food while swatting away those few bugs that do want your food who eventually get even by committing suicide in your drink? When Prudence agreed to go camping she never dreamed that it would mean she would have to eat outside. Why couldn't they eat at McDonald's and just sleep outside?

"I know!" Patrick said. "Why don't we pretend we are the Turtles going camping? I'll be Van Gogh!"

"Uncle Pat, you're so silly! There's no such anyone as Van Gogh!" Ian giggled.

I'd rather scarf pizza in the sewers, Prudence thought to herself. Aloud she said, "How much longer till we get there?"

"About eighty-five more miles."

"EIGHTY-FIVE!" Ian shouted.

"Yes, but how much longer?" Prudence pressed.

"Well, let's see..."

Prudence knew by experience that this was one of those times that her father, being a college administrator, would try to turn into an educational moment. She didn't want to be educated. She just wanted to know how much longer until dinner.

"Okay, we have eighty-five miles and we're travelling at fifty-five miles per hour. Now what do we do? We divide, don't we? Didn't they teach you that in kindergarten? What's eighty divided by fifty-five?"

"Thirty-six hours! Now how much longer are you gonna keep us cooped up in this thing?"

"One-point-five-four!" Ian interrupted. "One-point-five-four! Ha-ha! I knew it!"

"Suck-up," Prudence hissed.

"Prudence!" Patrick snapped. "You could do well to follow his example. Very good, Ian. Now what does that mean in terms of time?"

"One-point-five-four hours."

"You mean a little over an hour and a half, slope-head!" Prudence flicked her cousin on the ear. "And you're wrong."

"Prudence, I'm not going to warn you again. And no name-calling."

"But he's wrong."

"He's correct, and even if he were wrong, that's no reason to resort to name-calling."

"Nuh-uh! It's raining and it always takes longer when it rains! He's wrong."

"All right, all right! Give or take fifteen minutes. We'll be there in under two hours."

"It's gonna take more than an extra fifteen minutes."

"No, it won't. The weather report says that the rain will clear up. We should be past the storm once we cross that mountain over there," Patrick said, pointing at the horizon.

"TWO HOURS!" Ian whined. "I'm hungry now!"

"Hungry!" Prudence chimed in. "Hungry! Hungry! Hungry!"

"You two can yell all you want. We're not eating 'til we get there. So you might as well be quiet. Finish off the Mal-lomars, why don't you?"

"How much longer, Uncle Pat?"

"TWO HOURS!"

But you said that ten minutes ago!"

"Hungry!" continued Prudence.

"SHUT UP! SHUT UP! SHUT UP, BOTH OF YOU!"

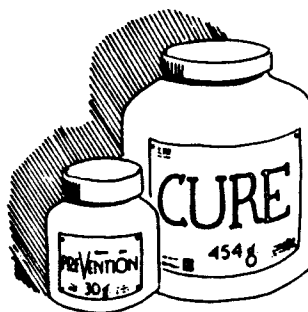
"I want Pink Bunny," Prudence said meekly.

With a jerk, Patrick swerved the camper onto the shoulder. "We're gonna stay here until you two settle down. Remember, the longer we stay here the longer we get to the campground, the longer till we set up camp, the longer till we eat dinner."

"Can't we camp here?"

"NO!"

(continued next issue)



PHARMACY CLICHÉS: METRIC VERSION

SURE *by Larry Oberc*

They're both a little crazy but that's to be expected. The baby screams, tries to lift its head to look around. It doesn't know what is going on. Who are all these people? Are the women reaching for each other? They got hate in their eyes, some kind of dreadful competition. The guards do their best to keep this whole thing calm, but there are reaching arms, fists, fingers wanting the taste of blood, of owning all the goods.

Both women start to talk first, trying to sell their point of view. It's got something to do with who's going to keep the baby, who's going to feed, clothe, hold it late at night. The baby starts to cry. Both women reach for it, operating on instinctual response.

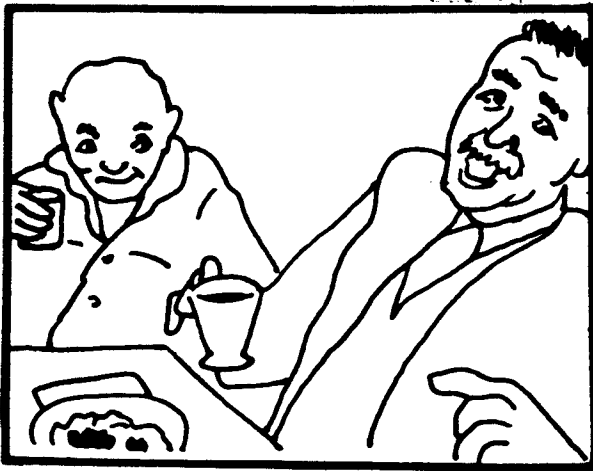
I can't tell you which one of the two is real. I make a fast move, grab my sword, whip it out on the crowd like an exhibitionist, like I got to show the things I got at hand, and they jump back. My guards are used to my bullshit tricks and grin. The women think I'm out to do them in.

I tell them I got an idea. I'll cut the baby in half. That way they'll both get a piece of their own. They look at each other, hatred in their eyes, and agree.

I lift the sword above their heads, figuring this better work. They grin at each other like they are getting even. The sword begins to fall...

OVERHEARD

at America's Lunch Counters



"Pork, according to anyone who knows anything about cooking, you're supposed to have on Tuesdays. It tastes best on Tuesday."

THE CONTINUING SAGA OF DR. IGUANA THE STORY SO FAR. by Ken Burke

Campbell's Chicken Noodle Soup 3/1.00, Pork & Beans 3/.89, Hi-Dri Paper Towels .59, Hartz Dog Treats 1.19...I've never met anyone who actually reads the opening paragraph that supposedly explains the entire premise of the article that is to follow...Sweet Corn 8/1.00, Donald Duck OJ .79, Whole Wheat Bread 3/.99...Most folks, when they see a title and a list of sub-headings like those below, jump right into the meat of the article and ignore the opening paragraph altogether. Chances are they'd rather read your shopping list...Whole Fryer Chickens .69 per lb., Bananas 3 lbs./ .99...HELL, I don't read 'em myself unless during the course of the article I suddenly find myself incapable of understanding what the author's saying...Hormel Chili .69, Hamburger 1.19 per lb., Strawberries .69 per pt...If any of you DO actually read these opening paragraphs, I'd like to hear from you...Helping Hand Bath Tissue 4-pak .79, Jimi's Burritos 5/1.00...Maybe we could become friends...Popcorn 3 lb. bag .39, Shedd's Soft Spread Margarine .99...We could even write letters to one another with little explanatory paragraphs above the salutation if you like...Colby Cheese 1.79 per lb., Corn Flakes 1.29...Until then, here's another edition of...

Notebook Jamboree!

A (Not-so) Shaggy Dog Story

When it gets cold in Arizona it also gets very dry. Around our house we go through an awful lot of skin moisturizer, and the random static electricity build-ups are so painfully potent that my wife and I have to remember to "ground" ourselves before we kiss or touch. Nullifying this environmental direct current has become a way of life for us. However, our dog Loki has never learned to adjust to this natural phenomenon, and lately she has come to believe that I am the source of this indiscriminate energy.

Last week Loki was scratching her back by laying flat on the carpet and joyously wriggling around. Her feet were kicking in the air and her tongue was lolling out the side of her mouth. As usual, I began to laugh at her antics. Loki likes the attention (she's MY dog), so she jumped up and ran over to me, obviously intending to lick my face. But as soon as she touched me, "GAZORT!" A huge charge of static electricity snapped her head away from me as if she had been cracked by a rawhide whip.

Astounded and confused, Loki rushed onto my lap (all 100 pounds of her) and began to contritely whimper and groan as if to say, "Oh-please-oh-please-oh-please, Ken, oh omnipotent master, don't use your mysterious powers to punish me, I don't know what I did wrong, but whatever it was, I won't do it again, oh please Ken, I'll be good, honest..."

It took several minutes of petting and sweet talk to reassure Loki that I wasn't angry and that all was right between us. Finally, she grew confident enough to get off my lap and leave the room. In the next room, Loki must've rubbed up against some metal shelving, for once again I heard, "GAZORT!", and immediately she ran back to beg my forgiveness.

It's going to be a winter filled with emotional agony for my faithful dog if she continues to believe that these occasional static shocks are the venting of my wrath and displeasure. Already Loki is acting wary and neurotic, which causes pity and

guilt to wring inside me. As I watch her twitch and spasm in her sleep, I can't help but wonder if Loki has canine nightmares of me, her Ken, throwing lightning bolts of undeserved punishment into her obedient loving soul.

Geriatric MAD Magazine Dept.

You Know You're Really Getting Old When...

- ...You think black & white movies are more "authentic" than color ones.
- ...The big choices in your life consist of the relative merits of hats versus toupees.
- ...You'd rather watch a debate on PBS than "Attack of the Cheerleaders in Wet T-Shirts" on HBO.
- ...You see a doorway curtain made of pull-tabs from beer cans and say, "I used to have one of those."
- ...You feel others have been culturally deprived because they never saw Al Kaline, Willie Mays, Mickey Mantle or Sandy Koufax play baseball.
- ...You still have the drive and curiosity to root through a department store's dumpster, but you no longer have the guts.
- ...You don't initiate conversations with anyone under the age of 25 because they won't understand any of your points of reference.
- ...You think it's more important to buy socks and underwear than the latest LP by the Rolling Stones (and you're certain that Mick would understand).
- ...You have a deep abiding belief that your childhood friends would not recognize you if they saw you on the street today.
- ...The high-school age girls that you once found lucious and sexy now look like babies auditioning for child pornographers.
- ...Your personal journal and appointment calendar have been superseded in importance by your TV Guide.
- ...You relish the opportunity to snarl, "Get out of my way, KID!"
- ...Those planned communities for the elderly you once called "minimum security prisons" now seem like "pretty safe places to live."

Life in Black Canyon City, Part IV

It was the same telephone pole where our dog Sheba caught sight of a vulture earlier that week. Incensed that a "mere bird" would dare to impose its shadow on her thrice-daily walk path, Sheba raised the pointy black fur on her arthritic back and barked furiously. At first the vulture tried to ignore the angry taunts of the black labrador on the ground, but as Sheba's barking increased in volume and hysteria, the vulture seemed almost embarrassed into action. Extending its massive wings, the vulture casually swooped off its perch on the pole. As it passed over us, the desert predator glared menacingly at my violent, nosy pet, then it flapped hard twice and flew off into the horizon. Once the vulture was out of sight, my stiff aged dog continued her nightly walk, huffing victoriously and strutting like a former champion who knew she still had what it takes to fight and win.

Now on that same pole, a lifeless form has been draped over a metal support strut. It's a cat. Not a stray, but a large fluffy domestic pet I have often seen sleeping on a neighbor's back porch. There are two bare spots on the feline's shoulders where it appears fur has either been chewed off or pulled out.

That day a friend and I examined the immediate area as if it were a crime scene. There were fresh tire tracks on the road, but no signs of a vehicle having stopped and no footprints leading to the pole. There are no signs of a ladder being set at the base of the pole and no scratches on the weathered, impressionable wood. Animal theft and mutilations (by satanists and sick jokesters alike) are common crimes in the Southwest, but we found no evidence of human involvement in the hanging feline's death.

In the middle of the dirt road we noticed fresh animal dung loaded with seeds from prickly pears and other wild fruit. Perhaps a coyote had come in from the hills, spotted the cat, and chased it up the pole, where the cat met its death by electrocution? Our enthusiasm for this theory quickly waned when we found no trace of a scuffle on the ground or pawprints leading up the pole. Also, there hadn't been an interruption in either Black Canyon City's delicate power supply or fragile phone service in weeks. It seemed that no satisfactory explanation for the cat's death would be forthcoming.

My dogs and I still take our regular walks down that road. Since the discovery of the dead cat on the telephone pole, I have seen vultures in flight, clutching rabbits and field mice in their talons, and a few times I've spotted them dining on the carcass of a rotting skunk. But they do not partake of the dead cat. Instead the vultures allow an endless parade of red ants to march up the telephone pole and strip the feline of its flesh and meat right from under their beaks. What had once been a plump and pretty kitty has quickly become a gruesome skeleton.

Just a cat? Another sildlife mishap in a town where domestic pets are still allowed to roam without a leash? To be certain. But nothing to worry about? I'm not so sure.

You only have to look at my dog Sheba's face to see what purpose this cat's death served. Each time we walk that path, there is a subtle, almost imperceptible shudder that runs through her as she passes that pole. There is the slight hunker of fear in her back for many yards afterwards, both coming and going. To Sheba, the cat on the pole is a macabre reminder of what can happen to a household pet that doesn't keep quiet and mind its own business. It's a fair warning that a smart animal takes to heart.

Lately Sheba has taken to barking at "safer" foes such as passing vehicles, slamming doors, and the wind.

(NEXT TIME ON NOTEBOOK JAMBOREE: The Dr. Iguana TV Guide & more!)

ANIMATION UPDATE



FILM REVIEW: For those devoted nostalgia buffs who were brought up on prime-time animation back in the '60s, you might be in for a slight letdown with the release of *Jetsons: The Movie*. This co-production of Universal Pictures and Hanna-Barbera Productions is simply an elongated version of a typical half-hour episode. In spite of the use of computer animation (some provided by Kroyer Films) and some abstract effects (from Kurtz & Co.) to enhance the traditional (sometimes limited) cel animation, this totally predictable story of the average family of the 21st Century plods along, punctuated by a score of completely forgettable songs (many of them sung by Tiffany, who took over Janet Waldo's vocal role of Judy Jetson). The only saving grace in this whole picture are some of the voice actors, who reprise their original TV parts. George O'Hanlon and Mel Blanc (regrettably in their final screen roles) are quintessential as George Jetson and his boss Mr. Spacely, respectively, although you can tell that time has caught up with them, as their voices are slightly strained. Also returning are Penny Singleton as George's wife Jane, Jean Vander Pyl as Rosie the wisecracking domestic robot, and Don Messick as Astro, the family dog (who can still say "I love you, Rorge!" as well as he did nearly 30 years ago). Absent from the original cast is the late Daws Butler, who portrayed young Elroy Jetson (Patric Zimmerman is filling the role for the film), Henry the Janitor, and Mr. Cogswell, Spacely's manufacturing rival (which obviously explains why the latter two characters aren't even in the movie). The plot (what there is of it) involves George's relocation to an asteroid mining community, where he becomes Vice President in charge of sprocket production at the local factory. Unbeknownst to George and his family (but knownst to us at the very beginning), the factory falls victim to a small band of saboteurs—which resulted in four former Vice Presidents giving up the ghost. The Jetsons not only have to get used to new living quarters, but new neighbors (of the alien kind). The story wraps up with an environmental message, as both family and friends try to save a race of creatures called The Grungies (with eyes transplanted from Kean paintings, and voices equally as unintelligible as Gizmo the Mowgwi from *Gremlins*), which I like to think of as "Smurfs of the Future." All in all, *Jetsons: The Movie* will probably entertain the youngest of cartoon lovers (and it will make a good babysitter when it eventually comes out on home video in a couple of months), but for the die-hard nostalgia buff, this Hanna-Barbera film is just barely tolerable. You're better off watching the original 24 episodes on TV (even the newer episodes are deemed more acceptable than this flicker). Oh well, at least you can get to sing the title song (which I'm sure the "over-30" crowd knows by heart)... "Rollercoaster Rabbit" (directed by Rob Minkoff; live-action directed by Frank Marshall) is the funniest Roger Rabbit short to date. Our hero once again sets about the troublesome task of looking after Baby Herman, this time at a carnival. Although the results are predictable, they are also laugh-out-loud hysterical. I won't give away any of the rabbit-paced—er, I mean rapid-paced gags (considering that this is a six-minute cartoon, that would be mean), but I can tell you that returning to the cast are Baby Herman's mother (who this time threatens to make "rabbit stew" out of the hapless hare), Roger's main squeeze Jessica, and MGM's Droopy (whose one and only line in this picture brings down the house). As usual, there's a live-action tag ending, but this time, computer animation is used to arrest our attention in the obligatory "rollercoaster scene." Now if this were only shot in 3D...

TV REVIEW: "Computer Warriors" is the latest in a series of animated half-hour commercials from Mattel (the people who brought you "He-Man" and "She-Ra," among others). This adventure show involves a troupe of good-guy bytes (the "Warriors," consisting of Romm, Skannar, Micron and Gridd) in pursuit of the evil "Viruses" (Megahurt, Indexx, Null and Minus) inside a computer terminal. Somehow, all the principal characters discover that they have the ability to escape the terminal into the outside world, where they can convert common household objects (such as digital clocks and a can of Pepsi-Cola, in more blatant commercialism) into weapons. These weapons have no effect on any living creatures outside the computer (which may or may not relieve the members of Action for Children's Television). The main objective of the commandos is to "neutralize the enemy" (an obvious euphemism for "destroy"), which is just a small part of the high-tech lingo used by the characters. Computer animation, combined with the usual cel animation, plays a key role in the visual presentation; and who better than the folks at Kroyer Films can make these effects possible? (These are the folks behind the animated titles from *Honey, I Shrunk The Kids* and the Oscar-nominated short "Technological Threat"—in fact, the two main characters from "...Threat" make a cameo appearance in this show.) Originally planned as a videocassette, "Computer Warriors" will eventually become a weekly series if the characters are popular enough (and the toy sales generated from the series are as hot as Mattel predicts).

MIS"CEL"ANEOUS: The best new animated spot on TV is the Slice lemon-lime soft drink ad with United Media's "Fido Dido" character. A simple line drawing of Fido, combined with a live-action

bottle of said product, equals one refreshing piece of entertainment, whether you like Slice or not ("Kid" Sieve notes: Fido's likeness is also starting to appear on t-shirts 'round here; the next big craze? Am I nuts, or does this character resemble the eerie Gregory, Marc Hempel's straitjacketed little boy in his recently-released comic book....) In other advertisement news, Kellogg's is bringing back Cornelius, the cartoon rooster from their Corn Flakes packages, in a new series of TV spots. Not to be outdone, the Battle Creek company has a new product with an equally new (and weird) character. Bigg Mixx is an anthropomorphic combo of a pig, a wolf, a moose and a chicken, rolled into one bizarre creature. And Kellogg's is supposed to bring "the best to you each morning?"...Along those lines, in a rare display of role reversal, an animated character from a TV commercial will become the star of his own video game. "Spot the Video Game," with the 7-Up character, will be released this coming September, marking the first time that a Nintendo game incorporates an ad character for its system. (Years ago, a similar but unsuccessful move was made for the Atari 2600 system with the creation of the "Kool-Aid Man" video game cartridge.) Virgin Mastertronic is the software distributor...And while we're on the subject of video games: just when you thought you'd had enough of TV shows based on games like "Super Mario Bros.," along comes "Video Power" starring Johnny Arcade (a co-production of Saban Entertainment Inc., Acclaim Entertainment Inc. and Bohbot Entertainment Inc.), featuring five unique characters from video games like "Kwirk" and "Bigfoot" (the vehicle, not the sasquatch). This series is slated to air this fall in syndication...Local NY station WNYW-5 becomes the second syndicator to remove the old "Dick Tracy" cartoons from the air due to two characters in the series deemed ethnic stereotypes... Fans of "The Fantastic World of Hanna-Barbera" will be pleased to know that new half-hour shows will be added to its roster. One show, for anthropomorphic buffs, is "The Adventures of Don Coyote and Sancho Panda." In it, this furry duo seek excitement through time travel (just like other H-B cartoons like "Peter Potamus," "Fonzie and the Happy Days Gang," and the upcoming Saturday morning series "Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventures"), with the emphasis on comedy. Look for it on syndicated TV...Bill Plympton ("Your Face," "One of Those Days") is in the process of making his first animated feature, with the working title "Smasheroo." So far he has completed ten of the film's 70 minutes of running time. If you can't wait for "Smasheroo" to be released (sometime in 1991), catch one of Plympton's commercial spots for the "Trivial Pursuit" game this fall on TV...Incidentally, for the die-hard animation buff who didn't catch all of Bill's "Plymptoons" on either MTV or *The XXII International Tournee of Animation*, the remaining short gags not seen by the public will become part of the latest "Spike & Mike" festival debuting on the West Coast (I have no idea when—or if—it will reach East Coast viewers)...If you thought that the lineup for Saturday mornings and weekday afternoons is beginning to sound mainstream, consider this—the three major networks are focusing their attention at presenting animated TV shows in prime time (in the wake of the success of FOX's "The Simpsons"). CBS has two projects underway: the all-new "Pink Panther" show (see IJ #71) and "The Family Dog," a spinoff of Brad Bird's animated episode of Steven Spielberg's "Amazing Stories." NBC has "The Jackie Bison Show" (the first "talk show" hosted by a cartoon character) in development, with the pilot having already aired. As for ABC, they are planning 13 episodes of "The Aristocritters," slated for 1991. What's unique about this series is that its producer is Steven "Hill Street Blues"/"St. Elsewhere" Bochco. What's next, "Doogie Bowser, MD?"...On the music video scene, my three recommendations this time are They Might Be Giants' version of the old song "Constantinople" and Elton John's "Club at the End of the Street" (both with clever visual effects), and Jeff Lynne's "Every Little Thing" (which combines abstract computer animation with full-color rotoscoping to create unforgettable images). It would not surprise me if one of these videos knocks off one of my projected nominees for MTV's Music Video Award in the Outstanding Visual Effects category...Speaking of awards, this year's Daytime Emmy for Outstanding Animated Program drew a tie between "Beetlejuice" (Nelvana) and "The New Adventures of Winnie the Pooh" (Disney), both ABC programs...Reginald and Worrington Hudlin, the writer/producers of the movie *House Party*, will produce an animated half-hour pilot for NBC. The show, titled "Bebe's Kids," is loosely based on a routine from comedian Robin Harris (one of the stars of *HP*), who sadly passed away on March 17...Besides 26 new episodes for CBS on Saturday mornings, Murakami-Wolf will produce 15 additional episodes of "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" for weekday syndication...In tandem with the release of "Rollercoaster Rabbit," director Rob Minkoff has earned a special honor. Although his last cartoon, 1989's "Tummy Trouble," didn't even garner an Oscar nomination, the short did pick up an award at this year's Zagreb World Animated Festival. Other winners in the bi-annual event included John Lasseter's "Knickknack" and Jerry Rees' "Back to Neverland," with Walter Cronkite and Robin Williams (featured at the Disney/MGM Studios theme park in Orlando, FL)...At this year's Zagreb festival, Robi Roncarelli announced plans for an anthology short called "Computer Jam." Like earlier films of its kind ("Anijam," "Animated Self-Portraits"), 20 different animators will each produce a segment using computer animation...American Multi-Cinema is bringing back "Looney Tunes." In a one-year deal with Warner Bros., AMC is screening these classic cartoons (uncut) with the main feature at a number of its first-run cine-

(continued next page)

mas. Today the cartoon; tomorrow the newsreel?...In a few years, watch for a spectacular cartoon feature about which you'll be hearing. Universal Pictures and Amblin Entertainment will present the first collaborated work of Hollywood wunderkind Steven Spielberg and Broadway legend Andrew Lloyd Webber—an all-animated feature-length version of the musical *Cats*!...The Museum of Broadcasting in NYC is presenting a tribute to the late Jay Ward now through mid-September; for more information, call 212/752-7684... Renowned animation personality Leo Salkin recently broke his knee. If you wish to send him a get-well card, mail it to 3584 Multiview Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90068. Salkin is credited for his work at UPA, as well as for unusual TV specials such as "The 2000-Year-Old Man" with Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner.

MAGAZINE UPDATE: The cover story of *ANIMATOR* #26 (from the UK, released in January) deals with the many film projects of Don Bluth, including "All Dogs Go To Heaven" and his next two works, "Rock-A-Doodle (another musical) and a yet-to-be-titled ecological tale featuring whales. Other articles include a tribute to British animation veteran John Halas, and a look at the 1989 International Animation Festival in Bristol (where the best shorts were "Balance" and Nick Park's "Creature Comforts," and the feature *Akira* gained cult status while being screened no less than six times)...**AMAZING HEROES** regulars Korkis & Cavley present a rare treat in their "Cartoon Corner" column (AH #180), as they analyze the unknown works (never seen by the public) of Southern California's Tom Carter Productions. The studio's main project (from 1981-83) was an incomplete variation on Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" entitled "Huck's Landing." (One side note: among the people working on said project was Phil Mendez, who would later go on to create "Kissmyfur" for NBC and DIC.)...The popularity of "The Simpsons" has been so prominent that Bart's face alone has adorned the covers of *MOTHER JONES*, *ROLLING STONE* and *TV GUIDE* (the latter twice)...Speaking of *TV GUIDE*, Noel Blanc gives a heartwarming tribute of his late father Mel (who died one year ago this month) to reporter Jane Marion in the 7/7-13 issue.

OBITS: Margaret Mintz, 95, believed to be the first female producer and distributor of cartoons, died June 21 in Hamaroneck, NY. Among cartoons she had distributed back in 1922 through M.J. Winkler & Co. (Winkler was her maiden name) were the first "Felix the Cat" shorts by Pat Sullivan and the "Alice in Cartoonland" series by a 22-year-old, then-unknown cartoonist named Walt Disney...Artist/writer William Overgard, 64, died of a heart condition on May 25 in Stony Point, NY. Although best known for working on comic book titles like *DAREDEVIL* and *BOY*, Overgard's major contribution to animation was the cocreation of Rankin/Bass' two most successful TV shows, "Thundercats" and "Silverhawks."

1980S POLL (AGAIN?): Because of the small response to my poll from several issues ago, I've decided to give you readers out there another chance. You'll have until September 30 to send me a list of the best and worst of animation from the last decade in these categories:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Best Feature-Length Film | 6. Worst TV Series |
| 2. Worst Feature-Length Film | 7. Best TV Special |
| 3. Best (Theatrical) Short | 8. Worst TV Special |
| 4. Worst (Theatrical) Short | 9. Best Cartoon Character |
| 5. Best TV Show | 10. Worst Cartoon Character |

Some of you have written to me, suggesting additional categories like "Best TV Commercial" and "Best Character from a TV Commercial," as well as "Best Music Video with Animation." While I don't want my poll to become completely esoteric with these suggested categories, I will welcome any response to them. Send your list (complete or incomplete) to me at 71 Crystal Street, Elmont, New York 11003-4215, and I will have the absolutely final results in *IJ* #80!



by Ho Chi Zen

GODSMANSHIP

Few Christians realize that, according to the 10th chapter of John, we are all gods. Buddhists know that everyone but Joshu's dog has the buddha-nature.

There are all kinds of ways of interpreting such things.

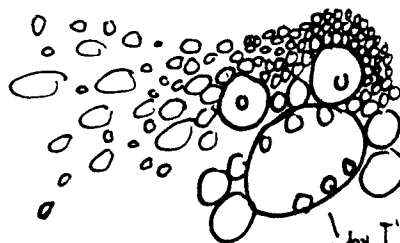
My friend, Tony Pless, a prisoner, related a recent theological discussion: "Someone in response to a boastful remark I made asked me, 'What the hell makes you God?' I replied, 'When I started sending assholes like you to Hell!'"

WAY FOLLOWING IS NOT THE WAY

The "tao of discipleship" is for Chuang Tzu a figment of the imagination, and it can in no way substitute for the "Great Tao," in which all relationships find their proper order and expression.

That Chuang Tzu should be able to take one side of a question in one place, and the other side in another context, warns us that in reality he is beyond mere partisan dispute. Though he is a social critic, his criticism is never bitter or harsh. Irony and parable are his chief instruments, and the whole climate of his work is one of tolerant impartiality which avoids preaching and recognizes the uselessness of dogmatizing about obscure ideas that even the philosophers were not prepared to understand.

- Thomas Merton, *The Way of Chuang Tzu*



Why I'll lose my marbles without *IJ*!

LOOK - AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION! TED HAS A SURVEY! SEND HIM YOUR OPINIONS NOW! - ax.

NOTHING BUT NOTHING AND NOT MUCH OF THAT

"The swatter was originally used to hit mosquitoes but it Zen it is used to needle the mind. Hu Shih and Suzuki are diametrically opposed in their interpretations of such a technique. For Hu Shih, the apparently nonsensical Zen gestures are calculated to force the student to think for himself, 'a method of education by the hard way.' For Suzuki, the swatter and various forms of gestures represent Zen's 'persistent and often violent opposition to words and then to the intellect which deals exclusively in words.' Suzuki added that Zen has no prescribed methods. We may add that in the typical Buddhist fashion of the Four Points of Argumentation, the swatter may mean this, it may mean that, it may mean both this and that, and it may mean neither this nor that..."

"When the Master (I-Hsuan, aka Rinzai) was among Huang-po's congregation, his conduct was very pure. The senior monk said with a sigh, 'Although he is young, he is different from the rest!' He then asked, 'Sir, how long have you been here?'"

"The Master said, 'Three years.'

"The senior monk asked, 'Have you ever gone to the head monk (Huang-po) and asked him questions?'"

"The Master said, 'I have not. I wouldn't know what to ask.'

"The senior monk said, 'Why don't you go and ask the head monk what the basic idea of the Law preached by the Buddha clearly is?'"

"The Master went and asked the question. But before he had finished, Huang-po beat him. When he came back the senior monk asked him how the conversation went. The Master said, 'Before I finished my question, he already had beaten me. I don't understand.' The senior monk told him to go and ask again."

"The Master did and Huang-po beat him again. In this way he asked three times and got beaten three times...Huang-po said, 'If you go to Ta-yu's place, he will tell you why.'

"The Master went to Ta-yu, who asked him, 'Where have you come from?'"

"The Master said, 'I am from Huang-po's place.'

"Ta-yu said, 'What did Huang-po have to say?'"

"The Master said, 'I asked three times about the basic idea of the Law preached by the Buddha and was beaten three times. I don't know if I was mistaken.'

"Ta-yu said, 'Old kindly Huang-po has been so earnest with you and you still came here to ask if you were mistaken!'"

"As soon as the Master heard this, he understood and said, 'After all, there is not much in Huang-po's Buddhism.'

Comment: Not only is there not much in Huang-po's Buddhism; there is not much in Buddhism itself! This saying has been repeated time and again by Zen Buddhists. It expresses not only a spirit of revolt, but also the determination to wipe out anything in the way of the mind's direct and immediate intuition of truth, including Buddhism itself. Fung Yu-lan is right in considering this point as one of the five most important in Zen."

(From *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, translated and compiled by Wing-Tsit Chan, Princeton University Press, 1963, pp. 446, 448-449)

SUNG HU'S WAKE

Rather like the Irish in their view of death, Taoists have been known to sing cheerful ditties at funerals.

Three friends of the departed Sung Hu sang:

Bey, Sung Hu!

Where'd you go?

Bey, Sung Hu!

Where'd you go?

You want where

You really were

But we are here—

Damn it! We are here!

When a disciple of Confucius chastised them for their frivolity in the presence of the dead, they turned to one another and said, "This poor fellow doesn't know the new liturgy!"

IMPOSSIBLY FRIGHTENING

From *The Way of Chuang Tzu* by Thomas Merton, page 103:

You cannot put a big load in a small bag,

Nor can you, with a short rope,

Draw water from a deep well.

You cannot talk to a power politician

As if he were a wise man.

Atlanta rock singer Bruce Hampton compiled a compendium of a similar nature, of things that scare him, one of these being "Politicians without any hobbies."

FLIGHT *a nonfiction work by Steven F. Scharff*

I sat in the terminal bar, watching the various passengers, either entering or leaving the great metropolitan complex of the Southwest, pass in a blur induced by two Coronas with lime. I had never been this far away from home by myself, and I was taking everything as if it were a massive object lesson.

I had heard how big this Dallas/Fort Worth airport (listed on my ticket as DFW) was, but I still wasn't ready for the shock. My flight to Newark (EWR) was from the American Airlines terminal (reportedly the world's largest), and boarded at the very last gate, Number 39-B.

My father and I had driven out during these cold days to where my brother was enrolled, the University of New Mexico/Las Cruces. Of course, driving there from Union, NJ is not something I would recommend, but we needed my father's van to haul my brothers effects and tow his car back to New Jersey.

The three days' travel seemed to be a continuous blur of interstate highways, roadside rest stops, truck stops with mammoth rigs taking on mindboggling amounts of diesel fuel, and the obligatory Motel 6, where the two of us dined on US Army surplus MRES (Meals-Ready-to-Eat).

One of the few bright points of the long journey (other than our bypassing the much-hyped and -pilgrimized Elvis Presley estate that I kept calling "Disgraceland," much to my father's amusement) was a side trip to Carlsbad Caverns. It wasn't so much the deep tunnels of stone that were so indescribably quiet, giving them a cathedral-like quality; but it was the land that surrounded the visitors' center that left a lasting influence.

I now have a fraction of the feeling that the original Americans must have had for the land. A scenic overlook gave me the most powerful moment that I have ever had. During the summer, the road is lined with cars, pick-ups and RVs. But this was the winter, and the only car to be seen was a green VW Beetle snaking its way down the paved seam on the landscape.

The land felt alive, like I was in the presence of some great and noble personage. As I stood on the overlook, with my father looking elsewhere, my eyes caught sight of some great bird, too far away to be clearly seen, wings spread out in silent glory, riding a thermal updraft.

As a child, I used to wonder about the ceremonial dances of the Amerindians, and why they often emulated the flight of birds of prey. Now I understood.

Our route took us into, out of, and back into Texas. The trip to El Paso was the exact opposite of my Carlsbad odyssey. Although the interstate highway was five lanes in each direction, the cars were driving seven across. By some act of a higher power, we made our way out of the midtown nightmare of 18-wheelers, low-rider pick-ups, and battered cars with Mexican plates, across the line to New Mexico where my brother resided. Between his final exams and preparations to leave, we slept first in an overpriced but lavish hotel, then in a no-name nightmare with one bed to share between my father and me (with a bathroom featuring hot and cold running cockroaches), and finally the blessed Motel 6 (which I had suggested in the first place).

On days my brother had free, we would travel to the local sights—historical places, shopping centers, and two Amerindian sites. One was a cave dwelling (a far cry from the Flintstones), which took an entire day's drive to and from, along a narrow, twisting, unfathomably elevated road that must be a true horror show when travelled upon at night. The views, however, seemed to touch something in the "race memory" about which I keep hearing, looking out of a stone-lined opening to a cliff face across the river, as I sat near where a fire would be kept, a vision that doesn't leave the memory too soon. (The original inhabitants, for one reason or another, packed up and left, leaving no trace of their travels.)

Another was a petroglyph site. A stress the word WAS. At one time, not too long ago, there were scratchings in the rocks of a hilly area a few miles outside of Las Cruces. What they were remains a mystery—religious symbols, road markings, or just graffiti by bored hunters...some of human forms, some of animals, some of decorative motifs. Now, most of the rocks have been chiseled apart and their decorations stolen by unscrupulous collectors of Ancient American artifacts. I later found out the Bureau of Land Management felt the problem to be so widespread a lotline to report suspected activity was established (1-800-NEIGHBOR).

Ah yes, and White Sands. As far as the eye could see, an ocean of gypsum. My brother said that during full moons in the summer, the park is opened at night. The landscape glows with an eerie intensity.

But all things must pass, the since I could only obtain one week's worth of vacation from work, I had to leave early and fly back while my father and brother drove.

On my last day, we took a brief and unusual walk across the bridge to Ciudad Juarez (in Mexico's Chihuahua State) to buy discount "packaged goods" (read: beer and kaluah). I noticed a message spray-painted on the concrete riverbank on the Mexican side. The English message that it bore I took to be a reference to the US auto makers setting up plants to manufacture engine parts for US cars, and the INS's unending struggle against "illegals" (known amongst themselves as "mojados").

"ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T NEED ME ANY MORE?"

Upon our return to the "sweet land of liberty" I was driven to El Paso International, given the obligatory hugs and kisses, and walked in to receive my boarding pass.

Entering the plane, I was reminded of what my mother had said about airliners. "They're just buses with wings," she'd say, "no big deal." Since this was my first flight, I was taken with the stark white interior of the plane. It seemed both commonplace and futuristic. I stuffed my bag into the overhead compartment and sat in my assigned seat by the window. The two seats to my left would be occupied by a rather friendly woman in her 50's accompanied by her mother (who remained silent through the whole flight) on their way to Las Vegas. We started a conversation of "Where are you going's" and "What do you do's," and then the plane began to taxi down the runway.

A strange experience it was, my first takeoff. The feeling I had I associated with a descent on a rollercoaster. Instead this was in an upward motion. I mentioned it to my neighbor, who thought it was amusing.

Out the window I could see the scratched lines in the desert where El Paso's new housing would be built. It awaiting only the water that the state of New Mexico refused to divert from its farms and that international law forbade Mexico to supply. The landscape began to shrink and merge with the clouds, until all that could be seen was an ethereal collection of blue shades and white masses.

Our conversation seemed to come on in short sprints, speaking only when we felt we had a topic about which the other knew. Then came our drinks. I ordered a cola with lime, and my neighbor, out of curiosity, did likewise. Her mother simply waved her hand at the offer of a drink. My neighbor expressed her appreciation of my choice of nonalcoholic refreshment, and then our conversation hit another abyss.

We separately read the airline magazines, my attention drawn to an ad for Scientology apparently geared for yuppie wanna-be's.

Finally, the planet came back into view. The bridge that my father and I drove across on our travels, and that he and my brother would probably also cross on their return, was in clear view. We banked, passed over a large square building with an oversized corporate logo on its roof, and made our landing.

After the long, slow taxi to our gate, I said my goodbyes, got my bag, and walked past the overly friendly flight attendants wishing me well (reminding me of the Edward G. Robinson cartoon of flight attendants in a chorus line), and into the airport.

I checked the schedule; 45 minutes to kill. A quick lunch of tuna salad on a croissant, a bag of potato chips and a cola; then a trip to the souvenir shop to buy a bottle of hot sauce for a friend who worships Justin ("A gah-rhawn-TEE!") Wilson, and a coffee mug for myself.

I still have that mug by my computer—an anthropomorphic armadillo with cowboy hat, red bandana, blue jeans with oversized buckle, grey boots, and wielding a six-shooter, aimed at the viewer, as the armadillo smiles and stands with one hand on the Texas flag behind him. Encircling the artwork is the legend, "Don't Mess With Texas..." Ethnocentrism as a commodity.

I leafed through the copy of OMNI that I had picked up at the newsstand, trying to understand the technical terms while I picked my brain cells, when the announcement for my flight, "Nahw bohrding ayt gate thir-tee-nyn-bee!", came over the loudspeakers.

I paid my tab, left a tip, and folded my magazine into my bag as I walked the short distance to the gate. I fumbled with my pockets trying to find the boarding pass. For an instant, I went into a drunken panic. I COULDN'T FIND THE DAMNED THING! I imagined calling my mother in New Jersey saying I'd be on the next flight and charging my father's already-overburdened Visa card even further!

The ticket clerk, not once breaking stride, smiled and calmly said, "Your left front pocket, sir."

I looked down. There it was, peeking up at me.

I handed over the card, grinning sheepishly. The clerk, still smiling, said, "Don't worry, sir, it's a frequent occurrence."

Then and there, I promised that the next time I travel by air, I stay sober.

This flight would be far better, much longer, and quite enjoyable. I took my window seat next to a man busily reading a loose-leaf notebook with preprinted pages on real estate law. After several minutes, we were airborne.

This airliner sat more passengers, but from what I could see was almost empty. The video projector showed a segment from a network morning show on automatic garage door safety, a few "human interest" and travelogue bits, some commercials and teasers for HBO, and a rather enjoyable video for a song entitled "From A Distance," illustrated with news photos and film clips of the decade about to end.

All I could see from my window was the engine housing reflecting the fading sunlight. When I craned my neck, I could see the fading landscape, and then blackness of night. I tuned the headset to the channel playing classical music, and drifted off into near-sleep.

I remembered the first night in Las Cruces, when the three of us celebrated in the hotel with 2-liter bottles of soda and pizzas from Little Caesar's. We called my mother back in Union to let her know we were okay. Then my father asked the question.

My mother had stayed behind to look after my great aunt, who had been living with us. She had suffered a paralyzing stroke and was bedridden. The day we left, I had told her that we would be leaving, and that if she wasn't there when I returned, I wanted

(continued next page)

her to know I always loved her.

"How's Aunt Helen?"

His expression changed slightly to disappointed surprise. The room began to grow cold. I turned to my brother, who whispered, "She's gone. Her funeral would take place without us. I later commented that it seemed strange that we'd be on the opposite side of the continent when she died.

The next night was a full moon. I had a strange dream in which I was an eagle, not unlike the great bird I saw at Carlsbad and the various hawks looking for road kills along the New Mexico interstates. I soared over the mesas and great expanses of land until I came face to face with a gigantic machine, planting cubical houses as if they were seeds and scraping the land flat, leaving paved roads in its wake.

I awoke in that hotel room, bathed in cold sweat.

A click in the tape signalled the seam in the tape loop. The meals were being brought out along with the drinks. I had heard horror stories of airline food, but this was far better than what I had been used to in the ways of volume food preparation. Steak filet with unskinned potato slices, steamed carrot slices, small dinner roll and a salad in a square bowl (with, of all things, shredded cucumber).

After dinner, as I nursed what was left of my cola and lime, nature called. I rose from my seat, much to my neighbor's discomfort, and made my way to the restroom in the rear. A sign on the door clearly stated that unless it was a medical necessity, only one person at a time would be allowed within. "A deterrent," I thought, "to the near-mythological stories of mid-flight trysts!"

Inside, I was struck by the sight of so much stainless steel. A sink the size of an ashtray shared space with a mini-bar soap dispenser (I took a bar as a souvenir). All the amenities needed were ergonomically designed to be within reach of the toilet seat occupant's right hand: waste disposal, toilet paper, and the "flush" button, which released not water but a pressurized dark blue solution for septic tank storage. Not a drop of water or a micron of space was wasted, and the entire unit could be cleaned with a blast of high-pressure steam. Bucky Fuller would have loved it!

I washed up, checked my clothes, and walked back to my row. Without being asked, my neighbor grimaced and brought his knees to his chest. I muttered an apology, sat back in my assigned space, and placed my headphones on. I drifted back into the music, listening to the different channels: positive-thinking messages for businessfolk, tales from Windham Hill's children's collection, country, pop, easy listening, and finally, classical. In the midst of a string section, the Captain came on.

"Attention passengers, we are now over Philadelphia and will be arriving at our destination, Newark International Airport, in approximately thirty minutes." Then the required return-to-your-seats, -buckle-up, -put-out-your-smokes-and-put-your-tray-table (where did they ever get that name?) -upright-and-locked.

A short time later, the lights below seemed familiar. They were Route 22 and the Garden State Parkway. Newark was underneath. After landing and taxi, I got my bag, made my way past the chorus line, and stumbled into the rather bare atmosphere of Newark International. After Dallas/Fort Worth, Newark seemed to be a disappointment. Of course, since it was 11pm, what could you expect?

I waited the minutes it took to retrieve my two bags from the carousel, once they appeared, and recalled the "Hawaii Five-O" episode that opened with a body tumbling onto a luggage carousel. This time, however, there would be no such excitement.

After retrieving my bags, I stumbled to a pay phone. "Yeah, I made it, I got my bags, American Airlines Arrivals, I'll be waiting outside."

I stood in the cool air of that December night, listening to the rumbling jets overhead. My attention was drawn to the neon sign atop the Anheuser-Busch brewery, a giant red eagle, flapping its wings until it froze to the position as it appears on the trademark, which would superimpose itself on top of the eagle's image. It triggered the memory of my mother telling me of the bald eagle she saw at the nearby Turtleback Zoo. In an encaged area, various birds flew freely, save for a long bald eagle who perched on an artificial tree limb. Then a strong breeze came. The eagle closed his eyes, and opened his wings as if to ride an updraft. It was then my mother noticed his mangled wing, rendering him flightless. Yet, in his mind, for that brief moment, he flew in his memory. My mother felt such pity for the eagle. He then turned to face my mother, returned her gaze, and slowly turned his back.

A familiar horn sounded. The old red Mercedes pulled into view. I opened the rear door, loaded my bags, and made my way into the front passenger's seat, with the required hugs and kisses, and we made our way down the familiar roads back home.

The house would seem strangely empty without my Great-Aunt Helen, but we all had journeys to make and destinations that awaited us. The neon eagle continued to fly in place as we drove past him, and I told my mother of my own flight. I fumbled for the appropriate words to express my thoughts.

I had once thought that travelling was a state between destinations. Now I realized that it is the destinations that are states between travels.

The sky, illuminated with both stars and aircraft lights, seemed to be both a covering and a roadway, as we passed underneath it to our own stop along our way.

MasterMath Explains... THE BACHELOR LIFE

by William G. Raley

Greetings from 12:25 in the a.m. For those of you expecting another installment of "The Toothpicks," I'm here to say they've been pre-empted. While they are a likeable, witty lot, I must say that, compared to my brand of humour, theirs is a bit ... oh, what's the word ... wooden. Anyway, the last time I looked out my window (which has been a while, actually, since I'm on vacation and am basically lazy and have no particular reason to go outside), the battle between the sexes was still going on. So I think it's time I did my part to throw a few products of the systems analyst's art to the proverbial wind, that they might land elsewhere (I don't need them in my house -- I'm moving, remember?).

Thus we have, amassed before you (or soon to be amassed -- don't rush me), ten examples of things bachelors do. Disclaimer: I, MasterMath, don't actually do any of the things on the list; more or less. By the way, I'd comment on things bachelorettes do, but I don't have first-hand experience of such matters. OK, there was the time a few years back where Lita Ford and I switched bodies at a party, but she wasn't conscious at the time, so that doesn't count. So what's the purpose of this list, you might ask. If you're a bachelor, and you're doing the things on this list, don't worry; you're normal. If you're a bachelorette, worried that your bachelor friend is doing these things, don't be; leave him be, he's got enough problems. Let him know you understand. If you're a bachelorette studying the male of the species, you can start taking notes now ...

-- THINGS BACHELORS DO --

(1) Use the same dishes/silverware over and over. A man may use the same plate for a month. A fork, two months. Not to worry. He brings home food from Popeye's Fried Chicken or Taco Bell or Jack in the Box most of the time anyway, right? And besides, they're not dirty, they've just got a little food on them. A little scrubbing does the trick; no need to use soap.

(2) Live out of their car. While guys don't have nearly so much stuff as women, they have a need to have all/most of it readily available for reference when they're at a stop light or drive through window. So if you find racquetball racquets, three pairs of sunglasses, a year's worth of gasoline company receipts, a high school book report, or coupons that expired during the last ice age, simply say, "Nice tape deck."

(3) Put off replacing spotted ties. Guys take great pride in being able, after only seven tries, to tie their favourite red tie so that the spot where they dropped a green bean on it two years ago doesn't show.

(4) Put off mowing the yard until the blades of grass assume the height and strength of bamboo shoots. You don't expect him to do it now, do you? After all, there's a game on.

(5) Collect men's magazines. It's not lusting after dirty pictures, it's ... social research.

(6) Watch pro wrestling. What can I say? Some men refuse to face reality, and are heavily into macho fantasy. Those of us into reality watch Married with Children.

(7) Spend a year's salary on a sports car, just so they can go speeds they'd never go anyway. Oftentimes, a car is a bachelor's best friend. After all, a man can care for a car, take it places, and it won't call him names and throw him out of the apartment when it overheats. It's less expensive than a relationship, too.

(8) Go grocery shopping looking grungy. On the weekend, a guy will sometimes show up at a grocery store at midnight with two days' growth of beard, shorts, no socks, the tennis shoes with the broken laces he only wears to mow the lawn, the long-sleeved plaid shirt with the button missing he wore to mow the lawn three days ago, sunglasses, and a coupon for Fifth Avenue bars that expired during the last ice age. Give him a break. At least he's there, right? If you see such a person, just point him toward the produce section and hope he's disoriented enough to put some fresh fruit in his cart.

(9) Take notes while watching Tommy Flanagan on Saturday Night Live. Humour him. Just read him transcripts from The Pat Stevens Show while he's sleeping.

(10) Eat certain foods indecorously. The bachelor may insist on eating such foods as bacon, French fries, brownies, fried clams, BBQ ribs, even frozen yogurt with his bare hands. It's innate; there's nothing a bachelorette can do to stop him. If you're at a party, the best course of action is to develop a standup comedy routine to detract attention from him. Note: this is how Lily Tomlin got her start.

All right, then. I'll be back next time with ten more things bachelors do, or more notes on moving, or whatever topic I'm obsessed with at the time.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR ANNI ACKNER: I showed your last 12 article, and your "Twin Peaks" article in Factsheet Five, to my friend Roni at work. She thinks we'd make a great couple, since she knows I prefer older women, and she thinks you're weird, and she knows I am. I, however, prefer not to venture an opinion on the matter. Time will tell. But, like Judy Tenuta says, it could happen.

PREMARITAL TRIPPING: 1990

by Larry Stolte

So you think you've found that someone special, your soulmate? After your first date, you had a hunch. You felt good. You felt young. You felt silly. You went home and sang Italian arias. You talked theology with your parakeet. You did the dishes. What's more, this unique person agreed to date you again. And again. You've been going out with him/her for some time now and you still have that healthy glow. You've worn a prosthetic silly smirk since that first meeting.

Are you in love? Ready for a fitting of a wedding dress and tux or merely his and hers straitjackets? At this point you're certainly not accustomed to reality in large doses. Your world is pure Disney. You think this relationship will end only when Stevie Wonder stops smiling and Mr. Ed wins the Preakness.

It sounds like you're ready for commitment. (If it seems that statement can be taken two ways, it's purely intentional.) But before you take the ultimate step—getting married—take the penultimate step—travel together.

Imagine Monterey, Prague, Kauai, or Rio in the summertime with your true love. Quite a reverie, huh? You can go with it and dissolve into a Capra movie or read further.

Travelling together on a one- or two-week vacation is a microcosm of marriage, a microcosm with no messy divorces. Let's face it, if the trip is a disaster, no judge will divvy up the luggage and say, "Okay, he gets Rome, she gets Paris." If the trip goes well, it will inevitably lead to the altar. If not, it will lead to a second-degree murder trial.

On dates you see the facade, you hear the witty causerie, you smell the perfume or cologne. On vacation, you see the face with no sleep, you hear the endless prattle, and you smell. When dating, you waged imaginative philosophical wars and fired truth-seeking missiles. On vacation, carry ammo.

The first big decision of your relationship will be choosing where to go. Easy, huh? Guess again. Most of us get only a few weeks off per year; we don't want to waste them.

You may think of these precious weeks as a time to take risks, to live life to the fullest. Perhaps scuba diving off the Great Barrier Reef is your first choice. What if your partner is not the athletic type, has even sprained an ankle playing the piano? What if he/she chooses the relaxing vacation, perhaps suggesting the wheat-eating festival in Duck Butts, Kansas? Will you compromise? Sure. Will it work? Remember the Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact of '39. You're off to a rocky start.

Your next hurdle will be getting there. You will spend ample time either in your car or a rental car. Ah yes, the open road, the windows down, the go-where-the-wind-takes-us attitude. Just you and that personified babbling bullhorn next to you—the back-seat driver with the front-seat mouth who carps when you drive one mph too fast, but when it's his/her turn to drive, you'd swear a PCP-laced spider monkey has the wheel.

For calming effect he/she remembered that favorite cassette tape that first struck you as being fairly innocuous, something you would hear only in an elevator in Stepford—a grain elevator in Stepford. After listening for eight hours, you realize it is anything but. You swear Satan is doing the background vocals and wonder if the unwound cassette tape is strong enough for strangulation purposes. You want to go home where it's safe and soundless. Just remember, on your first date you said you liked this music. And you will get the melody out of your head in a week or two.

You have found out more than you wanted to about your companion in transit. You ain't seen nuthin' yet. Upon arrival, you will uncover more skeletons. You see the real person. No schedules, no work, no outside friends, no meetings, no excuses. Relaxation can be stressful. You can't put each other off for convenience's sake or for a little rest. It's 24 hours a day. Like it or not.

Incompatibility rears its ugly head in many ways. It's hard for a person of limited frugality to be compatible with a cheapskate. A cheapskate may camouflage him/herself on a date, but on vacation, no way. Things to watch out for: Does your partner think Gandhi was extravagant? Does he/she want to celebrate in Cabo San Lucas with a can of champagne? Can it be said of your rental car, "If not for the bullet holes, we would have no air conditioning at all?" Is your Florida motel room more like a bunker? This vacation may cost you an arm and a leg, and you'll get only the middle finger for change.

All married couples discover some arcane eccentricities about their mate. Sometimes you can live with these, sometimes not. A premarital pilgrimage will draw out most of these dragons so you know what you're getting into.

Conversation is important. Early excursion talk will cover philosophical discussions, realizations of dreams, wedding plans, and favorite movies. Later the palaver may turn to invectives, challenges, funeral plans, and encomiums like, "You know, for an amphibian, you function quite well out of water." That raspy voice you once considered sexy now sounds like Sam Kinison's parrot.

A slight variation of the following conversation may be heard in many motel rooms every morning and in all motel rooms housing travelling Minnesotans:

"What should we do today?"

"Oh, I don't care. What do you want to do?"

"Doesn't matter. What do you think?"

"We could go to the Louvre...Or the Eiffel Tower."

"BUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK"



© VERNON GRANT — 1989

"Yeah, the Louvre...Or the Eiffel Tower."

"Well, which one?"

"Either is fine with me."

"Wait a minute. We're in Venice."

These indecisive people are exempt from fights. The drawback is they never go anywhere. It's amazing they ever made it out of the womb.

The journey is not all talk. Sure you must have good conversation and mutual interests, but pace is important as well.

Do you want to sleep in for a change? Is bunkie up at 5:00am, freebasing coffee? Trying to pull you out of bed to see Carmel at sunrise? Wants to hit three European countries by noon and you're in London? Watch out for the wayfarer who keeps the waking hours of a wild 'possum.

You are well into your trip. Your timing is perfect. Your conversation, ebullient. Your pace and interests, mutual. Romance is in the air. You're like Romeo and Juliet without the poison. Marathoners talk of "the wall," a point at the twenty-mile mark when their skin tries to become an internal organ. Vacationers hit "the wall" also on the third-to-last day of the trip when an epiphany of stark realization jades any romantic.

You soon will have to go back to work and maximum fun may not be achieved. This is costing more than you saved by bilking the IRS. Monday's food from Mazatlan is still in orbit around your colon. Your mate is hiccupping again. Worst of all, to coin Carly's line, "These are the good ol' days." Cheer up. Remember most marathoners finish the race. Then they barf.

Summer of '90, Where to go:

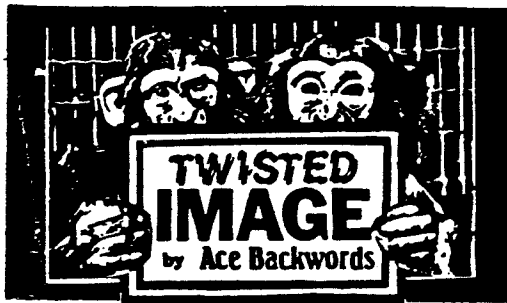
For the unique experience: Europe (of course). Check out Eastern Europe to refresh your memory with the concept of "hope." If entire countries can turn to freedom, you may get some ideas. In the West, Paris and Vienna are as romantic as ever. Try Amsterdam for a new kind of romance. Don't forget to bring a third party, the Jello, and bagpipes. A word about Eurail: Imagine the freedom to go anywhere at any time and still be virtually shackled to your partner.

For the culture: Are museums your thing? Check out New York or Toronto for exhibits like "Dean Martin's Early Drawings" or "Function of the Egg in World History." Also, plenty of tall buildings. Accidents can happen.

For the scenery: You want to go abroad, but you're a xenophobe? How about the land of barbecues and hopping rodents where people almost speak English? Almost five hundred years after Columbus discovered America, Yuppies discovered Australia. Entry is possible even for nonYuppies, but bring wine coolers and a copy of "The Journal" for backup. Lots of Outback and poisonous critters. Bodies are never found.

For the ultimate test: Can you envision a trip where you not only make your own bed, but your own room? Where you have to share a bathroom—with different species? True, camping is not for everyone; in fact, it's not for anyone. A person cannot tolerate even himself when in this true climate-controlled environment.

Best bets for camping: The north shore of Wisconsin or Minnesota. Or Banff, Canada, where you will make or break your relationship in the most beautiful spot on earth. And if you can make it camping, search no more. You have found your soulmate. Mr. Ed will win the Triple Crown before your relationship falters.



"MY SOUL AND WELCOME TO IT"

There was a guy I knew on the streets, I swear he had to be the ULTIMATE Guilt-Boy. If the disc jockey on the radio sounded depressed, Guilt-Boy was convinced it was HIS fault. Guilt-Boy believed he was sending out bad vibes that the d.j. would pick up on. He was an excellent ping pong player, much better than me, but he would always self-destruct at the end and I'd win. It was like he felt he didn't DESERVE success. Not surprisingly, his life was a dreary little mess.

I got a lot of that guy in me, too. If nobody shows up at the basketball courts, there's this painful little voice in my head that goes: "It's all your fault, you must have done something to offend all the guys, they all hate you, that's why they're not here, in fact they're probably talking shit about you behind your back right now..."

Course, the next day they'll all be back and the voice'll disappear. But it always returns.

I'm told this trait is typical of show-biz types. They're all insecure and have low self-esteem, so they put themselves out, naked and vulnerable, trying to win the approval of a room full of strangers. They're clapping, they love me, I must be all right after all. But the voice always returns.

The tricky thing is, it's so damned hard to separate imaginary paranoia from the valid, deserved guilt. The fact is, sometimes I really am an asshole (okay, everybody at least TRY to look surprised). All the pop psychologists preach the virtues of Accept Thyself. And yet there are some people—like psychopathic maniacs, evil pricks, and Republican presidents, to name a few—whose behavior is quite simply UNacceptable.

Like most people, I want to feel good about myself. I struggle heroically towards that end. And yet I usually fall short. Self-love: How to get it? No less an authority than Oprah claims that the root cause of the endless parade of wounded casualties who expose their pain as talk show fodder is none other than "low self-esteem."

Alan Watts has pointed out that we all want to make love to ourselves. But we can't quite get ourselves off. The back just isn't supple enough (literally).

So we go to heroic ends to get OTHER people to love us. Endless stratagems for showing the world how wonderful we are; how truly deserving of love we are. Mostly it doesn't work. Other people are too busy trying to get US to love THEM.

I guess it's true: The love you don't make is equal to the love you won't take.

I remember how put-off some people were when Sally Field, after winning an Emmy or something, beamed, "YOU LIKE ME, YOU REALLY LIKE ME!!" There's something almost taboo about nakedly admitting how dependent we are on winning the love and approval of other people: how deeply our self-worth is tied into this kind of validation.

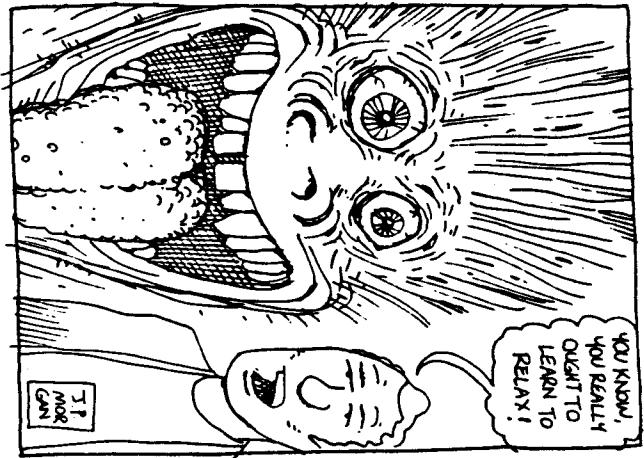
On the other hand, some people just seem to be born with naturally high amounts of self-love. Some people just firmly believe that they are quite simply TRULY WONDERFUL...often in spite of massive evidence to the contrary.

This guy I know—let's call him Bob the Blob—he's the complete opposite of the "it's-all-my-fault" Guilt-Boy. Bob firmly believes it's "all-his-doing." No matter what happens, Bob is ever ready to take full credit for all the good things in this Universe. And the next one, too. This in spite of the fact that Bob has never actually accomplished ANYTHING, aside from sitting in coffee shops and guzzling down umpteen double cappuccinos and regaling us with his numerous imagined feats of glory. And always delivered with this sickeningly smug, "cat-just-ate-the-canary" smile, this "ain't-I-just-the-most-adorable-widdle-baby" smile.

On the other hand, this artist I know, he happens to be a man of great accomplishments. And his talents have been confirmed by an adoring public, fame, recognition, gallery showings, even a write-up in PEOPLE magazine, so how truly God-like can one dude get? And yet, in spite of this, he's regularly plagued by the most insidious doubts and low self-esteem regarding the merits of his worth. It wouldn't matter if the whole world said his work was worth millions, his self-worth will always be a tenuous, shaky thing.

It's just not fair, is it?

On yet the other hand, this other guy I know strikes a good balance between these poles of self-guilt and self-grandeur. Let's call him Jimbo—that's the pet name he has for himself that he lets select friends call him. Jimbo truly is a great guy; he's well aware of his faults, as he is of his accomplishments, and still he just basically digs himself, but not in a queasy "ego-



YOU BE THE JUDGE

In seemingly scenic-smelling Burlington, Vermont (home, incidentally, of at least one INSIDE JOKEster):

- You'll find yourself constantly dreaming dreams of unusual, if not downright frightening, vividness and intensity
- You'll experience an aching, unrelenting craving for Cinnamon Life cereal
- You'll hear clerks in each and every store repeatedly implore you, "Don't forget to use your change!"
- Even on nice days, you'll feel like staying inside to play Astro Warrior on the nearest Sega system
- Everyone plays baseball
- Everyone drives too fast (with often head-splitting results)
- Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream Parlor sells only Chocolate Chip Raw Cookie Dough flavor ("now recycle your spoons and, yes, Don't Forget To Use Your Change!")
- Al's French Frys (it's spelt that way on the sign) sells the world's thinnest grilled cheese sandwiches. And I have PHOTOGRAPHS to prove it
- You can buy Mamie Van Doren videos two for ten dollars in the downtown Woolworth's
- Elvis Presley's unmistakable likeness has been sighted on various menus about town
- Everyone puts too much vinegar on everything
- The most-read book in town is a strange, scatological small-press edition of "Twice Around The Bowel" (author upon request)
- I met a man called Teddy Kent Poe
- And another named Jeffy Jap Jackson
- There's green bulbs in EVERY porch light.

Call me nuts, call me irrevocable, or simply say I read too many Whitley Streiber novels. The fact of the matter is (and don't just take my word for it: check the August 22, 1987 edition of The Bennington Banner) THERE ARE ALIENS LIVING ON HOWARD STREET.

(to be continued)

tistical" way. He just gets the biggest kick out of being Jimbo, and he's happy to share the kick with anybody who wants in. Some of my fondest memories are of getting royally drunk with Jimbo, and after about the nineteenth pitcher of Bud when our inhibitions have been sufficiently dimmed, I'd tell Jimbo just what a truly great guy he was. And ole Jimbo would just sit there, beaming, taking it all in: no false modesty or false pride. Just digging being a great guy.

Well, I guess that just about wraps up another column. I worked really hard on this, and I hope it'll win you over. Am I being loved yet?

THE HINDMOST

Part One by Glenn Five

The instructor took almost two minutes to scrawl the equation on the chalkboard. It stretched all the way across the board, and was much more complicated than the homework problems we'd had the night before. Still, I thought I could solve it. I hoped I'd be called on.

No such luck. "Mr. Hansen? Would you care to explain this equation?" The instructor adjusted his glasses fustily.

Hansen was a Swede who sat next to me. He leapt to his feet, obviously nervous and unprepared.

"Uhhh...it...it's the intersection of a tesseract with the Astral Plane?"

The instructor frowned at this, and twitched his tail impatiently. "Mr. Cranston? Perhaps you would like to help out Mr. Hansen."

Now it was my turn. "Yes, sir," I said as I got to my feet. "It's the formula for bisecting a pentagram, with Earth as the reference plane."

The instructor stroked his goatee. "Very good, Mr. Cranston. And would you describe this as a terminating or a non-terminating pentagram?"

"Terminating," I replied, "with ten-point warding."

"Excellent, Mr. Cranston. Mr. Hansen might do well to study with you sometime."

In retrospect, I suppose it wasn't the smartest thing I ever did. Frankly, I questioned it quite a few times while I was there. In my defense I can only say that I was young, dumb, and the School was the best opportunity I could see.

When I first learned of the School, I was twenty and had just trudged my way through my second year at the University of New Orleans or, as many of its students (and too many of its professors) call it, the "University of No Opportunity." I was majoring in marketing but I already knew I was kidding myself. Nobody hires marketing majors to begin with, and certainly not marketing majors from the University of New Orleans with a 2.1 GPA.

It wasn't that I wasn't smart; I knew myself better than that. But it was the mid-'80s and, like most of my generation, I didn't want to work for anything, and college was supposed to save you from having to work.

But as I said, by the end of my sophomore year I could see that there was more to it than that. I became increasingly hostile to the idea of spending another two years preparing for an unsatisfying job that I may not even be able to get.

I saw the ad in one of those college magazines they distribute to campuses from time to time. It was towards the end of spring semester 1985, and I had another gloomy summer of flipping burgers to look forward to.

The ad was on the classifieds page, tucked among the other enticements for eclectic thrills: "Work in Alaska!"; "Rock Star T-Shirts"; "Archaeology in New Zealand." It was refreshing in its directness: "Learn From Satan—Win Fame, Fortune, Power, Women. In Just Six Months! Enrollment Limited." Following was a toll-free number.

I made the call. Oh sure, I was skeptical, especially of the Satan part, but I figured any ad daring enough to make claims so bold and also so unusual deserved at least looking into. If Satan really was behind the program, I'd be sure to learn something useful. I couldn't see how someone could be the Prince of Darkness for several millennia and not pick up some valuable insights.

The woman at the other end of the line was very polite. Yes, Satan would be teaching his Black School that fall in Padua, Italy. Courses would include Hypnotic Manipulation, Religion: Making It Work For You, Black Sorcery (theoretical and applied), Contracts in Blood and Business Administration. Enrollment was limited to thirty students. Yes, there were still spaces available. The first thirty applicants would be accepted automatically, regardless of age, sex, religion or academic background. All expenses, including airfare, would be provided.

I knew there had to be a catch, so I asked her the cost of tuition.

She said payment would be determined by an athletic competition, usually a footrace, to be held immediately after commencement. The first 29 finishers would pay nothing and be under no further obligation. The loser, however, would be required to serve Satan for the rest of eternity. Did I wish to enroll?

I told the lady I'd think about it, thanked her, and hung up.

It took me two days to make up my mind. As I said, anyone who makes his way as the Great Deceiver, the Author of Evil, the Tempter, could probably teach me a lot about American entrepreneurialism. Plus, it would only take six months. Finishing up at UNO would take another two years, and even then I wouldn't be spectacularly employable.

My hesitation was over the matter of "tuition." The very idea was...well, weird, but then, no more so than anything else about the package. It made sense, though—Satan was in the business of capturing souls, so that one soul gleaned from each class probably justified the investment many times over. I'd run some track in high school, and I figured I could hold my own against any of the kooks and weirdos I assumed would be the other people answering the ad. Still, it wasn't impossible I'd lose—and I didn't see any way serving the Antichrist till the end of time could be very fun.

Math finally made up my mind. My chance of losing was only one

in 30, or around three percent. I'd gambled worse odds before without losing. So after the second day I called the number again and asked if the school was still open. The woman said one spot remained; I took it.

I went ahead and flipped burgers that summer anyway. I needed the money for my various entertainments, and the utter unpleasantness of the experience only heightened my resolve to attend the School.

I also got back into my running in a big way. I hadn't been told whether the competition would be a sprint or a distance race, so I worked on both. By August I was managing ten miles in under an hour and 100 meters in about fifteen seconds. I hoped it would be enough.

I left for Padua on the morning of September 5, 1985. I had a layover and change of planes in London, then flew the rest of the way to Italy. I landed at the Venice airport, where I was to look for a representative of the School. I found him right at the gate, holding up a sign saying "Students of Satan Meet Here." I was one of five students arriving on this particular plane, and the other four were already there. I noticed with dismay that all seemed rangy and quite fit. The man and his assistant helped us and took us to a spacious van out in the parking lot.

The drive to Padua was long, and the driving habits of our chauffeur assured that we stayed awake the whole way, jetlag notwithstanding. I chatted with my classmates and found them to be much like me—restless, unsatisfied and looking for a quick way to get ahead. Two were Americans, one was Irish and one English.

The building we finally arrived at looked very old. It was four stories high, made of red brick, and about the size of the administration building back at UNO. Gargoyles perched forbiddingly on the corners of the fourth floor ledge, and the compound was surrounded at a distance of forty yards or so by a sturdy breastworks covered in dead ivy. Over the iron gate, which faced the east, was the declaration, in English and Latin, "Black School of Padua. We Teach, That Others May Learn."

We checked in and had a brief reception before calling it a day. The other students were like the first I'd met, and well over half of us were American. Some of our instructors were human, but most were demons, many of whom didn't look even remotely human. Satan himself looked like a healthy middle-aged man and wore a sharp double-breasted pinstripe; a few grey strands streaked his otherwise-dark hair. His complexion was like a ruddy Caucasian's, and a pointed tail peeked out of his left pants leg. He was very friendly and likeable; I expected to enjoy his lectures.

I can't adequately describe what went on in the next six months. We received instruction ten hours a day, six days a week, and had at least four hours of homework every night.

Most of the "black arts" we learned had to do with manipulating other people. Mass hypnosis was one technique we practiced ad nauseum. Oration was another; Adolph Hitler was a guest lecturer on that topic. Blackmail, extortion and public relations rounded out the field.

We learned transmutation and basic conjuring. We learned to cure the common cold and to induce leprosy in our enemies. We became proficient in levitation, astral projection and divining the future. We learned how to summon demons, but our teachers made it clear that our training at the Black School would make that unnecessary in most cases, and that they hate to work weekends.

We also read lots of Vonnegut.

By the time we went home for Christmas break I was satisfied I'd made the right decision. Even with what I'd learned already, I knew I'd never have to worry about money, I'd never get sick, I'd have senators and heads of state at my beck and call. I hadn't found much time to work on my running, though...

The morning of April 9, 1986 was bright and sunny. We gathered in the front yard in our caps and gowns; underneath we wore Nikes and Spandex. The commencement speaker was an alumnus of the School, a Pole who'd gone on to a position of influence right here in Italy. We barely heard him; all our thoughts were toward the race afterwards. We knew one of us wouldn't be leaving.

After the ceremony we stripped to our running togs and lined up at the gate. The course was simple: seven times around the yard, staying close to the wall, and then out the gate, which would slam shut behind the 29th person. Satan stood ready at the gate, and he himself fired the gun.

It was a dead heat the first two circuits of the grounds. Even Lyle, who carried a few more pounds than he should, easily paced the rest of us.

The third time around we began to spread out a little. Dudley, a Briton, and Hansen developed a commanding lead. I was in the midpack, while Lyle and a few others began to fade. The knot in my stomach loosened slightly as my confidence grew.

In the fifth lap disaster struck. More and more of my classmates were pulling ahead of me, and I believed Lyle had more in him than he was showing. I panicked. I opened up full throttle and broke out of the pack, actually covering most of the distance between myself and Dudley. It looked as if I might even be able to catch him. But then a dagger of pain slashed up through my left calf, and I knew it was over. I had a cramp.

I tried to run through the pain, but the tortured muscle just wouldn't respond. The others overtook and passed me, and as we

(continued next page)

entered the seventh lap, only Lyle remained at my heels. Then, as I'd feared, his second wind kicked in and he zoomed on past. I stayed close enough to pick his pocket if I wanted, but I just couldn't catch him.

Satan was waiting at the gate as we approached. His smile, previously so kind and affable, was now quite frightening in its display of eagerness and lust. For the first time since I met him he looked truly evil. He reached for me greedily as Lyle scooted through the gate.

To this day I don't know how I got away with what I did next. It seems incredible that Satan wouldn't have anticipated it, but then, most people probably aren't dumb enough to try to trick him. I was.

I summoned up all the powers of suggestion and persuasion I'd learned in the past six months. As he reached for me, I looked him right in the eyes and said, "Not me! Him!" and gestured behind me.

Satan paused for only a moment, genuinely confused, and I leapt at the gate. I felt a strange ripping sensation, slipped through the rapidly-closing crack of the gate, and then heard it clang shut behind me. I was free.

As I limped quickly away from the wall, with chest heaving and leg throbbing, I noticed a strange smarting in the soles of my feet. I couldn't account for it until I recalled the ripping feeling I'd had at the gate. Slowly I turned to face away from the sun, took a deep breath and looked down. There I saw what had happened.

Satan wouldn't be leaving the Black School of Padua empty-handed. He had taken my shadow.

That was twenty years ago. I've done pretty well for myself since then. I went back to New Orleans and immediately began making my fortune. At first I was afraid of Satan coming for me, but soon realized he could always find me whenever he wanted to. When nothing happened after several months went by, I stopped worrying about it.

It hasn't always been easy to hide my unusual deformity, but most people don't even notice, and I can generally control the rest with my powers. After a few years in New Orleans, I moved up to Anchorage and got in on the ground floor of the lawn-statue industry there. Life's been good. I'm not as rich as I could be, but I've also found I'm not as ambitious as I thought I was. I'm comfortable, and that's all I really need. I rarely even use my powers any more; I've reached the point where I can do just as well for myself using conventional methods.

The others have had varying degrees of success. Dudley decided to be a rock star, and soon broke every record ever set by the Beatles, Elvis and Zamfir. His biggest audience consisted mainly of fundamentalists, who listened to his records backwards and immediately became ardent admirers. Half a billion people went into mourning when he died in a plane crash.

Hansen went into business in a big way, and within ten years he was worth forty billion dollars and owned a substantial percentage of the world's resources. He ran into some tax trouble he couldn't get out of, and ended up having to flee to South America. Now he controls all the drugs leaving that continent, and makes almost as much.

Lyle became vice-president.

I've come to realize Satan's true strategy in operating the School. True, his business was acquiring souls, but the student he snags at the end of every school is only the beginning. The power he dispenses tends to be corruptive, not just of its possessor, but also of the people who surround him/her. And all corrupt souls become Satan's eventually. The Black School is an investment, not an expense. But by living simply and keeping a low profile, I seem to have broken the pattern. I have twice cheated the devil out of my soul.

(Continued next issue)

HAPPY DAY BOWLING

by Bangor Zack Bullen

Notice the magic

Hand of fate—

Dot bowled

One hundred and sixty-eight!

"Terrific!" I shouted,

"Encore! Encore!

Try it again, Dot,

One time more!"

She picked up her ball

(A pleasant chore)

And bravely advanced

To bowl once more!

(Elayne inquired:

"What was her score?"

I checked my records:

"One seventy four!!")

ADVERTISEMENT by Brian Ruddy

To be, or not to be; that is the question...

...AND DR. JACK KEVORKIAN HAS THE ANSWER!

INTRODUCING THE DECAPITRON 2000: DR. K'S LATEST MASTERPIECE OF MECHANICAL SUICIDE TECHNOLOGY!

DR. K WANTS TO KNOW: ARE YOU DEPRESSED? RIDDLED WITH DISEASE? BROKEN-HEARTED OVER A FAILED ROMANCE? OVERWHELMED BY DEBT? DROWNING IN A NIGHTMARISH QUAGMIRE OF CHEMICAL ADDICTION? STUCK WITH A BAD HAIRCUT? HORRIFIED BY THE PROSPECT OF THE G.O.P. MAINTAINING ITS FIENDISH STRANGLEHOLD ON THE PRESIDENCY FOR THE REST OF THIS CENTURY AND WELL INTO THE NEXT? TORMENTED BY FEAR OF ANOTHER MELLOW, INTROSPECTIVE SPRINGSTEEN ALBUM? PLAGUED BY THAT "NOT SO FRESH" FEELING?

If you've answered "Yes" to any of the above, Dr. K's DECAPITRON 2000 may be the perfect ticket out of your private hell!

The good doctor wants to help you slip the surly bonds of Earth and touch the face of the deity of your choice!

The DECAPITRON 2000 will shortly render all traditional methods of self-murder completely obsolete!

The DECAPITRON 2000—quick, efficient, relatively painless state-of-the-art deathtech!

The Doctor realizes that you, an intelligent consumer, may have some questions about the DECAPITRON 2000, such as the following:

"Exactly what is the DECAPITRON 2000?"

The DECAPITRON 2000 is a highly complex, user-deadly, self-liquidation facilitator.

"How does it work?"

For obvious reasons, Dr. K is disinclined to divulge certain information regarding the device's specific technical workings. After all, we wouldn't want someone to try building one out in the garage and end up doing himself an injury.

"What does it look like?"

That much we can tell you. Perhaps the critic from Mutilation Monthly put it best when he described the DECAPITRON 2000 as "an ideal, utterly transcendent synthesis of guillotine and cold-cut slicer—incorporating the finest elements of each and ruthlessly eschewing any aesthetic embellishments that would have been superfluous to and/or inharmonious with its purely utilitarian design and function." (This from a man who had deliberately impaled his grandmother on a lawn dart.) He continued: "Not even the twisted psyche of Poe could have conceived such a diabolical and thoroughly charming device." He gave it the magazine's highest possible rating: "5 caskets." The only other suicide machines that ever got 5-casket ratings were the Ford Pinto and a Salvadoran voting booth.

"Is the DECAPITRON 2000 as messy as its name implies?"

You betcha.

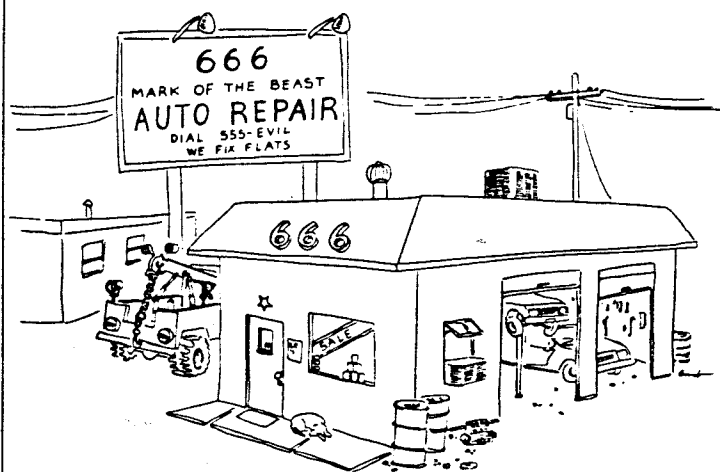
"What happens to all the heads?"

Before the procedure begins, the user—that is, the client—is presented with a number of options regarding the eventual fate of his or her severed noggin. For example, the client may wish to donate it, along with the body, to medical science, or perhaps the National Center for Motorcycle Helmet Research. Or, of course, it can be handed over to his or her loved ones for their own personal use.

"Gee, until recently, any ideas I might have had about killing myself were vague and uncertain. But all this publicity lately about doctor-assisted suicide has definitely pushed me over the edge. Now I can't wait to get dead! How do I go about making an appointment with Dr. K?"

Simply call him toll-free at 1-800-WASTE-ME.

BIBLE PROPHECY #42



THE ANTICHRIST IS ALIVE AND RESIDES IN JOPLIN, MISSOURI

Commercial McClue-In

by "Kid" Sieve

Been super-busy watching and listening to tons of ads on the tubes (subway, radio and boob) and taking copious notes during the summertime doldrums, so let's get right to it:

Marty Shugrue—there's a scary-looking dude. He's the guy who took over Eastern when a federal bankruptcy court snatched it out of Frank Lorenzo's greedy, union-busting hands. As if the Shugmeister hadn't enough problems what with the still-unsettled mechanics' strike (now in its second year), he's now got a safety fraud case to plead (not having talked to any strikers, I don't know for certain whether this is one of the reasons for the walk-out in the first place—lots of shit going down involving management instructing mechanics to disregard procedure and falsify records to pretend they did plane inspections), either guilty or *nolo contendere*. And he's still conferring with Northwest (they of the allegedly drunken pilots) about a takeover. So what's he doing on the air? Sweet-talking employees (read management-level employees—you can tell by the executive clothing and mostly white faces) in "true-life" pep-talk segments, schmoozing aboard planes and in power-lunches with rich white yuppies like himself about how flyers should Give Eastern Another Chance. If he really wants customers' business, he might think about giving collective bargaining another chance. Stay tuned, no doubt.

The Federal Trade Commission has copped out of mandating health warnings on alcohol advertising, citing inconclusive evidence as to whether ever-present TV beer ads encourage consumption. Hell, folks, all ads encourage consumption; I mean, duh! Naturally, the alcohol industry is fighting any legislation (this particular one is cosponsored by Joseph P. Kennedy—yay!—and Albert Gore). However, these same drug pushers are letting us know in no uncertain terms that Our Freedom is about to be Taken Away—yes, the big bad government (the same one run by their friends) wants to steal more beer money from you, The Little Guy, and it's up to All Of Us (but especially those of us with big advertising budgets) to protest this terribly unfair pending "sin tax." Anheuser-Busch, surely the most objective observer in these proceedings, even has a toll-free number where you can lodge your complaints. This is a little bit like tobacco companies suddenly discovering free speech when legislation threatens to cut back ad space for their peddling operations. It's been my experience that every time a company whines about how the poor taxpayer will be charged more for something, it's really because the company itself is about to have fines levied upon it and this is their brand of "plausible deniability" in passing along increased costs. If they cared so much about people, it'd make more sense to allow warning labels than to protest higher prices... Since NY Public Affairs Commish Markie-poo (Mark Greene) has gotten on Camel's case about sexism and ultra-hipness-appealing-to-youngsters in their billboard ads, well, the company has gotten rid of the omnipresent Chick In The Background, but seems to have gotten even more swinging in its depiction of that wild and crazy Smooth Character, Camel Joe. His proboscis is still as prominently phallic as ever (show of hands: how many men feel inadequate every time you pass a Camel billboard?), but his presence is now at group-type events, like an open-air prizefight with the best pastel sunset in the background that I've seen in a long while on a print ad, and a motorcycle rumble (this "pack of camels" scene is available on a t-shirt you can get free with your next purchase—cough cough—of three packs)... Not to be outdone, Newport's brand of hipness extends to comedy—bad comedy, to be specific. Reads their news ad copy, "Last Call to the First Annual Newport-Alive-With-Pleasure! World's Worst Joke Contest... send us your tired, your wretchedly pitiful attempts at humor" (or attempts at ripping off once-meaningful Statue of Liberty epigraphs?) "...The decision of our expert panel of judges is final. Unless we change our minds" and more such assorted snideness. The address given is P.O. Box 7197, Somerville, NJ 08876, and I'd like to suggest sending in their own slogan as the world's worst bad-taste joke...

While we're on the subject of drugs, a recent article I read begins "Scientists have found a class of chemicals that completely blocks the ability of the AIDS virus to infect human cells in test-tube studies," surely wonderful news. The article goes on to say that the artificially-created chemicals form molecules known as CPFs, and are made from synthetic versions of the amino acids proline and phenylalanine. Hmm, phenylalanine—where have I heard that name before? Oh yes—it's one of the main ingredients in aspartame (aka NutraSweet)! And you thought it was bananas and milk. Let's hope CPFs won't break down into component parts when heated, like their sugary relatives; I hear bodies can get around 98°...

Many people consider carbonated sodas a form of drug, so that segues us neatly into mocking the latest RC Cola ads, with a bunch of white assholes looking terribly, terribly stupid, bobbing up and down trying to "rap." Imagine rap as done by someone who hasn't a clue as to the rudiments of rhythm and scan (the two main components of the artform); this is even worse than that. They're so bad, so hopelessly off, so damn WHITE (they're at the beach and they're not even California-nuts!) that their pseudo-rhyming voices are dubbed in, and even the dubs are bad! Joe Piscopo's Fat Boy character laughs at these clowns... On the other hand, the new ads for Barq's Root Beer, with a reggae beat, are absolutely cool, and viciously HOT. Definitely the sexiest (without being sexist, as you get treated to bodies of both genders) commercials on the air.

Some people, for reasons known only to themselves, consume Worcestershire sauce like a drug, much to the chagrin of the protagonists in the new Lea & Perrin's ad. You see a billboard, hear a chainsaw being operated, the billboard falls down, and behind it are two Gary Larson-type cows (folks in cow suits, match) giving each other high-fives. Amusing, and an interesting pro-animal rights statement in a way, coming from a company that makes its living off of meat. I guess that would make k.d. lang proud...

From animals to animation: Jed has lots of ad-animation news in his column this time, of course, but I wanted to steal one from him because I think it points out just how ridiculously petty some networks can get. Now that Matt Groening's creation "The Simpsons" is enjoying so much runaway success, with FOX the seemingly main beneficiary, competing networks ABC and NBC are refusing to air ads made with Bart Simpson for Butterfinger candy bars back before the show spun off from Tracey Ullman. I guess I can understand their reluctance to air the post-hype Burger King commercials the Simpsons' creators have now made, but really, most people nowadays probably don't even associate "The Simpsons" with TV any more, now that they've become an independent short-duration icon of their own right, sporting some really nifty t-shirts—especially the neat bootleg Black Simpsons ones making the rounds in New York, which are positively Afrocentric in their consciousness! We can be thankful CBS isn't perpetuating this nonsense, saying animated characters doing commercials are okay as long as they don't mention their program. (Cosby, of course, isn't animated, so I guess his constant hawking is okay on all networks...)

On the other hand, CBS's intro for their fall lineup belies any sense. That's the one that begins, "When CBS introduced 'Murphy Brown,' Communism crumbled... When we introduced 'Major Dad,' the Berlin Wall fell..." (not only is all this inaccurate chronologically, as MB and MD were on a full year before these events in Eastern Europe, but I kinda like to think the so-called fall of Communism was perpetuated more by Major Tony Nelson than Major Dad), and ends its teaser with the conjecture that "who knows what" some new bad, interchangeable sitcom or other ("Get ready for one of the funniest comedies of the 'Free World!' Yeah, right. What, is it from England or something?") will change next? Whereas the first part of the promo is harmless enough lame humor, this visual has someone dressed up like Cuba's leader Fidel Castro in front of one of those bad-movie strategic war-type tables (presumably planning to Take Over The World, although this is not overtly stated) where one moves toy soldiers around with hockey sticks, shaking his head and saying, "Ay ay ay!" like the modern-day Frito Bandito CBS would like him to be. Seems CBS's news and entertainment divisions are blurring more than ever in their propaganda slants lately.

Fortunately, not only has NBC recently broadcast amateur baseball live from Havana (with, as far as I could tell not listening too closely, no ideological slurs on the part of Bob Costas and The Other Guy), but there's also Ted Turner to redeem us all. Oh, say what you will of Jane Fonda's current beau, the King of Kolorization himself, but I just can't stay mad at the man. He's actually gotten Fidel Castro to do a commercial for CNN! I haven't seen it (living as I do in the land that Cable Forgot), but it's supposed to have Fidelito saying something like, "You know, being the controversial world leader that I am, I must keep abreast of world events. When I need news quickly and accurately, I turn to CNN." Castro calling an American station "accurate" should put a crimp in whining CIA spooks' plans to subvert Cuban sovereignty with TV Marti on the pretext of Cuban citizenry not receiving US news (I mean really, a Spanish version of "Entertainment Tonight" is that important in our spiteful "hearts and minds" war against this brave little island?).

Speaking of baseball broadcasts, now that the season's in full swing we're seeing the new crop of Major League Baseball's ads promoting itself. This year's MLB commercials are much more palatable than in previous seasons (although overall they're relatively nice and low-key, some past spots have been rife with sexism here and there, just like baseball itself), smartly taking us Forward Into The Past, when today's stars were little boys with their own trials and tribulations. My favorite is the one with little Tony Gwynn. It's almost enough to make folks forget what a horrible ripoff ballparks (and baseball) are nowadays for the average (non-corporate) fan.

On the other hand, I think these during-game tie-ins are becoming a bit much. You know the ones: the "Budweiser Player of the Game" and the "GE Scoreboard," that sort of nonsense. This is nothing new—I've discussed it before in the context of corporations slapping their logos and sponsorship on any and every event—but only recently has this sponsorship been parcelled out in bits and pieces. What took the cake for me was the, get this, Nuprin Painful Play of the Game! I mean, come on; this is reaching so far I don't even have a comeback comment on it! (By the way, somebody must've tipped the Nuprin folks off that the expression "it's in these little yellow pills," used during their regular ads, conjured up the old Rolling Stones' "Mother's Little Helper" anti-prescription (and over-the-counter) drug anthem for too many viewers, as they've now overdubbed the line to "it's in these little Nuprin pills," losing the scan of the sentence entirely and really disappointing those of us who live to mock them. Oh well, at least their tag line remains: "Little. Yellow. Different." Bah.)

(continued next page)

Bo Jackson, of course, is in a class by himself, no matter what the sport. Nike has come up with the best Bo-featured ad yet, consisting of multiple superim-Bo-sitions talking with each other and to themselves, cross-referencing all over the place (one Bo drops the line "I knew I should have taken that right turn at Albuquerque!" for instance) and even bringing back, in a brilliant cameo, that wacky California mayor and sometime-hippie singer Sonny Bono (you even hear strains of Roger McGuinn-type guitar in the background for his walk-on) who, commenting to the camera on one of the multiBos wondering, "What's he doing here?" simply states, "I thought this was another one of those 'Bo-knows' commercials." Okay, everybody groan together...it's a lotta fun, and almost a triple pun if one remembers back to the old "Sonny & Cher" show where similar (though cruder!) camera layover techniques were used during the "V-A-M-P" segments.

Yes, it is amazing what modern technology hath wrought. Take, for example, currently-running radio ads reminding folks of Times in Everyone's Lives when they really need a fax machine and just can't get to one—why, now they can just go to designated post offices, thanks to a sweetheart deal worked out between the USPS and MCI Telecommunications (and you wondered why first-class mail was jumping \$4 next year, you naive ninny; why, to serve the corporate world, of course!). I guess I shouldn't throw stones, as I must admit the fax machine has helped several TJ columnists get their columns to E. in the nick of time, but I really must wonder if this technomania isn't just the latest incarnation of a conspicuous-consumption-crazy society that insists on creating needs which it can then fill with what I call "yuppie porn." And, as Ellen Goodman points out in a recent article on things like mobile phones and such, "In theory, the population explosion of phones and their fax-similes has sprung into being to offer mobility and freedom from the office. Indeed, people who take phones to the gym, the restaurant, even the bathroom, swear by the freedom they gain with this telephone tether. But watching my colleagues-on-call, I have become convinced that this network is a tie that binds more and more people to work. The executives who go to the beach with towel and telephone aren't liberated from the office: They are only on work release. The cellular commuters haven't changed the work environment, they have turned every environment into workspace." But hey, they still think they're free, 'cause commercials for these products promise freedom to them. An important fact to remember about commercials, once again: They don't sell individual products as much as they sell the feelings that owning these products will bring to you, The Viewer. Remember that the next time you see a beer ad featuring happy, partying people. You might not want the beer, but you want to experience that comradery, and that's the emotion the ad generates for you.

Another facet of our phone-crazy society has of course been the emergence of those wacky 540/970/1-900 overcharging numbers, and far be it for phone companies, the major revenue recipients from these ripoffs, to discourage their use. NYNEX has taken this one further—they're now offering a phone book called "Info Pages," so you can be up on all the different true confessions, pro-gambling and horoscope lines (not to mention the lewd talk and dating services). I find this particularly amusing not only in light of all the crap that's starting to surface about how NYNEX has scammed the public by, it turns out, overcharging them the past few years while engaging in all these money-making ventures on the side (the business pages of NY papers are full of NYNEX On Trial, and to the credit of the utilities commission, a rate drop is being recommended rather than the absurd rate hike for which NYNEX is begging them); but it appears that NYNEX executives, along with the bigwigs at several other corporations, have been partaking in so-called "Pervert Parties" down in Florida recently, at the rate-payers' expense. Maybe they connected with these Pervert Parties through all those 970 numbers found in their book...

For too many people, technology still means the car (and we can't entirely blame individual drivers for this, in a country that, led by auto makers, discourages its legislators and citizenry from even considering expansion of public transit in order to cut down on greenhouse gases expelled by cars' exhaust systems—welcome to decades of Long, Hot Summers), and for Chrysler, cars still mean Jap-bashing (not that Chrysler isn't in partnership with foreign countries to produce some of their makes, heaven forbid! but after all, those countries are filled with white folks), as in their current "Advantage Chrysler" campaign which smears "Honda-lovers" with the same venomous sneer heretofore used for "Commie lovers" or "liberals"...And, tailored for people who'd rather fly than drive, ex-Munster Fred Gwynne does the voice on a currently-running US Air campaign which reminds us that all other Western countries give their citizens decent vacations (some as many as six weeks), while Americans, on the average, only receive two a year from our miserly corporations. So does Herman advise Americans to incite revolution and fight for our dignity as workers? Come on, this is American television, of course not! He says we should, in one of the more annoying expressions of the '80s (now being used ad nauseum by, among other corporations, the aforementioned Nike), Go For It! Hey, it's okay that American workers are dumped on, because We Know How To Party, even when we have almost no time to do it! Go Team!

I've gone on way too long, so I'll just ramble on briefly to end this epic spewing...Recently while in Pluck-U, a fine Buffalo wings establishment in the Village, S.H. Otis and I noticed the video screen was playing VH-1. We could tell this because, all through the music videos, the VH-1 logo was there in the corner, kind of translucent but obvious. S.H. caught a bit of CNN on the

"YOU CAN TELL THE IDEALS
OF A NATION BY ITS
ADVERTISEMENTS" —
Norman Douglas.

NUTRASUC
MARQUE D'EDULCORANT

AS WE GO TO PRESS - FLASH!

"MARIA AB BANNED BY TV" - SEE IT #78 - da Kid

AVEC ASPARTAME

Thanks
TJD!

other screen and reported that its logo was also omnipresent all during an interview with one of those self-important rich white men who run our lives. For those of you who thought a station flashing its logo for 5-10 seconds during a show was bad, this is the wave of the future...When I grow up, can I be the "Bash the Beets" lady on that storage bag commercial?...Bobby Darin's son wants to sue McDonald's over Mac Tonight, saying his late dad's work has been commercialized. Good luck, kid, but whose work hasn't by now?...This issue's Sexism Award goes to the Goodyear spot where the guy's talking to his dog (whose front-seat company he obviously prefers to that of the subject of his conversation), complaining about his girlfriend—"Commitment? What does she call 11 months?" (he muses later, upon swerving his trusty Goodyears to avoid a slippery-road collision, "Maybe God was trying to tell us something," but I for one was rooting for the collision)...and our Questionable Taste raspberry is awarded to Prudential for their "Living Needs Benefits" ad, which starts off with gorgeous autumn shots done to Mel Torme singing, "It's a long way from May to September..." and a gentle voiceover that reads, in part, "We at Prudential believe the last years of your life should be as fulfilling as etc. etc.," then goes on to explain their policy of offering "death benefits while confined to nursing homes." Yeah, I bet those years are mighty fulfilling to oldsters...S.H. claims Dr. John does one of the voices in the new Roy Rogers commercial featuring two fish coveting a Roy burger...Every time I see a Felix-n-Oscar spot for Eagle snacks, I get shudders knowing that the reason Jack Klugman doesn't speak in one of the spots is because he's undergone surgery for throat cancer and has no real voice to speak of any more; it gives the ad an unintended poignancy...okay, I've overstayed my welcome, so until next time, I'm history (or at least current events)!

CONVALESCENCE

by Roger Coleman

The two patients chatting in the recreation room of the rest home were comparing symptoms.

Izzie Packt, a crinkled old man of 85, complained to Reggie, "I've got this terrible constipation. Nothing seems to help. Sometimes I think most of the nurses don't like me because my bowels won't cooperate."

Reggie, a bald little man with arthritis, reported, "Gee, no problem with me. My BM's are like clockwork. Every morning at 5am I have a regular evacuation."

"I'll bet the nurses just love you for that."

"Not really, they don't get me out of bed till 6am."



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AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

by Floyd R. Leavitt

America the beautiful. It hasn't always been that way. At one time our highways were in danger of becoming the waste dumps of the free world with non-biodegradable products such as Nehi Orange Soda Pop bottles and Campbell's Tomato Soup cans.

The beauty of our landscapes has been a long hard-

THE KNOW-IT-ALLS — GORBACHEV, BUSH, AND YOU — STILL DON'T GET THE PICTURE.

Shoot a S.A.S.E. to: 5 WRONGS RIGHTED OR
WORLD PEACE — Box 2243
YOUNGSTOWN — OHIO, 44504



THE EIGHT WONDERS OF THE WORLD

It wasn't enough that He Who Is Beyond Disgusting should build a

Taj Mahal; after all, whoever heard of Shah Jahan and his wife Mumtaz-i-Mahal? They may be famous in the history of architecture, but let's face it, in the grand scheme of things, Mrs. Mahal is no Ivana. So it warmed my heart to hear the guy on the commercial announce that the Taj Mahal is the 8th wonder of the world. This certainly puts Donald the Great in more worthy company. Alas, other than the Taj Mahal, the pyramids are the only surviving wonders. I guess the pharaohs are almost great enough to be mentioned in the same sentence with the incomparable Don. The hanging gardens of Babylon were built by another kissy-face for his favorite wife. History teaches us that it actually IS possible to grow quite fond of a wife, provided only one has several. In this case the amorous husband was Nebuchadnezzar, another guy who might have been worthy to lick the great Don's boots.

The temple of Artemis at Ephesus was designed by two Greek architects no one remembers, Chersiphron and his son Metagenes. You may be sure that if they were alive today they would not have been invited to the opening of the graet Taj Mahal (nor would their opinions have been consulted about its design, I feel certain). Artemis of Ephesus was the lewd, multi-breasted fertility goddess aspect of the usually chaste Artemis. The only thing Trump-like about the temple of Artemis was that some of the columns were donated by the legendary King Croesus, the Donald Trump of the ancient world. The columns had "CROESUS" carved in big letters from top to bottom, painted gold. The temple was destroyed by barbarians, something that would never happen to one of Mr. Trump's creations.

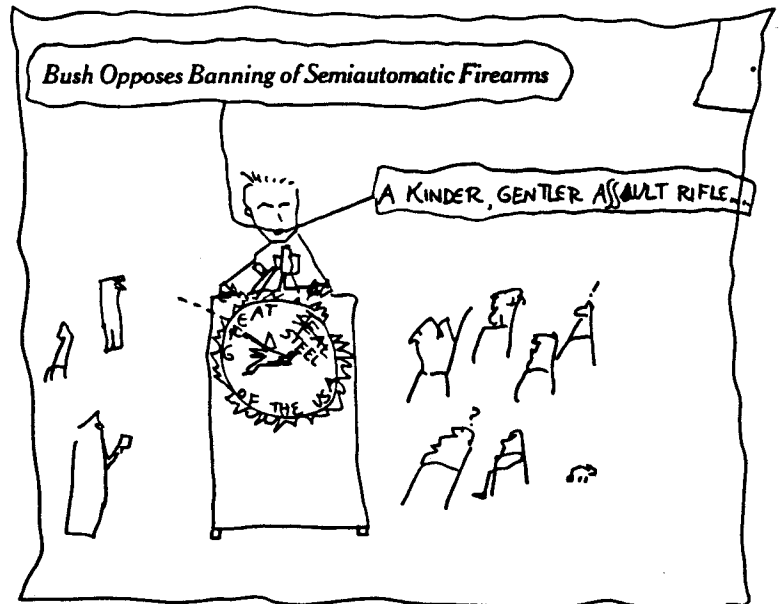
The statue of Zeus, 40 feet high, and made of gold and ivory, was made by Phidias, one of the greatest sculptors of history, who would no doubt be a pauper if he lived in the US today. The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus was the tomb of the otherwise obscure official of the Persian Empire, Mausolos. Since that time, all large tombs have been called mausoleums. The lighthouse of Alexandria, 440 feet high, was the 6th wonder. The Colossus of Rhodes was a bronze statue that stood near the harbor of Rhodes. It was as large as the Statue of Liberty. I think Mr. Trump's next project should be a statue of himself of similar size, the Colossus of Atlantic City, the 9th wonder of the world. I'm quite sure the people of this country would be happy to pay for it.

fought battle to maintain. Manmade products have ever encroached on the pristine beauty of our new world. But today we live in a society where manmade programs have been initiated to stop manmade injustices against the environment.

Programs such as recycling. Recycling Nehi Orange Soda Pop bottles reduces the cost of making new Nehi Orange Soda Pop bottles and takes them out of our lakes, streams and rivers. Recycling Campbell's Tomato Soup cans makes it possible to make more Campbell's Tomato Soup cans and even Campbell's Chicken Noodle Soup cans. And recycling aluminum cans makes useful products like Reynolds Wrap and lightweight hand braks for ten-speed bicycles.

But today our environment is faced with another man-made threat. Another manmade threat more dangerous than any before faced. The non-biodegradable paper diaper.

To see a paper diaper flutter in the down-stretched limbs of a Palo Verde tree brings tears to my eyes. By recycling paper diapers we can make useful biodegradable products like paper plates, paper cups and paper spoons to help keep America, the beautiful. So please...don't throw away, recycle.

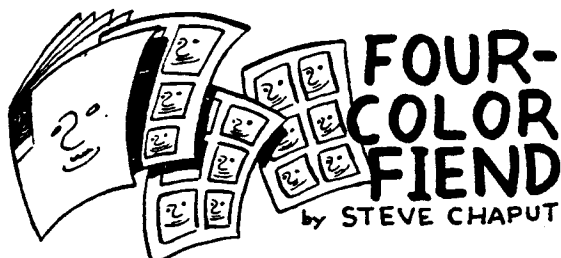


EMPIRE OF CONTRADICTIONS

essay by Sigmund Weiss

Our USA began as an empire of contradictions, fitting crossword puzzles to a lethargy called Civilization. From slavery and a sense of combining racism with dead-head promissary notations immolating Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Madison, Lincoln, real estate brokers, bankers, oil magnates, international cartels, governmental bureaucracies intermingling with Will-Haves, our USA took over everything, money, people, land, Indians, Mexicans, the southwest, making itself the most powerful autocrat in a world of autocracies, half-assed democracies, predetermining how people should think, what to say, to do with what one has or one has not and formed out of air a UNITED AMERICANISM ruling every nation in our world.

Thus has our beautiful USA become insignificantly big so that the character of its inhabitants, whether human, animal, plant or insect, seems to always get lost beyond that Nature which is Nature to a nut-house. Those guys far up in the cosmos won't ever come down here any more to each us what we never learned, don't know.



Have quite a few reviews to get through this time, so I'll only mention a couple of things before we get down to serious business:

Since my review of **GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY** last issue, I've had the chance to read #s 3 and 4, and have also been in touch with writer/artist **Jim Valentino**. Things really start coming together in the new issues, and Jim seems to have a lot of good things planned for the future. I think that fans less jaded than me will love this book, and I have to admit to a growing fondness. Good, fun reading.

Evan Dorkin, he of **MILK & CHEESE** fame, will be doing the pencilling chores on Dark Horse's upcoming **PREDATOR** miniseries. Way to go, dude!

Say, I'm currently doing a little research for a column on Western comics (the genre, not the company). Anyone with suggestions, comments or back issues of Dell/Gold Key western titles (especially with Tom Gill art), get in touch—thanks!

Now, for some serious reviews...

GIVE ME LIBERTY (Dark Horse; \$4.95 US/\$6.15 Canada)—**Frank Miller** is back, this time as writer, with **Dave Gibbons** doing the art chores. This "prestige-format" miniseries takes place in the late 1990s into the early years of the next century, and tells the story of **Martha Washington**, a young African-American woman. Martha begins life as a semiliterate child brought up in a low-income project-turned-prison. Fortunately, Martha befriends one of her teachers, who soon discovers that the young girl is quite the computer hacker. Not exactly a way out of her situation but, as she discovers in later years, quite a handy talent. Miller and Gibbons have created an all-too-frightening and plausible future. Lots of potential.

WORLD'S FINEST (DC; \$3.95 US/\$4.95 Can.)—**Dave Gibbons** put down his pencils and brushes and sat down at the typewriter to script this old-fashioned teamup of the Big Two. **Steve Rude** has done a very nice job with an able assist from **Karl Kesel**, but the remarkable thing about this 3-issue series are the incredible **Fleischeresque** covers that Rude has painted. They instantly conjure up images from those classic art deco Superman cartoons. The story is more a tribute to the pre-CRISIS Superman/Batman team than anything new or extraordinary. Throw in **Lex Luthor**, the **Joker** and an orphanage full of cute tykes and sit back. Fun comics, though a little steep price-wise.

GREEN-GREY SPONGE-SUIT SUSHI TURTLES™ (Mirage Studios, \$3.33 US)—If there is one thing you can say about those Turtle Boys (**Eastman & Laird**), it's that they don't take this whole thing seriously. Hell, if I had turned a one-joke parody of a pastiche into a multi-million-dollar international phenomenon, I'd have one heck of a sense of humor too. Anyway, they have set loose **Mark Martin** (he of the brilliant **GNATRAT** series of one-shots) not only on the film version of the Turtles, but also the whole merchandising marketplace. While biting the hand, **Martin** demonstrates why he is one of the most dead-on satirists working in the field. Cowabunga!!

THE TEMPORARY NATIVES (Epic; \$3.95 US/\$4.95 Can.)—This is a color one-shot, specifically done for Epic, of the **TALES FROM THE HEART** usually published in black & white by **Slave Labor**. If you aren't familiar with the series, it deals with semi-autobiographical stories of a group of **Peace Corps** volunteers in Africa during the early 1980s. This story tells of one particularly obnoxious **Peace Corps** worker and how his perceptions and prejudices cause his eventual downfall and nervous breakdown. Regular writers **Cindy Gott**, **Rafael Nieves** and artist **Sietu Hayden** turn in quality work. Both this graphic novel (48 pages) and the regular series are recommended.

EXQUISITE CORPSE (Dark Horse; \$2.50 each US/\$3.25 Can.)—An interesting experiment in comics. A three-issue miniseries, with all issues available simultaneously, they are pre-bagged and identified not by number but by color: red, green and yellow. The books are made to be read in any order, with the order of events shading the way you perceive the plot. It deals with **S&M**, child abuse, incest and homosexuality, with a murder and some masterbation along the way. An incredible and disturbing masterpiece. Story by **Jerry Prosser** with art and video image covers by the **Pander Brothers**. Recommended, with the caveat that this is not an easy book to put down and forget.

GOLGO 13 #s 1 and 2 (Lead Publications; \$1.50 US/\$1.95 Can.)—Well, this mysterious item, reprinting in English a popular Japanese manga series, turns up when you least expect it. Apparently written and drawn by **Takao Saito** (with no interior credits for the English version), the book follows the "assignments" of a professional assassin known only as **Golgo 13**. Each issue deals with a hit, its setup and execution (no pun intended). While the first issue was in black & white, this second is beautifully colored. With sparse dialogue, much of the action is carried visually, with great emphasis on facial expressions to convey inner conflict. Very well done.

DOC CHAOS (Vortex; \$3.00 US/\$3.50 Can.)—Strange 4-color book from across the Big Pond. I'm guessing that both writer **David Thorpe** and artist **Stephen Sampson** are British, since all correspondence is to be addressed there. Genetic engineering, "pirate" television and evil corporations—for whom do you root? Not my cup of tea, but you might feel differently.

I'll quickly mention a couple of books just to let you know they're around:

ELFQUEST: KINGS OF THE BROKEN WHEEL (Warp; \$2.00 US/\$2.50 Can.)—Another miniseries with the same cast of characters.

THE DEMON (DC; \$1.50 US/\$1.85 Can.)—Yet another attempt to do a character that so few do well. **Alan Grant** doesn't.

BIZARRE HEROES (Kitchen Sink; \$2.50 US/\$3.50 Can.)—**Don Simpson** takes a break from downright silliness (**MEGATON MAN** and company) and serious sf (**BORDER WORLD**) to have fun with cloning, villainous corporations and cat-loving masked vigilantes. The sort of stuff that almost, but not quite, is what the Big Two churn out month after month. Recommended.

MIRROR WALKER (Now; \$2.95 US/\$3.50 Can.)—Writer **Marv Wolfman**, artist **Barry D. Peterson** and photographer **Erich Schrempf** have co-created a very interesting 2-issue experiment. The two-dimensional characters have been superimposed over actual photographs (some model sets and actual scenes from New York's Central Park). The story line has to do with magic crystals and interdimensional travel. Fun, silly and recommended.

BATS, CATS & CADILLACS (Now; \$1.75 US/\$2.25 Can.)—Vampires, werewolves and wererats, plus one yuppie insomniac. Fun book that makes no attempt to take itself seriously. Writer **Diane M. Piren** and artists **Hannibal King** and **Mike Gustovich** bring us 4-color funny business that has the potential to be quite hot. Give it a try.

BORIS THE BEAR #25 (Nicotat; \$1.95 US/\$2.50 Can.)—Just thought some of you might have missed out on the fact that **Boris** is back! This issue also features a crossover with the Australian-created superhero group **Southern Squadron**. It's good to see this always-enjoyable book back on schedule.

SHADE THE CHANGING MAN (DC; \$2.50 US/\$3.25 Can.)—**Peter Milligan**, whose **SKREEMER** was one of last year's highlights, brings back another character, this time done correctly and in the manner of **HELLBLAZER** and **SANDMAN**. Excellent! (Hey, #2 is the scary "Who Killed JFK?" issue!)

PIRATE CORPS #2 (Slave Labor; \$2.25 US/\$2.75 Can.)—**Evan Dorkin** is back with another great issue of **PC5**. Man, the 2-page **MILK & CHEESE** story is in itself worth the cover price. Fun at the Mall! Yow!! (ED. NOTE: I'm trying to see if I can get Evan to do us a special *Milk & Cheese* cover for **IJ #79**, our 10th Anniversary ish.)

ULTRA KLUTZ #29 (Onward; \$2.00 US/\$2.50 Can.)—One of my very favorite black & whites. In fact, one of my all-round faves. **Jeff Nicholson** is always good, and keep an eye out for his "Through the HabiTrails" in **TABOO #5**.

THE JAM (Slave Labor; \$2.25 US/\$2.75 Can.)—**Bernie E. Mireault**, better known in some circles simply as "BEM," both writes and draws this wonderful look at someone actually putting on a costume and fighting crime at night. Sometimes he'll take his dog. His girlfriend is pretty upset about the whole thing, and even Satan doesn't like the situation, so he may be after the dog. Great!!

ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW, THE COMIC BOOK (Caliber; \$2.95 US/\$3.95 Can.)—Well, I suppose it was only a matter of time, huh? Since this is the fifteenth anniversary of the film's debut, several celebrations are planned. This book is a nice memento. Writer/artist **Kevin Van Hook** has nicely captured the feel of the film. With interviews, songsheets and all sorts of neat stuff, this 3-part series is truly a must-have!

THE AMERICAN Special (Dark Horse; \$2.25 US/\$2.80 Can.)—**Mark Verheiden** is finally back to wrap up the story line left hanging since last year. Also included are examples of the "original" **AMERICAN** series from the '50s-'60s. Nice!

Let's finish this off with something worth supporting:

CHOICES: A Pro-Choice Benefit Comic (Angry Isis; \$4.00 US/\$5.00 Can.; for further info write them at 1982 15th Street, San Francisco, CA 94114)—A wonderful book put together by editor **Trina Robbins** to raise funds and consciousness for the fight to keep the pro-choice option available. With **George** now able to replace **Justice Brennan** with another right-wing yahoo, things will only get much worse, not only for women but for all of us. This book contains work by **Howard Cruse**, **Cathy Guisewite**, **Nicole Hollander**, **Garry Trudeau** and many others. It deserves our support.

Although I usually review only comics, I do want to take time out to plug **PSYCHOTRONIC VIDEO** (make checks payable to **Michael J. Weldon**, 151 First Ave., Dept. PV, New York, NY 10003; subs are \$20 US/\$22 Can. for six issues). This is the best publication for those of us who enjoy all those films that "Entertainment Tonight" doesn't touch. There are also interviews and career retrospectives of the actors, actresses and behind-the-scenes personalities that have brought these films to us. PV also reviews obscure albums, and runs ads from places that sell videos of all those movies you remember from late-night back-to-back viewings. Recommended!

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DESPERATELY SEEKING TURTLES

by Mike McLaren

As a young boy in the suburbs of Denver, Colorado, my image of The Bomb was associated with a crack on the skull and a searing pain in my spine that sent tears to my eyes. I grew up in the late fifties and the Kennedy era, that age of "Duck and Cover." Every time Mrs. Purtsell yelled "Attack!" I cracked my head on the bottom of my desk as I dove to avoid the hot winds of the nuclear inferno, and smacked my back every time I crawled out from beneath the protective metal bunker—a small price to pay for outwitting those vicious Commies. It was a curious thing, however, to fear an unseen enemy and a cosmic force so powerful that it boggled my young mind to the point that the concept became meaningless.

During those years when I cut classes to attend rallies, riots, or symbolic burnings of a university building, I thought about The Bomb. And the more I thought about it the more I realized that the human race isn't significant enough to die in a blaze of glory.

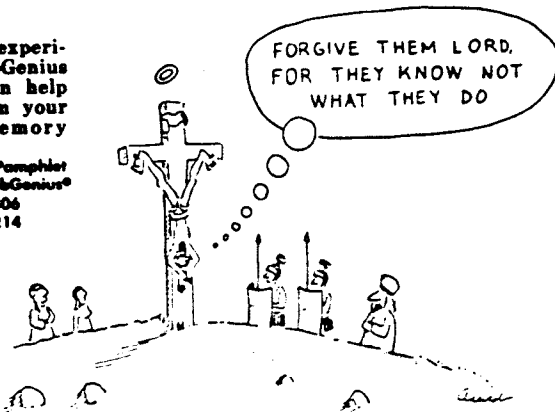
However, we are stupid enough to poison and prey upon ourselves.

My daughter is five, a beautiful child growing up in the age of "Environmental Awareness." She understands the new sickness that plagues Mother Earth. Even at a young age, children recognize death and decay when they see it. Unfortunately, my daughter is also very quiet at night when she sneaks from her bed and stations herself on the balcony above where I sit to watch the late news.

Denver is making headlines because of the toxins that are seeping into the suburban water supplies. Babies are born with puckered faces and no lungs because of the poisons being pumped into the homes that surround an abandoned munitions and chemical dump. West of the city, people are dying of cancer caused by the radiation leaks of Rocky Flats, a military plant that produces triggers for nuclear warheads. My daughter has seen glowing rivers that flow through the urban wastelands of Colorado, and is familiar with the smell that shrouds the entire Rocky Mountain metropolis.

In recent months, the people of Denver have been victimized by increasing numbers of rapes and child molestations, which the news teams report in graphic detail and, as usual, sensationalize for the benefit of the viewing audience. It is only when I hear a horrified gasp from above that I realize my daughter has seen the horrible pictures and heard the gruesome stories.

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And always, as I put her back to bed, she asks, "Daddy, why do people do that?" I just shrug my shoulders and shake my head. I'm just as confused, if not more, than she.

My daughter is hoping that, when all is said and done and the Earth can no longer recover from the illnesses that we inflict upon the soil and ourselves, she becomes a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle, an amphibious reptile born from the searing power of radiation and lacking no appetite for pizza. For the moment, and perhaps for at least another year, my daughter's main wish is to marry Leonardo, her favorite Cowabunga Commando. Personally, I was hoping for a son-in-law more along the lines of Johnny Quest, someone who wouldn't mind helping me commandeer a spaceship to flee this withering speck of cosmic debris. But it won't happen. My grandchildren (if my daughter and I live so long) will be turtles.

And I suppose that I only hurt my own cause. We now live fifty miles north of Denver in a small town of just over 100,000 people, and though our community sports industrial giants like Hewlett Packard, Anheuser-Busch and several Fortune-500 computer firms, it's still possible to walk across open fields within the city limits. Now that spring has arrived, my daughter and I trek out through the field behind our house and visit a small bog choked with cattails, tall marsh reeds and billowing willow bushes. At the center of this mesozoic landscape is a pond that is home to a family of ducks, a number of large frogs and a community of turtles. Every evening my daughter brings her little green friends a chunk of hamburger that she sets near the edge of the bog. Within twenty minutes, the turtles lumber out of the water and devour the precious gift. They are very noisy at mealtime.

My daughter continues the ritual because she wants the turtles to grow "big and strong" so that they can leave the miniature swamp and move into our house. The sooner her amphibious friends move in the sooner she can begin to learn the art of becoming a turtle.

I've thought about it for several days now, and have made a decision. I don't want to be a turtle. I want to pretend that the human race is better than that. I agree with Randy Newman, let's drop the big one and see what happens. Why not? For one split second we can pretend that we were heroes, that we were worthy of the magnificent explosion that thunders silently through the cosmic void of eternity.

It is better to die with humility than indignation.

Zack's Ad

Long Island, 1915, in summer--the meat was frequently spoiled. Folks got sick! In winter, no fresh fruit or vegetables. No indoor bathrooms, just an "outhouse" out in the snow. Icy cold! (Ask your grandparents.)

Count your blessings. Buy Neil Young; Louis Armstrong albums! New? Used? Tonight for your VCR - The Marx Brothers' "A Night At The Opera!" Enjoy!

COMPLAINT DEPARTMENT

by James D. Crabtree

Let me tell you, my life is not easy. For one thing, I'm in the Army handling secret material. I'm not even allowed to talk about my job. Since I'm not allowed to talk, my mother-in-law thinks that I don't really have a job, so I'm a bum. Eh, I don't really care what she thinks, but my wife, she's another matter. I really care about what she thinks. Of course, that's not very hard, seeing that she agrees with me all the time...

The only fault she has is that she tends to over-exaggerate. For instance, she's always telling me how much I complain. What, complain? I never complain.

Why, I remember just the other day when we went to a reastaurant for breakfast, she was telling me, "Yosef, no matter where we go to eat, you always complain."

"What do you mean, complain, I never complain about—hey wait a minute here. Mr. Waiter, what the hell is this on my eggs?"

Mr. Waiter tells me, "We call it cheese."

"Cheese? Is that what you call it here in El Paso? In New Mexico we call it yellow cheese. I want white cheese."

My wife, she starts in again with, "Oh, everybody else is having yellow cheese, why do you have to be different?"

"Because it's not white cheese. If everybody else had phlegm on their eggs, I suppose I should ask Mr. Waiter to spit on my plate?"

By now the manager has come out because I've been raising my voice about the eggs. "What seems to be the problem here?" he asks.

"What seems to be the problem? The problem is your waiter here gave me yellow cheese. If I were a Baptist or a Lutheran even, you can bet I wouldn't be looking at yellow cheese. I'd be seeing white cheese. But I'm Jewish, so your waiter here won't even spit on my plate!"

The only good thing about breakfast is that we got it free. The manager was so happy that we left that he insisted that we not pay. That was fine with me, because I hate getting cheese I don't really want.

For lunch, I went with my Mormon friend John, who's in the post Ordnance Disposal Unit. Now don't get me wrong, I really like John, but if I found a bomb under my bed I think I would rather try to take care of it myself than let John mess with it. Anyway, we went to a hamburger place, where we placed our orders.

"I'll have a coke," John sais. That sounds good, so I asked for the same thing. "Yes, Mr. Waiter, I'll have a Coke too."

Then, trying to be polite, I strike up a conversations. "Do you think I'm always complaining? I mean, my wife, she's always telling me that I'm complaining, but I don't really think I complain that much."

John, he's busy looking at some girl with a big black hate and a cape. To me, she looked like Zorro, but to John she must have had potential. "What?" he asks me.

"Never mind. Here's the waiter with our drinks."

The waiter, he comes over and gives us two Cokes. John's Coke is in one of the biggest glasses I've ever seen, a glass the size of New Jersey. The Coke the waiter gives me is the size of a thimble.

I grabbed the putz of a waiter by his little apron and told him, "Wait just a minute, Mr. Waiter, I think there's a problem here."

The man turns and looks at my gentile friend with his huge Coke and me with my tiny Coke and has the nerve to say, "What problem?"

"What problem?", he asks? You gave my friend here this huge Coke, which he doesn't deserve (believe me, I know), and give me this tiny, Jewish-sized Coke, and you have the nerve to say, 'What problem?'?"

"Oh, that," says the smart-alecky waiter. "We ran out of glasses."

As the waiter started to leave, I said, "Oh sure. As soon as

you see the Jew out here you run out of regular glasses. 'Hey, there's a Jew out there. He wants a Coke. Let's give him one in a specimen cup.' That's what they said."

So finally, our Arabic waiter (I know that had to be why he hates Jews) came back with our hamburgers. I noticed right away that there was something wrong with them.

"Wait just a minute, Mr. Waiter. Where did you get these fries?"

Our waiter sighed and asked, "What seems to be the problem now?"

I pointed to my plate. "These are curly fries."

The waiter just stared at us.

"Curly fries," I continued, "not regular fries, straight fries. I wanted straight fries."

John was no help at all. There he is, munching away on his curly fries, biting into his hamburger with yellow cheese, and drinking his gentile-sized Coke. The waiter, he has the nerve to ask, "What's the difference?"

"Oy vey!" I says. "'What's the difference?' he asks. The difference is that I like my fries straight. Like the fries they give you in Los Angeles. When I have straight fries I can stick them in the ketchup bottle. With these San Francisco-style curly fries, I have to put ketchup all over them, and I hate that. I either get just a little too much ketchup or not enough ketchup."

Meanwhile, John is laughing. "Oh sure," I tell him, "just wait and see: If we're ever in Tel Aviv I'll be the one with the big cup, and you'll be the one with the Mormon-sized glass of Coke."

Here I am, sitting in a restaurant where they hate Jews, with my 126 empty specimen cups of Coke, while John is over there, not even halfway finished with his first New Jersey-sized Coke. After I began nicely pointing out how wrong it was to make me pay the same price for each of my tiny Cokes as John paid for his one Coke, they began to see my point of view, especially after customers started leaving.

The only condition was that I leave immediately and never come back. Oh, they did say something about, "Stop yelling 'specimen cup, specimen cup!'" That was all right with me, since I planned never to come back to any place that hates Jews.

Finally, at dinner, me and my wife went to a schmantzy-fancy restaurant with the Japanese rabbi from the base, Rabbi Ivrahim Takashagi. We went to a nice Mexican place, because I figured, hey, why would the Mexicans want to hate Jews? Besides, I love Mexican food, and I thought I'd show my wife how wrong she was to say that I'm always complaining. I never complain! It's always my wife complaining, telling me how much I complain.

Since we were all Jewish, we all got the same sized drinks for a change. And at first, when our order came, I didn't think there were any problems. Until my kosher enchilada plate arrived.

"Hey, what the hell...?" I began to say.

"Shh, don't start, Yosef," my wife tells me.

"But—"

"Are you getting ready to complain about the cheese?"

"No..."

"Is there a problem with drinks this time?"

"No, but—"

"Then do me a favor for once and don't complain."

"Elizabeth—"

"Not one complaint, Yosef!"

"But there's a Goddamned pubic hair in my enchilada!"

Rabbi Takashagi spit out his chilichonga a good 20 feet. My wife was very upset. She was looking at me in a very disturbed way.

The waiter came back (the third one I'd seen that day). "Is there something wrong with your food, senor?"

"Of course there's something wrong!" I told him, holding my fork up to his face. "You see that? It's a hair. A pubic hair! Don't try to tell me any different, I know a pubic hair when I see one!"

"Yosef!" my wife says, looking at all the people in the restaurant staring at us.

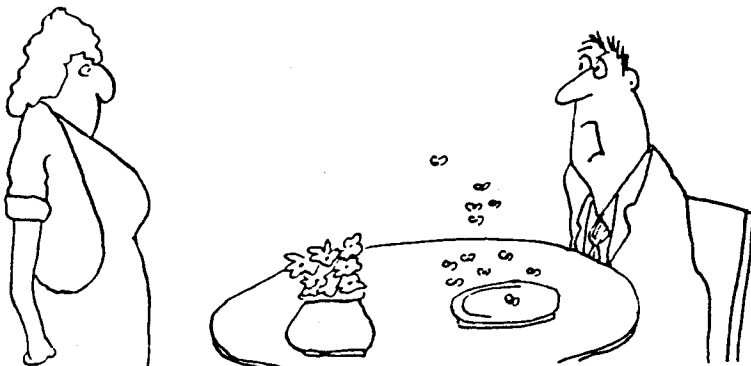
"I'm sorry, babushka, but I can't eat the pubic hair of a stranger! Rabbi, would you eat a pubic hair?"

I have to admit, I've never seen a rabbi with such a shocked look on his face. "Now my friend John," I continued, "he does that sort of thing. Especially with women who dress like Zorro. But me, I'm a regular kind of guy when it comes to sex. You know: boring."

Again, we were asked politely to leave. "Oh sure, throw out the Jews!" I yelled as a big guy named Jose dragged me out the door. I turned to one of the guests who was munching away at his table. "Oh sure, I could have stayed if I wanted to eat a pubic hair! If I was Catholic you can bet I wouldn't have to eat a pubic hair!"

My wife didn't speak to me for a week after that. She has the nerve to tell me I have no tact! Oh, and Rabbi Takashagi was avoiding me on the post, right up until he got run over by a tank avoiding me. John, I see him all the time, but right now he's in the hospital in the bed next to Rabbi Takashagi. You know, I always thought it was kind of funny that with all those duds and shells and bombs that he's always diffusing that he'd get himself hurt doing something with a girl named "Spike."

In the meantime, I haven't gone to a restaurant in a month. I needed a rest from—no, not complaining because I never complain! Sheesh, all these people trying to tell me I complain...



"FLIES? I said a small order of FRIES!"

The Simpkins

Revelation by Dale A. White

"The world will end at 5:52pm," the television newscaster solemnly announced.

As he monitored the noon broadcast from his living room sofa, Theo Simpkins relayed the grim message through a mouthful of potato chips. "You hear that, honey? End of world's coming up."

Marge Simpkins shut off her vacuum cleaner. "Can't hear a word you're saying."

Theo adjusted the volume with his remote control. "The world's gonna end at 5:52. It was just on the news."

"Oh," Marge changed adaptors on the canister's hose.

"You hear me," Theo snapped. "You just don't listen. The world ends this afternoon, Marge. Can you grasp that?"

"I have four more rooms to clean and you bother me with current events. For Christ's sake, Theo, I haven't got all day."

"Sorry. I figured you'd be interested in the end of the world."

Marge handed Theo his beer bottle and wiped the ring it had left on the coffee table. "What do they mean by the end of the world? A nuclear holocaust? The greenhouse effect? A supernova?"

"I dunno." Theo rubbed his balding head as he tried to comprehend the magnitude of what he'd heard. "Complete obliteration, I guess. Does it matter?"

Marge checked her middle-aged pouch in a wall mirror. "I need to know what to wear."

"If it's the end of the world, Marge, nobody's gonna give a mule's hind leg what you wear."

"I'll give a mule's hind leg, all right? The neighbors will probably come over. We should look presentable. The end of the world only comes once."

Theo groaned as he struggled to his feet. He paced and fretted. "It's over. I'm finished. The books I intended to read, the places I wanted to see—I'll never get around to any of it. I can't even fantasize any more. What's the point?"

The phone rang. Marge cheerfully answered it. She cupped her hand over the receiver. "What did I tell you?" she whispered to Theo. "It's the Doltons from next door." She resumed her end of the conversation. "Yes, Harriet, we heard it on the news. So tragic. Don't you think? -- No, we won't be doing anything special. -- Don't bother. Just bring yourselves."

Marge hung up. "I'm glad I started tidying up when I did. The Doltons are dropping by."

"Damn it, Marge," Theo snarled. "I don't want company at a time like this. I'm not in the mood."

"Wear your gray slacks and plaid shirt," Marge instructed as she stuffed the vacuum cleaner into a closet. "And don't be such a grump."

At 1:17pm, the Simpkins served the Doltons lunch on the lanai.

Bud and Harriet Dolton initiated the conversation with updates on their favorite topics: the mileage they were getting from their new sedan; cute observations about life by their 5-year-old grandson; bargains they'd found at a home improvement store's "close-out" sale...As usual, Harriet assumed the lead role as narrator and Bud rudely interrupted to make corrections and editorial remarks.

Marge laughed and responded on cue while Theo became distracted by thoughts of the day's forecast.

"What's wrong, Theo?" Bud Dolton eventually asked. "You're acting as if it's the end of the world."

Theo stood and angrily kicked his lawn chair out from under himself. "It is the end of the world! Hasn't that seeped through the travel in those fishbowl you have for brains. In four hours, we can stick our heads between our legs and kiss our sweet—"

"Theo's taking the news rather hard," Marge interrupted, glancing apologetically at her friends.

Harriet smiled sympathetically. "We understand. Maybe Theo will feel better if we talk about it. I heard on 'The Today Show' this morning the universe is expanding. Maybe that has something to do with it."

Her husband groaned. "You've got it all wrong—again. The universe is contracting."

"No, it's expanding," Harriet insisted. "So, it must not be just the end of the world but the end of the universe."

"That's interesting," Marge commented. "Isn't it, Theo?"

"Yeah," Theo grumbled as he resumed his seat. "Now I can die an enlightened man."

Marge passed a tray of crackers and processed cheese slices to the Doltons. "Please, eat up."

"You've gone to too much trouble, Marge," Harriet protested as she helped herself to the after-dinner snacks. "Lunch was wonderful."

"Just some leftovers I warmed on the stove," Marge scoffed.

"I've got a refrigerator full of food, dear. Might as well use it or it will just go to waste."

At 3:26pm, the Simpkins and the Doltons went for a drive. Schools, banks and stores were closed. Suicide victims cluttered the sidewalks. Outside the Catholic church, parishioners waited around the block to give their last confessions. On street corners, bearded prophets wore smug grins and waved placards stating "I Told You So."

"This is depressing," Bud Dolton said.

"Let's do something to cheer us up," Marge suggested. "Get ice cream. Rent tandem bicycles in the park."

"Loot the mall," Harriet joked. "I bet a lot of people are doing it."

"This is the end of our lives," Theo chastised them. "We should do something meaningful."

Harriet noticed Theo turning onto the coastal highway. "Like contemplate the sunset?"

"No sunset today," Theo reminded them. "No more sunsets—ever."

"Ah, that's a shame," Marge moaned. "I liked sunsets."

"We could do a good deed," Harriet chirped.

"Theo and I prefer to pay people to do that for us," Marge said.

"We've got a foster granddaughter in Botswana, I think. We get a mimeographed letter from her on holidays. Without our ten dollars a month, she'd die of rickets or head lice or something. I felt so sorry for her once, given that she's starving and all, I sent her a batch of my special jellybean brownies."

"How sweet," Harriet said.

"Yeah," Theo said, "Marge is a regular Albert Schweitzer."

At 4:42pm, they noticed a hand-painted sign advertising a scenic overlook with an exceptional view of the end of the world. Theo handed a teenaged attendant a dollar and fell into a long line of motorists searching for parking places in a pasture. From there, the Simpkins and the Doltons climbed a rocky bluff, where several hundred families had congregated to observe the ocean and await their fate.

"Why do they charge a buck for parking if they won't be around to spend it?" Theo grumbled.

"Overhead, I guess," Marge said as she donned her sunglasses and dabbed tanning lotion on her nose. "Besides, now's not the time to be frugal. Might as well spend our money. You think they sell souvenir t-shirts?"

"Saying what? 'I Witnessed the End of the World'? Some exclusive."

"Don't be such a party pooper, Theo. Get into the spirit of things."

"I am. I'm fatalistic. I accept the fact that, moments from now, we'll all be blasted into oblivion. God, I wish I were a dumb animal. At least I wouldn't understand what's happening."

"Well, I don't understand what's happening," Marge admitted as the foursome claimed seating arrangements on a patch of grass. "Are we going to blow up or what?"

"I don't understand either," Harriet laughed. "My horoscope today said I should consider making long-term investments."

A young man with rolled-up sleeves and a crucifix necklace intruded. He handed the couples several pamphlets. "Pardon me for asking, but have you made your peace with Jesus? God loves you and wants to help you through this crisis. If you have faith, you need not be afraid. This is a happy day."

Theo crammed his brochure back into the young man's slender fingers. "I'm ecstatic already. So shove off."

Marge diplomatically intervened. "We already believe in God. But thank you for asking."

"This is exciting," Harriet said as the young man tried to recruit another group of souls. "Maybe we will meet God today. Who'd have thought I'd ever see such a thing? Isn't this a wonderful time to be alive?"

"Now, Harriet," Bud said condescendingly, "don't get your hopes up."

At 5:23pm, a quartet of folk singers entertained the crowd with a rendition of "Turn, Turn, Turn."

"Have you considered the possibility that what actually awaits us is nothing?" Theo asked his wife and friends. "Emptiness. A void. You and I and the planet will cease to exist. Or worse: What if God exists? Do you think He'll be pleased the four of us based our understanding of the world on horoscopes, television, half-price sales and subscription charities? For one second, has any of us tried to comprehend what life is and how we figure into it?"

Marge and the Doltons exchanged blank expressions.

Bud patted his neighbor on the shoulder. "You worry too much, Theo. If something is wrong with the world, I'm sure the scientists and the government are working right now to fix it. And if the world does end, then we'll just have to sit tight until somebody in charge tells us what to do. You're not going to solve anything by creating a panic."

At 5:51pm, the crowd commenced a countdown. Fifty-nine, fifty-eight, fifty-seven, fifty-six...

"I guess this is it," Harriet said before kissing the Simpkins on their cheeks.

Forty-six, forty-five, forty-four...

"You take care now," Marge advised the Doltons as she hugged them.

Thirty-nine, thirty-eight, thirty-seven...

"Been great knowing you, sport," Bud told Theo as they shook hands.

"Same here, guy."

Twenty, nineteen, eighteen...

(continued next page)

The Simpkinses firmly clasped hands. They closed their eyes in anticipation.

"This is gonna hurt like hell, I just know it," Theo lamented. "After sixty years, this is what my life comes down to. I'm just another piece of cosmic shrapnel. What does it mean, Marge?"

"I don't know, Theo."

Four, three, two, one...

The Earth rumbled beneath them. A deafening sound reverberated within them. The light of a thousand suns seared through them.

In a sudden, climactic burst, the Simpkinses found themselves suspended in darkness and silence.

"Oh my God," Marge gasped. "I just remembered!"

Theo sensed her presence nearby as he drifted into an eternal void. "What, Marge? You know something? What?"

"Oh, Theo. It's too late. You're going to kill me."

"For Christ's sake, Marge, you're dead already. Tell me now, before we're separated."

"How could I have been so thoughtless? Please forgive me."

"For what, Marge? For what?"

"Oh, Theo," Marge cried as her voice became fainter. "I think I forgot to turn off the stove."

THE PERILS OF ATHEISM

by Ralph Sharaga

If God did such a great job designing the universe, why can't I ever find anything in my basement? If He created man in His own image, why did I start going bald at the age of 25?

For me, it began as skepticism at the age of eight. A friend offered 10-1 odds that the Cleveland Indians wouldn't win the pennant in 1958. I took the bet, and petitioned the Lord for a favor that same night. Six months later the Indians finished seventh, I lost a month's allowance, and God lost a fan for life. By the way, I continued to root for the Indians.

My older brother introduced me to Nietzsche. A high school senior, he enjoyed passing his newly-acquired knowledge on to me.

"This guy Nietzsche said that God is dead, and the world is really ruled by Superman."

Albeit a somewhat superficial interpretation, it sounded quite intriguing to an 11-year-old. If God was dead, it served Him right for double-crossing the Indians and me. And Superman seemed a perfect choice. After all, the guy could fly, he had a marvelous physique, and he seemed to have an innate sense for doing the right thing.

But several months later my balloon burst. A schoolmate began circulating a rumor that Superman was now dead. Something about shooting himself because he had been typecast in Hollywood. I thought it a rather petty complaint for someone in such a lofty position. I verified the rumor, then considered possible successors. I never cared for Batman or the Green Hornet, and my Zorro costume had been donated to Goodwill. So, I resolved to live the rest of my life as master of my own fate.

In tenth grade, a friend and I had a theological discussion following a touch football game. He related a revised interpretation of the crucifixion and resurrection.

Apparently, as Jesus dragged the cross to his desti-

ny, he rightfully demanded his one phone call. The Romans, honorable brutes that they were, granted the request. He phoned his Father. (Not a bad choice considering his predicament.) Busy on another line, the Old Man put Jesus on hold. By the time He got back to Jesus, it was too late. So when Jesus said, "Forgive them Father, they know not what they do," he was referring to the phone company for inventing call-waiting. Two days later he did rise from the dead, to ask for his dime back. He hung out for about six weeks. Then he moved up to heaven, because the television reception was better.

What a great story, I thought. At dinner that evening I recounted the entire tale to my family. Unfortunately, my father failed to see the humor in it. After the meal he gave his version of the Big Bang theory, using my rear end as his main prop.

Over the years various people have made vain attempts to draw me back to the flock. A college roommate and his church-going buddy once cornered me in the dormitory to explain the Cosmological theory. A slight disagreement between them ensued concerning the interpretation of the first cause. My roommate believed that A caused B, which caused C, etc., therefore making God A. His friend felt that A was caused by B, which was caused by C, etc., therefore making God Z. The argument became so heated that I tried to summon the Lord's intervention, but all I got was His answering machine. So the two theologians came to blows, with me right in the middle.

Several years later a casual acquaintance was suddenly "born again." He declared a recent mystical experience to be the cause of this major change. He recommended that I seek a similar experience if I had any intention of achieving salvation. I thought it might prove an entertaining diversion from the usual television fare, so I gave it a try. That night I lay in bed with the lights out, wide-eyed and open-minded. Alas, my girlfriend had different ideas, so I became distracted for about half an hour, surely missing the moment.

I waited for her bowling night to try again. I created the proper atmosphere, and sure enough, following the 11:00 news I had a vision. An entity came into my apartment without my unlocking the door. Its silhouette vaguely resembled that of the Buddha. Boy, someone sure got their wires crossed, I thought. Then it spoke.

"You're five days late with the rent, Mr. Lewis."

I explained that my oversight was due to a recent preoccupation with having a mystical experience. He said he did not want any apparitions in his building because the tenants might complain.

I related my failure to my friend. He felt I needed a sharper focus, so he gave me a Latin mantra to repeat, "Deo duce," meaning "God is my leader." This suggestion did not sit too well with me. But I'd gone this far, so I gave it one last shot. After an hour of chanting, the only thing I had to show for my efforts was a nasty sore throat. I spent the next two days in bed.

At the venerable age of forty, I assumed that these futile attempts at conversion were a thing of the past. But last week a fellow worker accosted me at lunch. Sitting down at my table, his first words were, "Do you believe?"

Uh-oh, I thought. "Not until the Indians win the pennant," I answered.

Well, he proceeded to dredge up all the usual arguments. I showed little interest. Out of frustration he finally exploded. "Don't you have any desire to be part of the hereafter? Doesn't the notion of eternal sleep frighten you?"

I told him that the idea of sleeping without having to wake every two hours to urinate sounded like heaven to me. He threw his arms up in disgust and bolted out of the cafeteria. In his haste he left an untouched dessert. I took the liberty of enjoying a second slice of apple pie. Then I thanked the Lord for making this unexpected bounty possible.

An hour later I sat in my office suffering terribly from indigestion. Such are the perils of atheism.

IF by Ted Brohl

If there wasn't a devil, would Jesus have come?
If there were no heartaches, where would joy spring from?
If there wasn't sickness, would there be good health?
If there were no poor, would there still be wealth?
If there were no children, would adults be clones?
If there was no sex, then no erogenous zones?
If there was no death, would there be a hereafter?
If there were no pain, would there be any laughter?
If no amputations, would there still be limbs?
If religions vanished, would there still be hymns?
If there were no wars, would there always be peace?
If there were no hatred, would all loving cease?
If no politicians, would there always be truth?
If no sugar or candy, then no Baby Ruth?
Those who have answers to these questions I pose
Are seers or seersuckers, for a rose still's a rose!

(TAKE #56) by Andy Plumb

HE COULD NO LONGER "GRIN AND BEAR IT"

(((((ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE ENDS))))))))))))))))))))))))))

The same thing that happens to most revolutionary movements when they find themselves in front of the parade rather than behind. Internal struggles, attempted coups, loss of idealism. We spent days on end arguing about which was the correct, oh how I hate that word, path to follow. Then the Mad Hatter dredged up the "Who Stole the Tarts?" case, enabling him to oust the Knave from power. When he took on the March Hare as his second-in-command, Wonderland became even more curious than ever. Those two

Oh, please, Oz is a dream world. No one can really go there. I have no interest in such places.

EASTER HOLIDAY

by Erik Johnson

There are many important holidays liberally sprinkled throughout the year in the United States. Some are very serious and subdued occasions, often accompanied by dirge, "death march" music, Latin verse and lots of kneeling. Other holidays are less tradition-bound, but also a whole lot more fun. These holidays are sort of like "E-Z" tax forms. They are created for the vast majority of the population, which consist almost entirely of street gang members, bag ladies and government workers.

One of the terrific things about living in These United States is the way we can take a dry religious holiday, one used mainly to incite bloodthirsty, machete-carrying Third World martyrs-to-be, and turn it into a family gift-giving party.

Halloween was at one time an adult celebration, and the only time children were allowed to make an appearance was as bonfire kindling. If you and your neighbor had an argument about whose ox had crapped all over the driveway, a suggestion could be made, on Halloween, that you saw him turn into an Irish Setter at midnight and watched him pee on the wheels of the town fire engine. And also that his ox is really Satan with a thyroid problem.

Originally, Easter was some sort of Pagan ritual created to make a fuss about the fact that spring had arrived. The merry villagers would then celebrate like Greeks on shore leave because they would no longer have to worry about dying of some horrible disease while lying in a snowbank. They could not die a horrible death in some meadow, with birds twittering and jackals and vultures rushing to the scene to give last rites. The surviving relatives figured that this was as good a time as any to celebrate the bounty of nature, plant crops, compost Uncle Bob and get dibs on his livestock.

Now look forward about 2000 years. Here we are, leaving plastic baskets, filled with plastic grass and plastic candy, on children's beds. There is a large white bunny which lays (?) multi-colored eggs in the bushes for children to find. Lots of people go to church because they are looking for pieces to The Big Picture and are forced to sit in benches so poorly constructed for comfortable sitting that even the people who build bus terminals would not install them. A man in a toga-like outfit stands at the front of the church and scares the shit out of everyone until people are falling into the aisles. He then dispenses some wine which has been allowed to breathe too long and some crackers which were made with Jesus' own rolling pin, and then his cronies pass the hat and if you do not throw in a large percentage of your pre-tax income, you will go to Hell.

At the dinner table is—rabbit? No, it's HAM. Would someone, besides the man from the Pork Lobby, explain to me why ham has become the sacred meat on Easter?

Where is the celebration? Where is the debauchery? Where did they come up with this stuff?

I have decided to trace the evolution of Easter from its inception to its present-day form. I want the reader to understand that I spent weeks at libraries near and far in search of answers and truth. Private libraries were ransacked for even the tiniest bit of useful information. My postage stamp bill went through the roof as I sent letters to oddball scholars in countries with an illiteracy rate of 100% (which explained why I never received anything back). I received ancient writings that had been written on parched sheepskins. These writings were in Sanskrit (or was it sand-script?) or Arabic and in such poor shape that the only way I could read them was when the sheep had gone to sleep.

And here is what I was able to piece together:

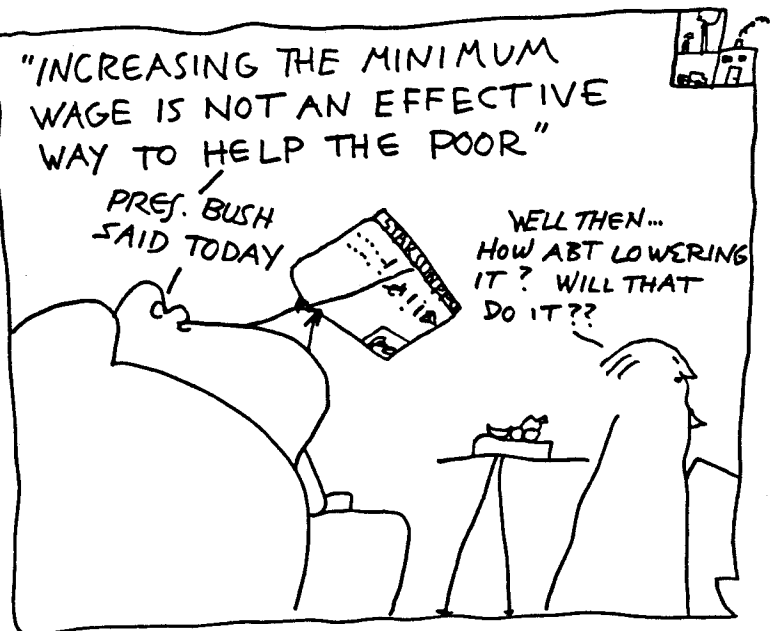
- 1) The first human-type creatures crawl from the primordial soup. There was no celebration that year, but they were able to make reservations at one of the better restaurants for the following year.
- 2) Man and Woman discover they are the only creatures on the planet with opposable thumbs. They celebrate by grasping things.
- 3) Human population plummets when sabre-tooth tigers discover that people are easier to catch than armored dinosaurs and, except for getting poked in the eye with a thumb, there is little risk of being injured. Humans celebrate by running away.
- 4) Ten thousand years pass. People start to worship inanimate objects such as rocks. They also notice that the days are longer and things start to grow in the spring. So they celebrate the coming of spring by hitting each other over the heads with rocks. This is the earliest example of modern religious behavior. Example: "My God is kinder and gentler than your God. And if you don't agree with me, my God will strike you down."
- 5) People start to worship animals and the sun. The beginning of spring has caught on as a good time to celebrate the survival of the winter months. People engage in annual springtime activities such as human sacrifice and sex with animals. A good time is had by all, except some of the homelier animals who can't get dates.
- 6) People start to worship other people. They sacrifice animals instead of people. A chain of stores that rents tuxedos to oxen goes out of business. The animals lament about the good old days.
- 7) Christianity is established by the Deep South Bible Company. It is a runaway best-seller, and they sign up all of the psychotics left on earth who have not al-

SLUG-FEST

by A.T. Hunn

Look, there go the tiger-striped slugs
Touching base with their trails of slime
Avoiding the salt of popcorn and peanuts
Plus puddles of beer where they'd drown
So on they go, in their pennant drive
And they'll take their "bats up" fully focused
They may be slow, but thoroughbreds all,
These newest of Louisville sluggers

this one's for you, Bill!



At a recent Ecumenical gathering, someone rushed into the room crying "Fire!"

The Baptists cried: "We knew we should've brought the water!"

The Christian Scientists agreed amongst themselves that there was no fire.

The Fundamentalists said that the fire was the vengeance of God.

The Lutherans nailed a notice on the door declaring that the fire was evil and something was going to have to be done about it soon.

The Quakers quietly praised God for the blessings that the fire brought.

The Jews posted symbols over the door, hoping the fire would pass over them.

The Episcopalians formed a procession and marched out in grand style.

The Roman Catholics inquired as to the traditional and historical approaches to fire.

The Presbyterians appointed a chairperson who was to recruit a committee to look into the fire.

And the Congregationalists shouted, "Every man for himself!"

--author unknown, submitted by Kathy Stadalsky

- ready signed up as Hindus and Muslims. From that humble beginning of just 12 people, Christianity spreads out across the face of the planet and attempts to enlighten ignorant savages to the virtues of peace and goodwill. Unfortunately, the savages have been using fist-sized diamonds and gold bars as doorstops, and the missionaries decide the church could use a piece of this goodwill. They enslave the natives. Pope Bob the First celebrates by gold-plating the Vatican.
- 8) Some natives continue to worship the beginning of spring. This pisses the Missionaries off to no end. The missionaries figure Jesus MAY have been resurrected on that very same day. They supply party hats and punch and tell the natives to party down in the name of the Lord Almighty. Missionaries 1, Natives 0.
- 9) Continue pattern for 2000 years.
- 10) Erik Johnson, age 5, colors raw eggs and drops said eggs from third story window onto father's new Buick. Gets the tar beaten out of him. Plants seed for revenge against A Major Religious Holiday.

...TO HOLD

Part Two by Sergio Taubmann

(Sam Steinbach, a successful and decidedly single investment banker, has begun to receive letters and packages for an "Emily Steinbach," a person these pieces of mail claim is Sam's wife. Sam originally chalks this up as a joke played by one of his coworkers but no one has stepped forward as being "Emily." Sam still treats it as a petty annoyance, just like the itching rash he has developed on his ring finger...)

The music in the club didn't bother Sam; it was ordered, not the dissonant mess that plagued the outer office. He could think here. Most importantly, he could find companionship here.

He sipped his Manhattan and studied the crowd. They were like him: sleek, well-fed, athletic, all looking for something exciting—exciting and safe these days, one can never be too careful—to tide them over for tonight, maybe a while longer if that something proves exciting enough. The lights were dim and fashionably blue. Strips of neon accented the bar, the main dance floor, and the walls. The glow they produced made the dancers seem almost dead. Usually, Sam found this effect disturbing.

Usually Sam found a way to get over it.

At the moment, he had focused on one woman who appeared to be a likely prospect. She was sitting alone a little ways down the bar, consulting the Filofax that was perfectly color-coordinated to her black velvet—no, more like a midnight-blue blouse giving him just a hint of her strong shoulders, skin that looked like it would be softer than fine silk. A necklace of heavy, rosy gold caught reflections from the spots above her, making her appear to shimmer. Sam studied her, noticed the way her body appeared to be built for durability (which was good), and wondered what it might be like to see her asleep in the morning, her hair standing out in sharp contrast to the chrome of his apartment.

He got up from his stool, his drink in one hand. Horns and bells howled in his ear. He could tell that people were talking around him, but what secrets they were sharing he was unable to discern. The bartender was wiping the bar with a white cloth, a cloth turned blue by the lighting. The dimness turned everyone around him into shades and ghosts, memories of somebody else's good time. He had to secure his own memories in this Stygian pleasure palace. And that woman, if he was able to, was about to help him do so.

He sat down on an empty stool next to the woman and shouted his hello. She looked at him and smiled archly.

"You should've been born a century ago, when the great artists would still be alive to paint you," Sam said. This line worked well for him in the past, as it appealed to a woman's vanity in addition to giving him an intelligent, sensitive demeanor.

She smiled at the line, a toothy, attractive smile that Sam felt should be on the back of buses. She closed the Filofax and got up from her stool, tapping his arm with the book.

"If you were born a century ago," she told him with gentle sarcasm, "they might rag you for adultery."

"But I'm not married."

"If you're not, I'd lose the ring," she said and weaved her way through the crowd.

Sam knitted his brow for a second. He watched the woman disappear and listened to the plaintive voice on the stereo system complain about being sick of it. He caught the bartender's attention, ordered another Manhattan and downed the last...

There was a golden band on his finger. It was fairly thick, plainly designed. It was a spitting image of the kind of ring you would expect a married man to wear.

Sam slammed the glass down and worked at removing the ring. He tugged hard at it, ignoring the stares of the clubgoers around him. There was a sharp pain when he pulled at it; apparently the ring was on very securely. He cursed through gritted teeth and doubled his efforts, his heart pounding like a rhythm machine gone wild. Once a drop of blood welled up from under the offending gold band, Sam gave up. There was a need for another approach.

Sam thrust the ring-bearing hand into his jacket pocket and headed for the bathroom. He jostled a few people, but did not stop to apologize. The curses and epithets would have to wait for now.

The music was less obtrusive inside the bathroom. There was one bare bulb, hanging from a thick wire, for lighting. An attendant wearing a blue workshirt and sunglasses was laughing at some black & white sitcom. Sam hit the nozzle of the soap dispenser several times until a small, pearly pink puddle had formed in the palm of his hand. He started scrubbing his hands together furiously, building up a lather that would loosen the gold from his finger. The blood from his finger mingled with the lather, turning it ever-so-red. Sam struggled with the ring, grunting with each pull. The attendant stopped laughing at his television and watched Sam.

"What are you looking at?" he shouted at the man. The attendant sneered and returned to his television.

Finally, with one great pull, the ring came off. Sam leaned against the basin, taking deep breaths, until he was calm. He pulled off the bit of skin that had torn away from his finger, wincing with the tearing pain for a moment. As he put pressure on the finger until it clotted, Sam began to fantasize about the many, many ways he could inflict death on his tormenters.

Once, of course, he found them.

The night was not a total loss. Sam had managed to connect up

with a petite blonde with a corona of pale hair and the kind of obscenely wide mouth that promised the fulfillment of all sorts of fantasies. She, unlike the other women he had talked to, was not concerned with the cause of his injury. Several tequilas might have had something to do with her apathy, but Sam was not concerned.

They returned to his apartment and, while she oohed and ahed appreciatively over the chrome and white of the place, he turned on the radio. He adjusted the dimmers while Warren Zevon moaned about how the little girls wouldn't leave him alone and how this made him worthy of pity. He heard the woman giggle.

"Would you like anything?" he asked her. She was studying a statue a friend of his had made—several metal pipes twisted beyond recognition. This was the source of her laughter.

She approached him, pointing a finger at the object. "That's real silly."

"It could be."

She flung her arms around his neck and pulled his face down to hers. "It is," she said before kissing him hungrily. "Is there a bathroom in this mausoleum?"

"Down the hall to your right," Sam replied before returning her kiss. He felt her tongue enter his mouth briefly.

She broke away from Sam's embrace and started toward the bathroom. She smiled at him over her shoulder. Sam watched her, deciding that some of those promises were definitely about to be kept. All he had to do was wait. He went to the refrigerator and got a bottle of water. The cold of the interior felt good on his skin. On the radio, Linda Ronstadt had begun the same speech as Zevon. Sam had no sympathy for them tonight.

Then the woman screamed.

Sam put down the water and ran to the bathroom. His heart was racing again, but his subconscious was already rationalizing. It's probably just a bug or something, he said to himself, nothing to be afraid of. He'd kill the bug, confront the woman, and call the landlord to complain in the morning. It was a minor setback at best.

The blonde was standing in the doorway of the bathroom. Her attractiveness was marred by a frown. She was flush with anger.

"What sort of shit do you think I'm into? Do I look that cheap?" she shouted at him.

Sam put his hand on her shoulder, only to have it wrenched out of his grasp. "What do you mean?"

"I mean you should be honest with people, okay? I enjoy a good time an' all, but I don't get involved with this kind of thing," she said loudly. Her voice echoed off the walls. "There are magazines where you can advertise for people who are into this kinda stuff."

"But I don't understand..."

She pushed past him, her arms up in the air. "Just let me get outta here."

Sam watched her walk away briefly before looking into the bathroom. He heard the door slam, but the contents of the bathroom stunned him into inaction.

There, draped over the shower rod, were several pairs of pantyhose. Large pantyhose set out to dry, a few still dripping water. It took a second before Sam detected the scent of bath oil and sweat.

It took him an hour to get up the courage to check the bedroom. The only thing on his bed was his sheets and an unfamiliar green comforter with lace fringes.

Last night's incidents had galvanized Sam just as much as they had frightened him. The letters and packages could be construed as friendly japes, but these last two things were bordering on the dangerous. Somebody had actually been in his apartment, had violated his privacy last night. Sam was as good a sport as the next person, but there was a line that had to be drawn. That line had been crossed.

He wasn't quite sure how to handle the problem, though.

Calling the police was a given. He had done that immediately after discovering the package left for him on the shower rod. Two uniformed officers visited him after an hour. Sam tried to explain the situation as best he could—leaving out the incident with the ring, of course; Sam was still trying to rationalize that one. The officers nodded their heads politely and took notes, occasionally grunting their understanding.

"Was anything stolen?" one officer said. They both had bland, tired voices that sounded bored but probably weren't.

"I've not taken a full inventory, but I don't think so."

"But the intruder did take a shower here?"

"Yes. Look for yourself," Sam replied. The perfumed smell was gone, but there was a ring of grit and soap around the bath. The officers looked it over with one unified, detached stare and wrote in their books. One took a pencil and removed the pantyhose from the rod while the other held open a plastic bag.

"You haven't taken a bath in the last few hours yourself?"

"No. I was out most of the evening, and when I discovered what had gone on, my mind was...elsewhere."

"Do you know of anyone who would have cause to break in here? A former girlfriend, an ex-wife?"

Sam was taken aback. He sneered involuntarily. "I'm not married, and I've never really dated anyone long enough to call her a girlfriend..." Sam brought a finger to his lips. His eyes looked down at his injury. The bleeding had stopped, but the skin around

(continued next page)

it appeared to be rubbed raw. "You don't suppose there's one of these Fatal Attraction deals in operation here, is there?"

"We have to address all possibilities, Mr. Steinbach. We'd appreciate a list of all your woman friends. That could help, if that's what we're dealing with."

"I'll get it to you in the morning."

"You should also do a detailed inventory to determine if there's any loss. And get your landlord to change the locks, Mr. Steinbach."

"But I own this apartment."

"Then change them yourself, Mr. Steinbach."

Sam promised them he would change the locks and provide the officers with lists first thing in the morning. After a brief nap and a large breakfast, he ruminated over the events of the night, and had to admit a twinge of excitement. If what the police mentioned as a possibility was true, and some woman liked him enough to do these things, then it was actually not that bad. Oh, it was certainly dangerous; Sam had seen the film, and heard Ella's stories about Neal-the-Mut stalking her when she was in college. If this "Emily" was one of those, then she was definitely off the deep end. Still, he did feel a bit of pride that he was so good, so desirable that somebody was going to insane lengths to win him. Sam sipped his coffee and allowed the pleasure he felt to seep into his mind. He's worry about the serious ramifications tomorrow; now was the time to be pleased with himself.

The pantyhose incident was the prime topic that Monday. The buzz had already reached a frenzy before trading opened in Tokyo, and Sam found it very hard to conduct business with Mr. Wallach over at Beacon Securities with all of his coworkers tossing jokes and witty asides over his shoulder. Sam tried to be good about it, smiling and waving at every well-wisher, but his concentration was slipping dangerously. The numbers Wallach was throwing at him became less and less clear, until Sam had to ask him if he could return the call in a few minutes.

Sam went to the kitchenette and poured himself a black cup of coffee. Bill was yelling at Stockholm over some annuities. He watched the crawl and noticed with some interest that Olsen Fiduciary was releasing a new bond offer. Sam made a note to bring it up with Rafe—the bonds could be just the thing to finance the buyout of TolTech he was arranging for that hotel chain. He gulped down the coffee quickly and placed the styrofoam cup in the sink when one of the secretaries ran up to him.

"Mr. Steinbach! There's a call for you on five-three-oh," she told him in a shrill, panicky voice. Sam decided he would have a talk with Auggie about switching with him. This secretary got on his nerves, she was too jittery, her skin was bad. There had to be somebody better to work with him.

"Who is it?" he asked between sips.

"Your wife."

(continued next issue)

Art Wars Drag On

Vesco Terms U.S. Stance A 'Wish'

MOSCOW (YU)—Securities and High-Tech Party Chairman Robert Vesco again charged the United States with "negotiating according to wish" at the new Strategic Arts Limitation Talks in Geneva. In a statement issued by Tass, the official Soviet news agency, Mr. Vesco's harsh comments seem to signify a strengthening of communist resolve to resist Washington's proposal that any future missile reduction agreement be tied to an accord which would exempt advertising and commercial art from the category of anti-Soviet propaganda. The U.S. delegation, meanwhile, un-

veiled yet another strategy in the escalating Art Wars exchange when special envoy George Plimpton suggested a compromise in which books and artworks banned in one nation would automatically be banned in the other, regardless of political content. "This way," envoy Plimpton smiled, "we'll be able to sit down to discuss the details of substantive issues, like the dimensions of the negotiating table and what wood it should be constructed from."

Yossarian Universal

KILLED BY MODERN



TECHNOLOGY

The nature of men and women — their essential nature — is so vile and despicable that if you were to portray a person as he really is, no one would believe you — W. Somerset Maugham.

This reality is our defense against the problems arising from our 8000 year old platform of suicidal, winnerless wars, inflationary fixed wages, unnecessary unemployment and no after life. For a herebefore and hereafter something like this here now — maybe exactly — send S.A.S.E. to:

4 WAY HEREBEFORES

Box 2243 — YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO, 44504

The events: devastating explosion in New York City, social and political chaos in Europe and the starving remnants of the "Soviet empire;" 1993 — betrayal leading to buckets of blood in the Middle East, social explosion in China spills over into parts far west of there, a new political system in the USA; 2023-24 — more lousy TV.

Daza's Lifetime Horrorscope Forever-At-A-Glance

Your lucky stars from today 'til death (yours)

ARIES — Things go your way or you don't notice, always, consequently you give the impression that everything is moving ahead. Not much worth telling is really happening until 1991-93 when your naturally narrow focus proves an asset. Why? Read on.

TAURUS — You're in for a tough time, now through the end of time. Late this year a financial crunch, debtors hell, you'll have to sell a lot of those useless things you've acquired. Tough in 1991-93. Why? Read on.

LEO — Ha ha fooled you, look for Gemini and Cancer elsewhere. Leos never like the truth unless it's theirs. Sometimes they're right, usually not. But they are decisive and that's enough to convince most people that they know the score. This talent for inflated ego will be useful in moments of general chaos, reassuring others in 1991-93.

LIBRA — This is a great sign. These people have the most to offer in 1991-93. And again in 2019-23, depending on their values.

CANCER — Too bad you're not Libra. January 1991 brings big-time problems that change your reality altogether in a stressful way, quite unlike the excitement of late July/August 1990. Cancer people have heart, but the aspects for the next 50 years are not easy on the blood pump. After that, who cares.

SCORPIO — Here's a sign worth being a part of. NO, I am not a Scorpio. Intense, hot, passionate and very much a part of the action in 1991-95. I'm glad I have three planets in Scorpio. These people will get us all into trouble soon, and they will get us out also. This adventure will change our biology forever. How? Read on.

GEMINI — This versatile mentally mobile sign is one of great resource in 1991-93; you need to keep these people in your portfolio.

SAGITTARIUS — Just one more party to you, eh? Oh yeah? Once you've lived up the scene that's been so grim since 1991, you yourself will begin to experience the grinding wheels (square) of merciless potent little Pluto well into the next century. Personality, spirituality, institutionalized religion ends, begins after apparent death, changed, 1995-96. Sorry BOB.

CAPRICORN — Well, it's about time you got here. Summer of 1990 wasn't a ski vacation in the snow, but how could it be? It's summer! January of 1991 will be lots better, partially 'cause of an eclipse, mostly because Saturn is about to clear out of Capricorn. That's bad news for Aquarius, and for everyone else too! It's actually the first real planetary movement into the New Age that some people have been acclaiming since the Sixties. This is going to be a prolonged, painful birth. This travail, long-prophesized, lasts until Neptune and Uranus enter

AQUARIUS — Guess when that is? There is no clear and definite time, but the upward trend commences February 1996, suddenly, and quite clearly. I'm definitely sure of that date. The spirit catches on and is seen to blossom in 1998 briefly, and again for real in 1999.

PISCES — These people are lovely and inspiring in many ways, just don't ask them to do anything terribly important in a hurry. And don't give these good people anything valuable to keep unless it's an idea or a feeling of significance, ever. Life is always rough for them.

So what happens? What do you expect? Earthquake shrinking California? Ya. Japan ripped up to the point of a Third World country? Ya. Aliens? No. Want to hear some good news? Don't want to hear about how many will die from AIDS? Job opportunities in fashion and the arts? How about a creative renaissance the roots of which were in the Sixties, but a mature message? Not cute, not based on dress or hair, not drugged. The stage will be cleared first. American morality and religion versus human nature. Nature wins. AIDS loses. Pain proportionate to resistance; Evolution.

ON ORDINARY HUMAN PLEASURES

by David Castleman

One of the sorrowfullest fellows on earth is the fellow who finds no joys or satisfactions in ordinary human activities. The appreciation of ordinary activities is programmed into our genes and into the patterns of social and private behavior. In many cases this appreciation is all that is given the human animal. One might say that it is intended to be enough.

When we find no pleasure in all that is given us, we become a very dismal beast indeed. Unhealthiness intensifies and sits feeding upon itself, and we seek relief in release.

But the luckiest fellows among us are healthy, and in their health it seems they are too busy being alive to think about it. They are normal, and they are adequate to circumstance. When we see the smiles on their normal beautiful faces as they walk and laugh in the sunlight together, we know that these happy normal people are the luckiest folks on earth, and that they justify creation and the support of the cosmos.

Their eyes are clear and their voices are clear. Their skin is clear and their stances are clear. The posture is upright and honest and healthy. The manner is of sharing and is refreshingly extroverted.

No dark thoughts huddle in the mind's recesses or lurk across the surface fleetingly like water spilled on oil. No egocentric immaturities gawk through the healthy animal behavior. Nobody needs to pretend. No schemes burrow through the relationships gropingly, subterraneously, dishonorably. Embarrassment is unnecessary, and brings no blush.

This is life unfallen and it is good and the people enjoying it needn't brood and ponder whether they enjoy it. Knowledge is in the doing, when knowledge matters. The sunlight feels right and the broken stems of grass can be sniffed from nearby lawns. What could be wrong? Nothing is wrong for these people in these moments, in these lives.

Moses and Jesus and Dante and Abraham Lincoln were not of their ranks. Shakespeare would have disported smilingly among them, unknown and unsuspected, for he was of them. Napoleon led them willingly.

Politicians pretend to be comfortable among them, and many politicians belonged among them when young. These healthy happy decent folks have always been rather easily led and easily fooled. In age their happiness mellows but remains uncluttered and mostly unweakened, albeit softer, and softer.

The act of being a beast doesn't disgust them. They aren't disgusted by the apparent and ineradicable uncleanness of the common bestial slimes and greases, the mortal stench, the holes and flaws in the skin, the dry or glistening impurity of bristles like forests for lice and other bugs. They dwell among the exultations and do not choose to see the illnesses. This is health, and health can be a great achievement.

They do not gaze upon each other and witness the living past within the present, the living future in the present. They do not gaze on the adult and witness its conception during the love-struggle, its gestation and parturition and its development upon the land, and finally the lap of the maternal planet reopening to accept the aged baby, the aged capsule of spent spark.

They do not see the wizened moribund through the healthy adult, though it is there, and others do see it. They do not watch the steady dying that may require a century for achievement. They have no time for such distractions, for such foolishness. They are too busy being alive, too busy being.

Crises of the psyche are virtually unknown to these healthy folks, these the unforsaken folks, who have healthy normal thoughts and healthy normal feelings and aspirations and fears. They have never lain awake at night as their psyches rolled back and opened and whole worlds encompassed them. No explosive imagination caused their heads to be cradled in their hands and arms while they cried in fear that their heads would explode.

They are too healthy for this, and they are the children of the flesh and they dwell in the realm and the health of the flesh absolutely. These laughing babes of health are the chosen of Deity. They choose to be healthy, and have chosen.

They do not mind living in a mediocracy, as long as they live. It never occurs to them that among the worst aspects of life is that it is so very very terribly sad, so very very sad, so sad.

The do not hate, and do not require the solace of hatred, the solace which dissipates our sense of life's sadness. We see all of the living and beautiful creatures as they pass into the death from which they came. We witness the aspect of the living and the beautiful which returns to the death it was borne through, and we become sad. But in the wisdom of the flesh they dwell upon the moment, and they are not sad.

They do not need to struggle spiritually or psychologically. They do not need to justify their personal existence except by living. They do not require the toys an artist requires, as when the soul with its bloody grappling-hooks of will drags the starlit soup of the subconscious for jewels.

An artist sees and feels a beauty that is not of the artist, and tries to capture that beauty and the image of the truth it is a shadow of. An artist may see a woman so beautiful it hurts, and try to portray that beauty and that pain. And yet the beautiful brings no pain to these fortunate folks, for they are alive with beauty, and do not need to gaze on it from a distance, yearningly, hopelessly, foolishly.

THE PERRYTON EXPEDITIONS

by Mark Hatmaker

(taken from the soon-to-be-published Memoirs of Sir Nathaniel Perryton; the following excerpts concern Perryton's 1953 assault of Peak T23 in the Andes)

Day 1 - The months of preparation have proven profitable. The expedition is scheduled to be underway tomorrow, weather permitting. We shall assault the south face. Pemberton and his men will stay with the pack team while I lead the fore team.

Day 2 - Thus far, the expedition is going fine. Spirits are high, though Ginridy got a little carsick on the way up. We have established camp at 3000 feet behind an escarpment of granite and feldspar which should provide nominal protection from the howling wind.

This evening, while dining on canned rations, Jennings, our photographer, entertained us with his stunning impersonations of his favorite lichen. Our Sherpa guide Yo-lan, particularly amused, was moved to relate the history of some legendary race of beasts within these mountains, that from time to time come down from their craggy perches and enter the native villages to audit their taxes. Yo-lan, the old blowhard, could always weave a shuddering tale.

Day 3 - Russell has become increasingly irritable, perhaps because of the thinning atmosphere. It seems that earlier today, he was reminded of the Amazon expedition in which he became enamored of a large dung beetle. I remember trying to dissuade him from notions of marriage, but he rejected my arguments, insisting that Sadie was the beetle for him. Russell now has a funny walk. Note: I must remember to wear more hats.

Day 6 - After yesterday's near-disastrous events, I feel blessed to be able to set pen to paper. The climb of the south face, despite perilous conditions, proved uneventful. It would have been very dangerous if not for the fact that it wasn't.

More noteworthy were the events that occurred with our pack team. It seems a sort of mountaineers' mutiny was brewing. Yo-lan demanded his own tent complete with blackboard and colored chalk; Thornwell suggested we concede, but after much bartering I convinced this ambitious savage that a pocket full of peas and a hand-puppet were much more appealing than shelter from the elements.

Day 8 - Distressing news for my navigator. Today Davies radioed home and was distraught to discover that his wife had run off with a man who thinks a tributary is a car. Decidedly bad news, but the intrepid Davies seems to be pulling through just fine, though he has taken to muttering to the soap dispenser and shrieking whenever someone looks at his knees. I think he is doing well.

Day 9 - Russell married his thumb today in a small ceremony on peak 112. We were all in attendance except for Hobbs, who was resting up after thwarting all remaining traces of mutiny by treating the Sherpas to his pantomime play on the evils of crouching in mixed company. We all chipped in and bought the couple a rake. They seem happy.

Day 10 - Triumph! We have reached the summit, though curiously enough Haines' calculations prove that we are actually lower than when we started out. We covered Haines in yak fat and wedged him into a crevice. It's just like him to try and spoil things.

Day 15 - We have returned. The comforts of home are a king's pleasure after having braved the frigid elements. All is well, though Thornwell mentioned that we had forgotten to post our flat, take pictures, or document our accomplishment in any way. We were all a bit taken aback by this revelation. It was then that Russell cried out that he had proof, for he had placed a snowball in his pocket before we left, and he would rush home to get it. We all took turns beating him to death with a cricket bat.

DO I BELIEVE IN GOD?

ANSWER:

I always put it this way - "If it could be proven there is no God I would still believe we live forever". There are five flies in the ointment. Send S.A.S.E to: 5 WRONGS RIGHTED - Box 2243 YOUNGSTOWN - OHIO, 44504

THE MAGIC PRICK

by Myrna Sharp

Susan needed to lose weight. She was forty, fat and single, and thin was "in."

In magazines and movies, on TV and in ads, "thin" meant health and beauty. Plus, to Susan, it meant Marty, with whom she was in love. For all his women looked alike, with long, brown hair and no meat on their bones. Susan (who had the hair) adored the tall, blond, brilliant biology professor. Unless Marty married Jean, his current British girlfriend, she would be deported back to England. Which would leave Susan, as his postdoctoral assistant, in a good position to get him next. If only she were thin.

But unfortunately, Susan loved to eat. She awoke each morning compulsively considering what to have for breakfast, lunch and dinner that day, and she tried every new restaurant in town. She pigged out when she was happy and stuffed her face when she was sad. She'd been to Weight Watchers and Diet Workshop, had done Scarsdale and Oprahfast. Everything had worked, but only once, and afterward she ended up even fatter than before. In addition, middle age slowed the shedding of excess tonnage. And the more depressed about it she got, the more she ate.

One Saturday afternoon, Susan sat in the concavity in the center of her living room couch; her two cats sat on either side. "Why can't I be thin?" she cried into a gallon of Ben & Jerry's Heath Bar Crunch. "I love Marty so!"

Suddenly, the two cats glowed a phosphorescent green. Susan rubbed her eyes, thinking: *Probably too much MSG in the take-out Chinese I just ate.*

Purrsky spoke. "Enough complaining, already!" the cat said. "Nine lives we have, but we grant only one wish. And this is it."

Harry flopped, as usual, onto his furry back, commanding Susan to rub his belly. As she did so, he dug a claw deep into her thumb.

"Ouch!" she cried, grabbing her hand and watching as a drop of green blood emerged from the prick, followed by a noisy rush of air. It sounded like a balloon deflating and smelled like French fries. It was not an unpleasant odor. When at last the expulsion ended, Susan looked down, and she was thin!

"It's permanent," said Harry, tucking his paws beneath him. "Eat what you want." Their green glows disappeared.

Susan felt great! Her arteries unclogged, her joints stopped hurting, and she could see her feet in the shower. Her closet, which contained clothes in sizes 9 through 2X, did not include "skinny," so Susan shopped with joy for an all-new size 3 wardrobe. The whole world seemed larger, from her seatbelt to her shoes. She looked great, too.

Two months later, Jean was in England, and Marty was in Susan's bed. Susan was ecstatic. At first. Because, before long, Marty turned into a jerk, and Susan fell in love with his grad student, Jim.

Jim is twenty-five.

Now Susan needs to lose age.

DIVIDED BY MYSELF

by Sigmund Weiss

Divided by myself into spaces
where in me bones click words
overflowing like water,
my eyes rigid amid mounds of voices
carry my thoughts into distant worlds
where soft fingers touch my brow
as waves of air refreshing me,
my thoughts dance to a harmony
till awakened by a storm of voices
I lose myself amid conflicting words
breaking me apart
into meanings devastated with conflications.



"BOB"

SOLAR SONG

by Joseph Cuthbert

Consider Uranus,
Stars all about it,
Psychotically whirling
Around in orbit.
Big and bold,
But too far for me to see,
It's the eccentric relation
Of the Solar family.

Even the name is vague,
For goodness sake:
Uranus or Uranus.
No wonder the planet's a flake.
It just rolls along
On its carnival ride,
Laughing at astronomers
As it spins on its side.

Brevity induces gratitude!
- ye concierge



BOOKWORM DEVOURING
F DIGESTING INSIDE JOKE

HOLLANDAYS AGAIN

by Ken Wagner

Dick and Linda lived in an upstairs apartment on 13th Street. It was 11:00 at night when I scaled the stairs toward their door.

I tapped on the wood.

Linda's muffled voice called sweetly, "Come on in..."

I tried the knob.

"It's locked!"

I heard feet shuffle up to the door, which opened. There stood Linda, short, with hazel hair and greenish eyes.

"What's up?" I asked, stepping inside.

"What's up?!" she cackled. "He wants to know what's up, Dick! Tell him what's up!"

Dick was a skinny fellow with curly black hair. He slowly opened his mouth, and said dumbly, "Well--"

Linda cut him short. "Forget it! I'll tell him what's up! it's the Hollandays again! They do this all the time, don't they, Dick?"

Dick foggily tipped his head forward in agreement.

Linda went on. "Their kids ripped down my curtains, tore up the bathroom, and dumped a full pot of beans I was cooking. I'm telling you, I'm not putting up with this! It was 1:00 in the afternoon, when she stopped in, asking, as always, can I watch her brats for a few minutes, and she leaves them forever! And she never pays me! You'd better make her pay me, Dick!"

Dick looked at the floor.

Linda went on. "She's going to hear it from me when she gets here!"

There was a knock at the door.

Linda called sweetly, "Come on in..."

The Hollandays stepped into the apartment.

Rick Hollanday was a short, stocky man, with a big split between his two front teeth. Rick's wife, Cindy Hollanday, was taller than he and heavy-set with long brown hair.

There was a long, uncomfortable silence.

Dick disappeared into the kitchen with Rick, where they laughed about something.

Cindy slithered into a rocking chair near Linda, simultaneously asking, "Were the kids brats?"

"Not at all," Linda replied, not looking Cindy in the eye. "They were angels."

"I'm sorry I was gone so long..."

"It's no problem."

"I can't pay you anything now, but I will later..."

"That's fine."

The Hollandays snatched their children and fled.

Linda took out the vacuum cleaner and began frantically vacuuming as she cursed, "I can't believe her nerve! I had her kids all day! She's going to hear it from me the next time I see her!"

SAGA OF THE SOUTH SLOPE

by Dennis Brezina

CHAPTER 5 BEETLEMANIA

When we last left the South Slope--where animals and plants with human-like traits grapple with problems bigger than life--Essie, a snake, had tied herself into a figure-eight knot trying to get in touch with her feelings. And Jasper, a praying mantis, had packed his bags after learning that his karma was to be eaten alive by his mate.

Today in our less-than-serene community, we hear a heated exchange near the Monument to the Unknown Chipmunk.

"We're too ecologically pure and self-sufficient to worry about monetary and fiscal policies," exclaims Greta, a reclusive daffodil.

"I disagree," interrupts Sweetness, a honey bee. "The federal budget and trade deficits are hurting America and its economy, including our community on the South Slope. American companies--to maximize profits--are moving jobs overseas and foreign nations are picking up the slack, buying up the United States at a discount. It's happening here."

"Sweetness is right," says Give-a-hoot, an owl. "America should never have emptied its piggy bank. Now Japanese beetles are buzzing the South Slope in droves."

"Yesterday, Japanese beetles met with Mitsubishi, Ink., a huge iridescent black beetle," Sweetness tells her astonished friends. "He agreed to transform the beehive in the Rust Belt section of the South Slope into an Oriental honeyfactory. A Shrine to Wa, the goddess of harmony, will replace the queen bee. All worker bees will bow to Wa while eating raw eggs for breakfast. They must do warmup exercises while smiling. When collecting nectar, they will fly in place. No droning for drone bees on nectar breaks. They must dress as cheerleaders to lead chants on the virtues of *kaizen*, the doctrine of continual improvement. One shift of bees will have to work by moonlight."

"Wow! Every animal will be affected," exclaims Winchester, a woodchuck. "All of that bowing--we won't be able to shake paws any more. And what about female workers? I hear they will have to hum and chatter less, like their Japanese counterparts. Sounds like a lot of Shinto mumbo-jumbo."

"That's only half of it," continues Sweetness. "I heard via the grapevine that the beetles plan to convert several ant colonies into assembly lines for Sony micro-mini-cameras. And, the Pokeberry Saloon--would you believe, a rolling sushi bar and fast noodle shop?"

Moral: Be it ever so rough-and-tumble, there's no place like Tokyo.

JOHNNY, YOU CAN'T

by Selena Anne Shephard

"Johnny, you can't play football in a tutu."

"Yes I can. We're only playing touch football. I won't get it dirty."

"Johnny, you can't play baseball in a dress."

"Why not? I run faster in a dress."

"But what if you have to slide?"

"Then you'll see my panties, big deal."

"Johnny, you can't play tennis in a slip."

"Who says so? It's too hot to wear anything else."

"Johnny, you can't do backflips in a nightie."

"Are you jealous because I can score a perfect 10 and look like one, too?"

"Johnny, you can't ride a horse in a miniskirt."

"If the horse doesn't mind what I wear, why should you?"

"Johnny, you can't pole-vault in a girdle."

"You should be wearing one, too. It gives more padding when you land."

A MIRACLE

by Andy Roberts

A trail of pork rinds and regurgitated broccoli led me to the President. He was ill, lying on the red room bed, which spread out around him like a spider on a pincushion. He clutched at his stomach and moaned.

I whispered, "Mr. President?"

"Is that you, Barbara?" His eyes were open but he couldn't see.

"No sir. It's me."

"You? You again?"

"I'm sorry, sir."

"Just what do you want with me?" He recoiled in disgust from my presence.

"You know very well what I want, sir."

"But my hear, it's--it's..."

"So vital, sir?"

He nodded furiously. "Yes! Yes! That's it. Vital! Absolutely!"

"Not at all."

"You speak with the voice of raw egg white, demon."

"The language of love and death. Will the anesthetic be necessary, sir?"

"You...you...stay back! I'll call Barbara! Barbara!" The voice was no more than a frog's croak.

I nearly laughed but composed myself. "Oh, sir, don't you see, this thing is merely a useless metaphor. So easily plucked...you see...it's out already." I held the steaming organ in my hands.

"Why--why--" The President explored the hollow in his chest. "I feel so much lighter, better...it's--it's--"

"A miracle, sir?"

"Yes, demon! I could kiss you! I can see again!" The President sat up. The wound was beginning to coagulate. He blinked his eyes and tried to focus. "Why--you--you'rea--Stop! Where are you going?"

"There are many to feed, sir."

"You--" The President squinted as I disappeared through the doorway. "...you're a black man." The voice was incredulous, but gaining strength.

"Yes. Homeless."

The President swung his legs over the side of the bed and felt underneath for his slippers. The blood had disappeared entirely from his shirt front. "Why, I'll get on this problem right away. Gosh! I feel so much better."

"Thank you, sir."

"Don't mention it."

SERENITY

by Mary Ann Henn

Dusk is serene
the trees are green
then black against
a rosey sky
the hours pass
guttering candles

flicker light
in the shadows
cool wind rattles
but I am cozy
I sleep and dream
of being a queen
and wake to a sky
full of scudding clouds

"Johnny, you can't lift weights in a bra."
"Oh, yeah? You'd be surprised what a boy can do in a Maidenform bra!"

"Johnny, you can't play ice hockey in a Girl Scout uniform."
"Betcha I can. It sure is prettier than a silly hockey uniform."

"Johnny, you can't go fishing with your daddy in a garter belt and stockings."

"What's your problem? He bought them for me."

"Johnny, you can't swim in a wedding gown."

"Don't worry so much. This gown is waterproof."

"Johnny, you can't bowl in 5-inch heels."

"Oh, come off it...Uh-oh, I guess you're right this time. I'll just have to play with my dolls. They're more fun anyways." 31

PRAYER LUCK AND MAGIC

by Tamarina Dwyer

"If the words are spoken softly or written in subtle ways, messages are varied as destinies are carried."

Snow for Halloween, snow on Xmas? C'mon. Drink some hot cocoa. Have a toddy. You have an electric, a fuzzy, stay warm in the heart.

Why not 20 cups of herbal? Be creative, unique. Water composes most of the earth's surface. The weight of the body is primarily water. Bouillion cubes and good golden oj. Money buys health and why not?

Compromise. School's over. You can write, you can draw. Something might come up. Go down in the basement and see if you can find that paintbrush.

Marriage isn't everything. Men care about themselves, hon. You aren't gonna fall for that, are you?

Rock 'n roll music--it's loud, too fast, you aren't going to be thinking much about life if you're movin' to that stuff.

Work is, now dear, everybody has to do it and there's stars in your eyes, it isn't that good to feel like you do. No job is important as your children. Oh the mind lies near the heart...

THE JOB APPLICATION

by Gregory Burnham

I know you'll madly desire examples of my success. Gradually, it all happened gradually. I swallowed a piano and suffered no repercussions. I put out a brush fire with my breath. The first lottery ticket I bought was a million dollar winner.

Sure sure sure, you're saying. Nobody swallows a piano and lives to tell about it. Nobody has that much breath. I better look at my lotto ticket again.

Okay then--it wasn't actually a piano I swallowed. I blew out the candles on a birthday cake. I won a million bucks in one of those mail order sweepstakes in which everybody wins a million bucks but never sees it. But it did happen gradually, I'll tell you that much, over the course of many months, each occurrence surrounded by everyday mundane circumstances.

Big deal! So what, you're saying.

Perseverance--that's what! I'll get the job done for you. And I hope you'll be able to understand what I'm about to say: I have connections elsewhere.

There aren't many of us, that much is certain, and even fewer who are willing to step forth and try to explain the miracles of eating pianos, extinguishing brush fires and buying the winning lottery ticket. These are not typical miracles. Doing what we do is not as fun as it sounds.

So listen: what I'm trying to say is that I think positively good thoughts, I think the way a man with connections should think. Put your trust in me. I'll confront your piano one key at a time. Imagine: devouring a musical instrument for the good of the company, ingesting--in its entirety--something larger than yourself until your body starts stretching into the shape of a baby grand. And I'll start with just one branch of the bush, blowing on it for a minute or more and then moving on to the next, leaf by leaf. I'll buy us just one lottery ticket, as that's all we'll need.

It'll be easy, but remember--it will happen gradually, it takes time. Nobody anywhere becomes a success overnight.

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COWABUNGA

by R.M. Willard

"Cowabunga!" yelled the surfer
Hefting up his shiny board,
And he high-stepped thorough the pasture
As the water called him on
But when he hit the beach
A thunder played upon his ears
No, not the sound of breakers
But a bovine-fury charge!
Was then the battered surfer
Saw the folly of his way
For the cow has yet been born
That one should dare to call a bunga

THING A THONG

by Rim DeMar

Enjoy the beach. Catch some rays. But don't do it in a thong unless you want to get busted.

Now, thongs used to be what we called those sandals that you flopped around in.

But for the '90s a thong is that brief swimsuit (with a top for the ladies) that covers the front, winds around the waist and disappears as a thin strand between the buttocks.

Gads! Can the downfall of civilization be far behind?!

One would think so, the way the blue-noses (i.e., people with nothing better to do) have brought about laws that crack down on the tiny thong.

This smacks of an attack on freedom of beach, dudes and dudettes.

But, honestly, how many people, women or men, do you think will actually wear a thong?

After all, as a carryover from the '80s, we're still a self-conscious, guilt-ridden society. And that will knock out a vast majority of would-be thong wearers.

Let's face it, a body's going to have to be in pretty good shape to wear a thong, 'cause there's no hidin' anything with one of these, baby!

So why all the hub-bub? Do the blue-noses feel threatened? Are they jealous?

Or do they just need some piddly new cause to (you'll pardon the expression) stick their noses into?

Well, this whole fuss makes me so mad that I think I'll go out and get a thong, even though it'll make me look like a polar bear with a band-aid around its stomach.

Yeah! That'd show 'em!

Okay, which way to the beach?

"TO LIVE FOREVER"

by Anne Valley

It was cold and rainy. The grief-stricken man threw down his pen and began to weep. *Damn*, he thought, *I can't write this play. It's just too damn sad.* He thought of his son buried in the graveyard.

He picked up the manuscript and began changing the words, crossing some out. *After all, I have a family to support.* What if he changed one letter of the protagonist's name? *Now it's only one letter off from my son's name. Even if my family name dies out, my son's character will live on in my play. Ah, to live forever...*

He worked far into the night; after all, he was under contract to his theatre company. His decision made to immortalize his son, he produced his greatest masterpiece. Every word, every line was dedicated to his little boy. On opening night, even the queen of his land came to see his play. His play never went out of print.

Because Shakespeare chose "To be," his family name has never really died!

SAYZ-U (Letters)

Dear Mrs. Wechsler-Chaput, June 1, 1990

Those of us who are familiar with IJ here in Fort Collins are sorry to hear that you'll soon be stopping the presses. When I taught writing at Colorado State, my colleagues and I used to spend two weeks discussing various small press periodicals in our classes. The students loved it, though I must admit the Dean raised an eyebrow or two at a few of the magazines we brought in. But, like IJ, my colleagues and I understand the importance of the smaller publications. The small press, as we believe it, is the real voice of the people. And as I told my students, every time a small press publication stops its presses, a small part of that public voice disappears.

But from every ending there comes a new beginning. My colleagues and I have decided to put together a publication. For the past two weeks we have been deciding upon how we want it to look and what kind of philosophical following we would like to pursue. Wish us luck. We're hoping to appear in the next Writer's Market. We'll see.

And best of luck to you. IJ has been a lot of fun for the folks in Fort Collins. May your future be filled with adventure and just enough confusion to make the world seem exciting...

MIKE McLAREN
2206 Coventry Court
Fort Collins, CO 80526

Thanks for your good wishes, Mike and Fort Collins! I don't think I'll have any problems maintaining the confusion in my life, thanks...Oh, and I prefer the honorific "Ms." to "Mrs.," but I much prefer no honorific at all. Please, call me Ishmael--I mean, Elayne.

Dear Elayne,

The American capitalist press has been giving Gorbachev advice for five years now, as he takes each delicate step of *perestroika*, restructuring a collectivist dictatorship into a socialist democracy, an undertaking made especially difficult because the Soviet Union is one of the two most powerful countries the world has ever seen, and is made up of over a hundred different subcultures, not to mention the constant hostility and economic non-cooperation of the West. And of course every time the US agrees to an arms reduction treaty proposed by Gorbachev to make the inevitable imminent destruction of the human species just a little less likely, the American media acts as if, by acting ever so slightly less like maniacs, the US is doing Gorbachev a big favor, which is in a sense true. Every time the US acts a little less like maniacs, they do EVERYONE, including themselves, a big favor. Unfortunately, it doesn't happen nearly often enough. The American capitalist press pictures Gorbachev as walking on a tightrope, where one false step will plunge him into early retirement and the world into chaos. They give him advice with every step, every week, week after week, month after month, year after year, and assure the American newspaper-reading public that if Gorbachev doesn't take their capitalist advice, the next step he takes will be the last of his reign. Gorbachev hasn't taken a single bit of advice from the American capitalist press, has in every instance taken a different step, found a different solution to each problem from the ones the American capitalist press advised. (Of course there were always several ONLY solutions to each problem offered, plus the periodic assurance that there was NO solution --Gorbachev must have passed dozens of insurmountable obstacles by now, at least from the point of view of capitalist logic.) And yet Gorbachev continues to work, and with each month of his restructuring the Soviet Union, and the world, become slightly less demented places in which to live. Now what does this tell us about capitalist logic, the logic we have used to justify the murder of over a million people in Vietnam, and continue to use to justify the murder of people throughout the world every day?

Yours in Kropotkin,

ELLIOT CANTSIN
1961 Cedar Street
North Merrick, NY 11566

P.S. Hierarchal planning is exactly what real socialism, coordinatorism (if you must use such a term) of Gorbachev, and anarchism are against. The very essence of all true socialist theories is equality and the idea that hierarchy is hell,

that human society must find a more egalitarian way of structuring itself. This is the argument Gorbachev uses when he encourages the Soviet Communist party to decentralize, i.e., to move toward more anarchistic structures. I encourage punk anarchists to do the same thing in a tinier, but more creative level. American socialism strikes me as being totally stagnant. The Green party would be a great thing for the US exactly because it would challenge American capitalism on practical, not ideological pinko, grounds.

Yo, who you callin' an ideological pinko? Seriously, Elliot, when I mentioned the term "coordinatorism," I was referring to the same thing you term "collectivist." But don't mind me, I have severe "ism" trouble lately...

Elayne--

6/19/90

Thanks a quillion for the bonus plug in the latest IJ [for her real groovy serial-novel-in-progress, *The Shopes Go Camping*]. It was totally unexpected and I was quite pleased. Reading Anni's columns was a pleasure, as always, but this time it was ironic as well because as of Sunday I will be cohabiting--something I never thought I'd do, for all the reasons she mentioned. But when the time and person are right...Anyway, new address:

STEPHANIE duPLESSIS
P.O. Box 4697
San Francisco, CA 94101

Dear Elayne,

June 21 1990

Sorry to hear IJ's going under, but it's good for you because you'll have time to write. Maybe I'll see your stuff out there somewhere. Getting published in IJ gave me confidence that I could write things that people would like to read rather than just writing for myself. Thanks, Elayne, I appreciate it.

Sincerely,

ANDY ROBERTS
394 Hiler Road
Columbus, OH 43228

My dear Elayne,

June 30, 1990

Alas, the year is half done and only now getting a note off to you. I'm always behind in answering my mail, the volume of which is much less than yours, I'm sure. It comes as no surprise that IJ will soon end, considering your workload. I couldn't do it and admire that you have for so long! And so modest! I think the way you tied up that IJ party Gerber was great. I regret I couldn't make it there and had to settle for daydreams of "Kid" Sieve seducing me at that gathering instead ...sigh...(The Kid says, as you knew she would, "Not if my beau, S.H. Otis, had anything to say about it!") Well, maybe I'll be dropping by your neighborhood later this year...

The past several issues were full of delights too numerous to mention, which reflects well on the good tastes or their creator. I don't know what else to say!

Till next time,

JOHN P. DOUCET
R.R. #1, Box 135
Concession, N.S. B0W 1M0
CANADA

Elayne--

Thanks for the nice review (of his great newsletter, *THE PRESIDENT JOURNAL*)...Your review sold me a few copies. Hope my reviews of IJ will do the same.

TPJ's doing well. Too bad IJ's going out of print soon... Your zine is a wonderful effort; I hope you know. I never cease to find at least 10-20 things that intensely interest me. Usually it's all fantastic! And what will you 'n' Steve do after IJ? Sell SPIN Magazine? (Not bloody likely! Among other things, we'll probably write for TPJ!)

Ciao,

CHRIS LAURSEN
Tofield, AB T0B 4J0
CANADA

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