

FAST TIMES

#2

KEEP
NORTH
PARK
FAST

STORIES

GAMES

FREE
STICKER

Fast Times #2 - The North Park Issue

"Downhill Is the Fastest Way"

Welcome to the second issue of the 'zine, a 30-odd page love letter to the greatest damned neighborhood in San Diego or any other city, North Park. For the last five or six years of my life, the corner of 30th and University has been the center of my universe and I've yet to find another place on the planet I'd be happier to call home.

Like many urban neighborhoods, North Park is in a tremendous state of change - some of it good, some of it bad, but then again that all depends on who you're talking to. Either way, it's interesting, confusing and sometimes downright frustrating. This issue constitutes part of my personal effort to make sense of it all and express how some of us feel about the current climate in the 'hood. I hope it's a more productive and entertaining statement than, say, spraypainting on a wall might be.

Special thanks to everyone who read the first issue and cared if a second one came along, Det. Gary Hassen, Kate, Neil, Linh Van Bui, Fat Mike for the \$20 and all my friends and neighbors. Extra special thanks to Chili Dog for the help and motivation. This issue is lovingly dedicated to the memory of Freddy Pohr.

Enjoy, and welcome to the neighborhood.

- Ken Swagger



BRING ME THE FINGERS OF WHOEVER WROTE THIS DRIVEL

"From around the corner, the distinct aroma of fresh-brewed coffee tempts you to stop in for a cappuccino. You hear the soft notes of a jazz singer fill the crisp night air as you walk along Ray Street glancing at the beautiful artwork in windows on gallery row. Your lifestyle has taken an exciting turn at La Boheme, a stylish collection of new homes in North Park's trendy urban environment. Here, residents enjoy a vibrant city setting in a central location. Experience the new renaissance of art, entertainment, and culture today at La Boheme."

This is an excerpt from marketing material for La Boheme, a mixed use condominium/ retail complex currently under construction on 30th street just north of University Ave. It sits on space formerly occupied by a Rite Aid and a large parking lot where you could park all day for pocket change. I'm not sure what was there before the Rite Aid, but I imagine it was much less of an eyesore, and I imagine the people who lived, worked and played there then were none too happy about the change.

Many of the people who live, work and play here now are just as upset about the latest development. While a corporate drug store and a few acres of concrete are nothing to mourn, people are more angry of other losses it represents and the much greater loss it foretells.

It seems like every few weeks some of my friends lose a place to live. It usually happens to a few friends at a time, because most people I know have roommates in order to afford what it costs to rent a house or apartment in San Diego. Owning property in the city you choose to call home used to be a reasonable goal for most people, but now it's unlikely if not impossible. How can you hope to pay more than \$300 grand to buy the same apartment you once struggled to rent after they slap some new counter tops and some Burbur carpeting in it and call it a condo conversion? And a new condo? Forget about it.

The University Avenue corridor between Utah Street and the 805 and roughly a block to the north and south is known as Greater North Park, and was once ranked among San Diego's most successful retail districts, home to Woolworth's and a number of other large chain stores as well as an abundance of mom-and-pop shops. The corporate stores abandoned the 'hood for Mission Valley after I-8 was built and the retail character of the area has ebbed and flowed since, the most significant upswing occurring within the last decade.

Today it's a collection of mostly small, independently owned businesses that mostly suit the character of the neighborhood well. But these small businesses are feeling the double-edged sword of redevelopment as their rents climb through the roof and developers push them out, presumably in favor of corporate establishments and specialty boutiques to better serve North Park's newer residents, a more affluent, less diverse population with richer tastes.

These new residents are generally wannabe urbanites lured by the promise of their "lifestyle taking an exciting turn." Then they move in and realize it doesn't quite live up to their fantastical vision of yuppified "Bohemia" and invest their time, energy and considerable resources into making it more resemble that ridiculous archetype. Developers and planning commission members are all too happy to make

that a reality, regardless of the human expense.

I'm not trying to write a primer on the infamous G-word I promised not to use in this issue (too obvious, I figured). I don't have the knowledge, ability or time to do that, but I know what I see. I know what it's like to be pushed aside and to lose the things you love. I know today I can pawn my typewriter for \$50 and get a great meal, pick up a new pair of thrift store shoes and some cheap Dickies, share a pitcher with an old man and hear stories about Korea, down a few more watching three bands, get a burrito and have change in my pocket to give to bums on my walk home. All along the way I'd encounter friendly and familiar faces and never travel more than five blocks from home. I'm afraid that tomorrow, I won't be able to do that.

I'm not implying that La Boheme is the source of the problem, nor trying to libel their marketing techniques. Their location to the neighborhood's nerve center makes them the most obvious example.

La Boheme's sales offices are located at 2860 University Ave., next door to Central Adult and the Corner Clubhouse, where the disabled and disadvantaged can get valuable vocational training and other help. Across the alleyway is Labor Ready, where you can show up with your work boots at 5 am to bust ass all day for \$40. Prices for a two-bedroom, 1134-square-foot condo with mezzanine start at \$524,900.*

*Source: La Boheme sales materials.

North Park lacks the notoriety and recognition nationally that other SD 'hoods like the Gaslamp and Pacific Beach have (which is probably for the best). But on Sept. 25, 1978, the neighborhood was at the center of the world's attention. That's when PSA Flight 182 collided with a Cessna on final approach to Lindbergh Field and crashed near the intersection of Dwight and Nile. It was the largest air disaster of its time, killing all 135 passengers and crew aboard the Boeing 727, two people in the private plane and seven people on the ground. According to an excellent article by Patrick Mondout ("PSA 727 Crashes Into San Diego After Collision," www.super70s.com). More than 3000 people descended on the crash site, some to help, some to loot the body parts strewn over a several-block radius.

Scolari's bartender, race car driver and all around cool guy Donny Nanos lived blocks away from the site of the impact and heard the explosion. He and a buddy jumped into their car and drove around checking out the hotspots - a house on the other side of the 805 where one of the Cessna occupants body crashed through an awning, another spot where what was left of the smaller plane crashed onto El Cajon Boulevard and slid into a storefront.

I wanted to spend some time driving around with Donny, record his narrative as we visited these places and print them verbatim. Not that I want to focus on the grisly, sensational details of the tragedy, but because Donny's lively storytelling and eye-witness credibility are far more than I can offer. Here's a paraphrased sample from earlier conversations:

"We hauled ass over and checked it out. The poor fuckin' guy's leg was ripped off, I don't know where the fuck his other leg was but it wasn't on him, and he crashed through these poor fuckers awning right smack onto their goddamned porch. It was fucking gross dude, I've never seen anything so fucking gross in my life."

There's some great recollections of the day of the crash and a lot of other information on sandiegostories.com and more specific technical analysis of the crash on airdisaster.com. In all my years, I've

never heard anything more heartbreaking and terrible than the tower recordings of the pilots last words as the plane plummets toward the streets: "Brace yourself ... hey baby ... Ma I love you."

North Parks first Starbucks opened last September in what is most likely the neighborhood's most valuable retail space - inside the newly renovated North Park Theater (or pardon me, the Stephen and Mary Birch North Park Theater. It's nice old Steve and Mary kicked down a substantial amount of money for the project, but do we have to name everything in San Diego after these people? If I were a dead Spaniard, I'd be a little pissed). The supercoffeemegachain signed a ten-year, \$705,840 lease to infiltrate the last bastion of independent coffee in greater San Diego. A low grumble erupted throughout the neighborhood, which I contributed to with an article to one of San Diego's independent weeklies.

While I was pretty happy with my story and it granted me the opportunity to analyze the situation from the inside and talk to many of the people directly involved, there are two things I didn't include. Once exclusion was because it was out of context in a hard news story, and the second one I just plain missed until it was too late. Both have been eating away at me since, so it's time I cleared my conscience.

The first part is some of the interview with local Starbucks representative Montey Dunn and the details of how it happened. In ten years or so of doing professional interviews I've never really dealt with large corporations so, though this may be typical of such situations, but the experience was new to me. It began by placing calls and emails to Starbucks until a woman called me back. I asked her my first question and she replied, "Uh huh," followed by a long uncomfortable silence. "Oh, you thought I was answering your questions?" she finally said.

It turns out she worked for an outside PR firm. She took my questions, changed them slightly, then e-mailed them off to Starbucks, who passed it around until the appropriate responses could be formulated and e-mailed back to me through the PR firm. I can honestly, from personal experience, say it was much easier to get a an in-person interview with Tom Cruise than it is to get a Starbucks representative on the phone.

A few days later I received a set of responses back from local Starbucks representative Montey Dunn.

And my what responses they were. Here's the answer to "When is the North Park Theater store opening?"

"The Starbucks at 29th & University is scheduled to open on September 30, 2005. We are excited to be among the few retailers located in the newly renovated North Park Theatre, and build strong relationships with the local community.

"This Starbucks is unique for a number of reasons. It will feature a spacious floor plan and unique design that compliments the architecture of the historic North Park Theatre building. It is also an Urban Coffee Opportunities (UCO) location. UCO is a joint venture formed by Starbucks Coffee Company and Johnson Development Corporation (JDC) - Earvin "Magic" Johnson's company - to enhance the development of Starbucks stores in ethnically diverse communities throughout the United States. UCO retail locations look like other Starbucks locations, reflecting the fabric and character of the neighborhood. In addition, each UCO store features a framed photograph of Earvin "Magic" Johnson and co-branded items such as a special mural and a plaque

signed by Mr. Johnson and Starbucks Chairman Howard Schultz.

"These joint venture UCO stores are committed to hiring locally and working with local non-profit organizations to develop long-term relationships that will benefit the community. Our partners (employees) are committed to giving back to the communities where we do business through local programming, in-kind donations, partner volunteerism, cash contributions and The Starbucks Foundation."

What the figgity fuck are you talking about, Montey? And is there a more insidious marketing plan than "Urban Coffee Opportunities" and signed pictures of Magic Johnson? Probably, but there are few that are more stupid. What's next, Carmizzle Mochizzle Frapachizzles?

At least we know The Starbucks Foundation cares about our urban jungle. Way to keep it real, Howie.

Another interesting response from Dunn was, "While Starbucks is always looking for opportunities to better serve our customers through new locations, we do not have firm plans to open additional locations in North Park at this time." At the time, Starbucks actually did have firm plans - which I confirmed through other developers - to open three more North Park stores. One is already open in the Von's at 30th and Howard (four blocks from the theater). Another will open at three blocks down University from the theater, at 32nd Street, and yet another will open in the "Renaissance" condo/ retail development at 30th and El Cajon, a block away from Von's on the land once occupied by Aztec Bowl.

I can't seem to wrap my mind around the cause of this tidbit of misinformation. The only logical conclusion I can grasp is that Dunn didn't actually know about these other stores, but that seems unlikely. C'mon, he's Montey fuckin' Dunn!

I'm far more bummed out by the other missing bit. "Low grumble" is an adequate description for the response to Starbucks opening. "Complete silence" was the response heard before the Starbucks sign went up, even though the deal had been made public in May. When I asked Bud Fischer - the developer behind the theater renovation and the man responsible for leasing the space - about the opposition to Starbucks coming to the neighborhood he said "What opposition?"

And he's completely right. It's likely no one ever walked up to him and said, "Hey Bud, Starbucks doesn't really fit with most people's vision for the theater or for the neighborhood in general," or, "Hey, Bud, y'know that's right across the street or within a few blocks of whole lot of locally-owned coffee shops that kick the shit out of Starbucks."

Still, I heard the opposition every time I bought a cup of coffee or went out drinking. But barroom and coffeeshop banter falls far from the ears of developers, planning committee members and mainstream press outlets unless it's taken to another level. I fucked up myself, not offering my pen to air the opposition until way late in the game.

Someone splattered the front of Starbucks with a little red paint or wax or something that Bud said "washed right off." Ocean Beach firebombed their motherfuckin' Starbucks! While I don't advocate violence, vandalism or property damage, a little public outcry isn't too much to ask. It's hard not to be apathetic knowing that developers and property managers can lease to whomever they wish as long as it complies with zoning laws, but that doesn't mean neighbors are powerless. Imagine the ruckus that would have arisen had Fischer leased the space to a porn shop, or a needle exchange program. What about that prick who moved to the Gaslamp in search of peace and quiet and singlehandedly shut down the Juke Joint? We can all learn a thing or two from that prick.

It's unfortunate that Starbucks' setting up shop tarnishes the glory of the North Park Theater renovation. A lot of people struggled for a long time to see the theater brought back to life, and it's certain more

than a few probably felt betrayed when it happened. For some people the coffee shop completely nullifies the value of the theater and they swear to never go. Granted, lyric opera may not be the preferred diversion for straight people under 50, but kudos to the San Diego Lyric Opera for making the project work. The theater is also available for other events, with significant discounts offered to non-profit organizations.

I went to the theater's reopening ceremony. The inside is even more beautiful than the outside. I saw the pride on the faces and misty eyes of people who made it happen. I saw an 89-year-old Craig Noel - often called "The Father of San Diego Theater" and only attendant also present at the theater's 1928 opening - behold the place with the awe-filled wonderment of an 11-year-old child.

Personally, I see the theater as I believe he does - a temple to art and music and imagination all that is good and righteous and beautiful.



Along with the theater came a six-story parking structure. I could go on and on all day about privatized versus city run parking lots and how it relates to the fundamental things wrong with the way the city is run (thank you Jay), but I'll spare the toner, and I'd probably fuck it up anyway. All I really wanna say about the parking lot is the view from the top rivals any in the city save my personal favorite, the view from my back porch.



I live at a place we call the Fast Corner, which is an apartment on University above one of NP's more notorious bars. You'll recognize the one I'm talking about when your halfway down the hill and there's a collection of shady-ass characters gathered around doing lord knows what. It's a pretty cool apartment - good-sized, decently-priced, and there's always something interesting going down right outside our window. It has it's downsides though.

Like the morning we woke up to find Kate's car had been hit by some bastard who didn't stop to leave a note. We drove around until we found the genius' car - halfway around the block - and took pictures and plate numbers. Then we took the info to the cops, where a surprisingly honest and cool cop told us it probably wasn't worth filing a report since the City Attorney doesn't prosecute hit-and-runs. She gave us the guy's address from his plate number and told us, "Do what we do, lie and say you have several witnesses who saw him do it and threaten legal action." She even checked to see if his insurance was up to date. Wow, thanks cop.

I went home, Kate went to work. Jackie Rusted (my personal favorite house guest ever with the exception of Rasputin) was staying with us, giving tattoos in our living room, and two girls coming to get work done told me there was a guy on the back porch who was rambling about a ticket or something and he "needed to beat someone's ass." I went to the back door where I was greeted by a nice man with few teeth and no shirt on, a citation of some sort hanging out of the front pocket of his dirty jeans.

Minus the slur, he spoke very proper and respectfully: "Hi there, I'm Mark. I'm sorry to bother you sir, but I need to speak to you and your roommates about this citation I reserved a few weeks ago. Now I was just sittin' on yer porch there at the bottom of the stairs there mindin' my own business. Now I'll admit I, well, y'know, I smoke a

little pot and get high you know, just kick back. So I was smokin' a doobie and I guess the smell musta, I dunno, drifted on up throo yer window and offended somebody. Well I'm sorry about that, but they shoul'da come down and talked to me like a man instead a callin' the bar, cuz sumbuddy at the bar called the cops and I got this citation."

"Uh, I don't know what your talking about. Noone here called the cops on anybody."

"Well I ain't sayin' you did it man, you seem cool and all, but somebody did, and I'm gonna need all your roommates to come out here right now and talk to me."

I was flabbergasted. "Uh, why do we need to come talk to you."

"Becuz someone in thare either owes me money for this citation, or if they don't wanna pay me than that's OK, but I'm gonna have to beat their ass."

I have to say I admire his honesty.

I told him to get the fuck off my porch and things started to get ugly. He started screaming and banging and trying to get in. Two calls to 911 were placed from the house and things damn near got ugly. Everything told me it was right to step outside and break this little man in half, and I had visions like the air-conditioning scene in high fidelity involving launching him off the balcony flash through my head, but I decided to do what is normally accepted as the "right way" to do things.

A cop showed up three hours later. He offered a sincere apology and when I asked what I should do he said, "You're entitled to do whatever is necessary to protect your property and these stairs are your property, as far as I'm concerned."

Fuckin' A. Deputized for the second time in a day.

I think the bottom of my stairs might be the center of a transsexual drug ring, but Bad Chad says I can't complain about things like that because I moved here and knew what to expect. I agree somewhat, and hey, better a buncha twacked out shemales than realtors seeking investment opportunities.

Bearpaw lives a block away and so does Jay Wang. So does Rob Logic and, until a few short months ago, Chris Henry lived in the same spot for 16 years. He moved a few blocks away to Georgia Street. God bless Chris Henry. Paw very authoritatively calls our part of the 'hood "Lesser North Park," which I don't think is an official description. It's kind of derogatory, but then again so is the fact that they've got plenty of condos but the new library only exists in blueprints and artist's renderings. I've heard some old-timers call our part of town "the last bastion of Old North Park," and I like that much better. We call it the Fast Kingdom. Let the yuppies, slumlords and robber barons have the rest. Here, let's make our stand.

If only I could figure out how to do that. Any help is gratefully accepted: kenswagger@gmail.com.

Go to www.92104.org. Check it out, add to it. Someday it may save your life.

I'm afraid I'm making North Park sound like an urban wasteland, when in fact it's anything but. It's actually more Mayberry than Mad Max, with beautiful tree-lined side streets filled with amazing old houses. It's rare these days to see entire neighborhoods full of

old houses in such amazing condition and this makes the neighborhood a real national treasure.

One night Good Chad and I left a show at The Muse (R.I.P) early. I saw some vato pull a gun on a car in the parking lot that used to be where the new parking structure is. The car sped off and Chad stopped in the crosswalk to stare, unaware what was happening. "Fuck are you lookin' at, you want some?" homeboy yelled at us and I grabbed Chad's arm and pulled him along and we laughed all the way to Saguaro's, where we got burritos. Some crazy bum was sitting at the booth across from us, arguing with his non-existent dining companion and sometimes banging hard against the

bottom of the table. Chad's turn to spot something I missed: "Look under the table, his hands aren't empty." Sure enough, the guy had an erection in one and a quesadilla in the other. We decided to stop for drinks at that one liquor store at 30th and Upas on the way home. I bet Chad there would be crazy shit going on there, and sure enough as we were walking in a bum said, "Pull up your pants nigger, I know what you're fucking game is" to a guy walking out and almost started WWII. Chad grabbed a 40 and I grabbed two cans of Sparks and we slipped through the chaos to observe from across the street at the bus stop. We jumped on the number two and for some reason my heart swelled with pride as I saw the 14-year-old Mexican hardcore kid with a Los Crudos patch across from us scribble song lyrics into a tattered notebook. We got home and listened to Coast to Coast as I finished my column for the next day's deadline and he drew comics, Art Bell's voice occasionally drowned out by the sound of the ghettobird passing intermittently, with rhythmic precision, over our house. It was the night I think I realized I'd found my home.

A few weeks ago Kate and I took a late night walk down to Morley Field, assigning names like "Hansel" and "Scarlett" to the homes along the way. We stopped to rest on a wall in someone's front lawn and heard someone practicing on a piano and the sirens wailing down University a few blocks away seemed distant and none too unpleasant. As silly as it felt, I asked Kate to close her eyes and be quiet a second, and I fell in love with North Park all over again.

Kate bought a \$10 squeeze box in Baja a few months ago, and one night we were mesmerized by the sound, sitting in my room and smoking on the back porch. A large and angry rabble began to gather at the bottom of our stairs and seemed to get angrier with each passing minute. I looked outside and saw people digging through our trash cans with flashlights and cursing someone who'd taken something or thrown something or lost something. I told Kate we'd better stop with the squeeze box and she gave me a hurt look.

"They won't bother us for playing music, will they?" She looked



La Boheme promotional cartoon.

looked scared and hurt.

"Ah, they won't bother us," I reassured her, and myself.

I've never heard "the soft notes of a jazz singer fill the crisp night air" from my back porch. The real music of the neighborhood is far more beautiful.

Bring me their fingers.

- Ken Swagger



PHOTO BY KATE RONAN

Issue Two

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in
TIMES

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Carson

never trust a person
who doesn't

#1 n. Park

#2 Fast crowd



I am from
Iowa...

It's not
snowing!



#3 we're drunk



and liquor stores
on every corner!

↑ cute boys... I'm really lazy...
he has this dimple that is
out of control!



dear north park,
I wish to take this opportunity
to express my gratitude for
your relentless kindness.
I'm not going to drop names,
but, salute, to all the good
dudes who have made my
time here no less than

amazing... you know who the
fuck you are! thumbs up
motherfuckers! totes parts!
♥ rusted

and **#10** Just because...
Hell fuckin' Yeah!

NORTH PARK



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PHOTO COURTESY OF WWW.TEDWILLIAMS.COM

North Park's favorite son

Ted Williams could kick Joe Gordon's pinko ass

This was supposed to be a real, serious, in depth account about the life and times of arguably North Park's most well known celebrity, the now deceased Hall of Fame baseball player Ted Williams. Unfortunately, most of my time of late has been dedicated to finding a job and I haven't been able to give this project any attention whatsoever. And that's a shame. I think (and I think some of you would probably agree) that a summary of the late, great, Ted Williams life in North Park would be a great read. Just try to imagine what bars the Splendid Splinter frequented. What were his favorite fishing spots? Did he embrace or abandon his Mexican heritage? What kind of student was he at Hoover High School? These things would be great to learn but, sadly, I couldn't invest the time I would like to properly investigate these kinds of questions. I'll still approach this subject the best that I can.

By  **Jeff** 
Proctor

I imagine Ken probably asked me to take on the task because I've probably got the unhealthiest obsession with baseball this side of Scott Puckett. I'm not really sure where it comes from, though I probably get it from my dad. How else would one of my first words be "Rupert," as in Rupert Jones, the man who had about two decent seasons with the Seattle Mariners before I was born? Though my dad's not a baseball fan to the degree that I am, he still provided me with the impetus to become a fan, as well as a good deal of my historical knowledge.

That said, I can't really remember when or where I first heard of Teddy Ballgame. I do remember a glossy, early eighties set of baseball cards that featured all of the players to have hit 300 home runs in their career up to that point, and that I was terribly impressed with all of the players who belonged in the then-select company. In these post-expansion, designated hitter and steroids days, hitting 300 home runs over the course of your career is not quite the same achievement. I mean Gary Gaetti hit over 300 home runs in his career for fuck's sake. And I remember that Ted Williams was high up on that list, with 521 home runs to his credit (tied with the San Francisco Giants most feared slugger of the 1960s, first baseman Willie McCovey. And yes, McCovey was a more dangerous batter than Willie Mays).

I also remember that Ted Williams was the last living player to bat .400 in a season. And growing up a Padres fan in San Diego, where Tony Gwynn was the only consistent star the team had, this would be a fact that would be repeated ad nauseum, as Tony Gwynn continuously led the league in batting (batting as high as .394 in the strike shortened 1994 season, a fairly amazing feat considering his batting average was nearly as high as the team's winning percentage that season, .402).

As a matter of fact, the year that Ted Williams hit .401 to finish the season, he did not win the American League MVP award. He lost it to the Yankee Clipper, Joe DiMaggio. DiMaggio that season set the major league record for safe hits in consecutive games, with a 56 game hitting streak. The record still stands and may stand forever. However, when you take a closer look at the statistics between the two players, despite DiMaggio's feat, Ted Williams clearly had the better offensive season and deserved to win the MVP. In 1941, Ted Williams had a higher batting average, higher on base percentage, higher slugging percentage, more runs, more home runs, more walks. Ted Williams, in 1941, led the American League in two of the three Triple Crown categories and also led the league in OPS, the modern standard of offensive success. Even the most staunch of Yankees apologist has to look at the numbers and agree that Ted Williams had the greater season, possibly the single greatest season offensively in the nearly 150 year history of professional baseball and was denied the MVP award because of DiMaggio's hitting streak.

As another matter of fact, Ted Williams would follow up this amazing 1941 season by winning the Triple Crown (leading the league in batting average, home runs and runs batted in, a marvelous accomplishment) and

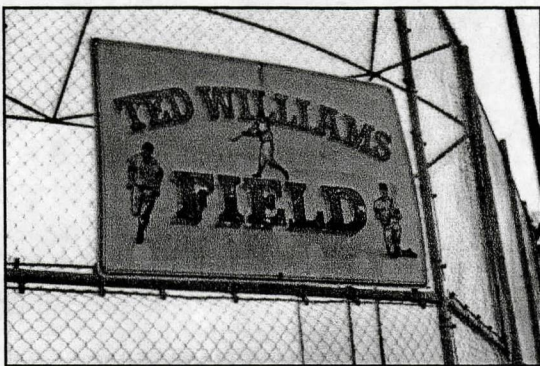


PHOTO BY MICHAEL STELIGA

"Thirteen days after arriving in Korea, Williams nearly lost his life when his plane was shot down by enemy fire. With his plane aflame, Williams was able to make a crash landing and was in the air again, seeing combat, the very next day."

again lost the league's MVP award, falling behind another Yankee, Joe Gordon. And who the fuck is Joe Gordon? Tell you what Joe Gordon did in 1942, the year that Ted Williams won his **first** triple crown. Joe Gordon hit 27 home runs, knocked in 87 runs and hit .278 for the season. A decent season, surely. But are these MVP numbers? Fuck Joe Gordon and fuck the Yankees.

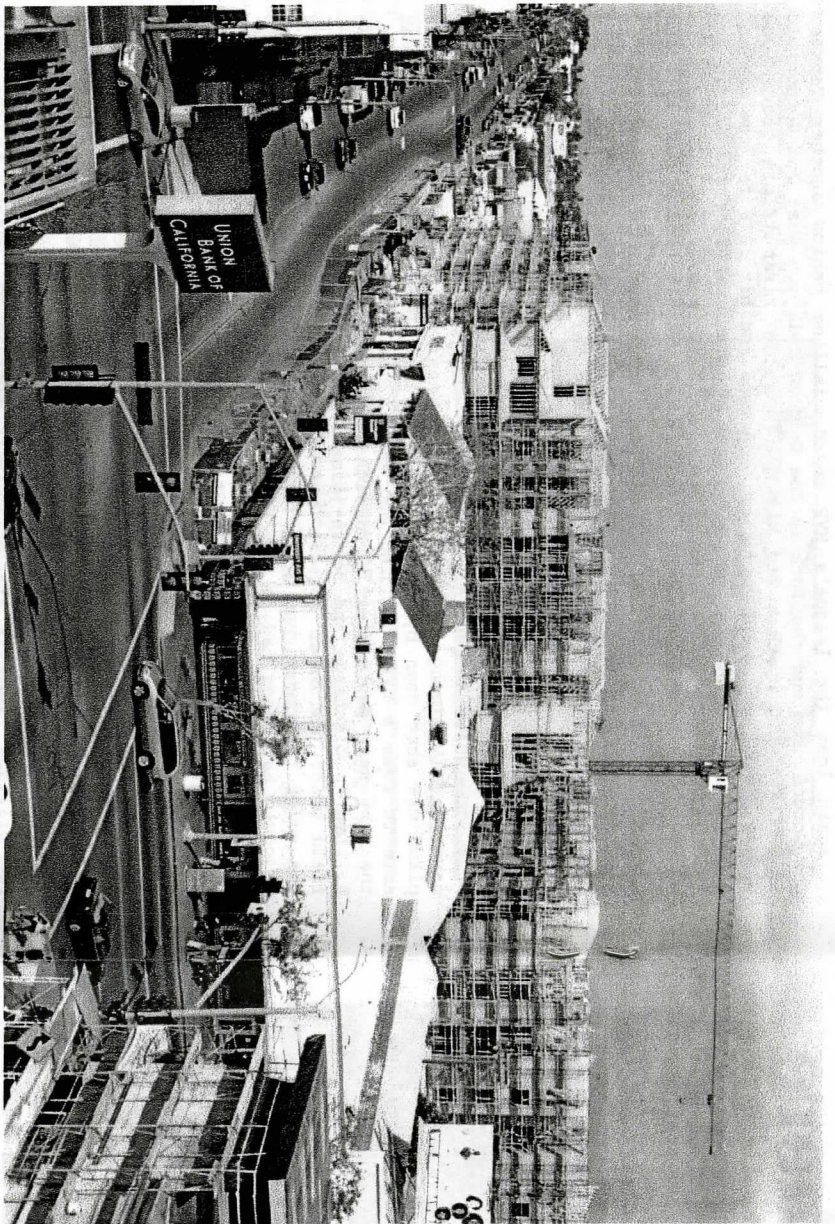
You know what Ted Williams did to follow up his spectacular 1941 and 1942 seasons? He joined the United States Marines as a pilot during the height of World War II. Ted Williams, who was the sole supporter of his mother and who had received a deferment from service, enlisted on his own. Williams never saw combat during World War II - he was en route to Hawaii when VJ day was announced. However, he lost three years of major league duty, during the prime of his career, to training.

Though he didn't see combat during World War II, he would see combat - and lose parts of two seasons to military duty - during the Korean Conflict, where he served as a pilot alongside John Glenn. Thirteen days after arriving in Korea, Williams nearly lost his life when his plane was shot down by enemy fire. With his plane aflame, Williams was able to make a crash landing and was in the air again, seeing combat, the very next day. After 39 missions in Korea, the Marines awarded Ted Williams a discharge and he re-joined his Boston Red Sox, manning left field under the Green Monster and winning batting titles, and leaving the world to wonder just what he could have done, what kind of player he could have been had he not lost those five seasons to military duty. Every record in the book could have belonged to Ted Williams.

So, what does this all mean to you, the reader who was born long after Ted Williams took his last steps on the baseball diamond, or who was never a baseball fan in the first place? Well, this is a story about more than a baseball player or a military hero. It's a story about a fellow North Park resident and about our sense of time and place and history. Maybe now that you've read this story, you'll stop and take a moment to think about this man, the others that came before us, and those that'll follow our footsteps after we're gone the next time you drive by Hoover High School, the next time you play a pick up game at Ted Williams Field in the North Park Recreation Center, or the next time you pass 4121 Utah Street, the former home of Ted Williams.

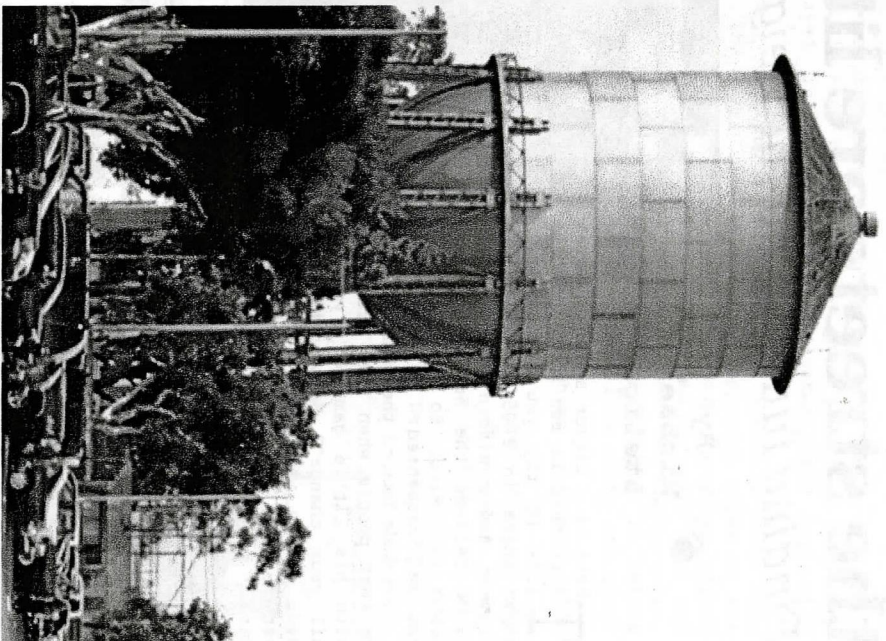
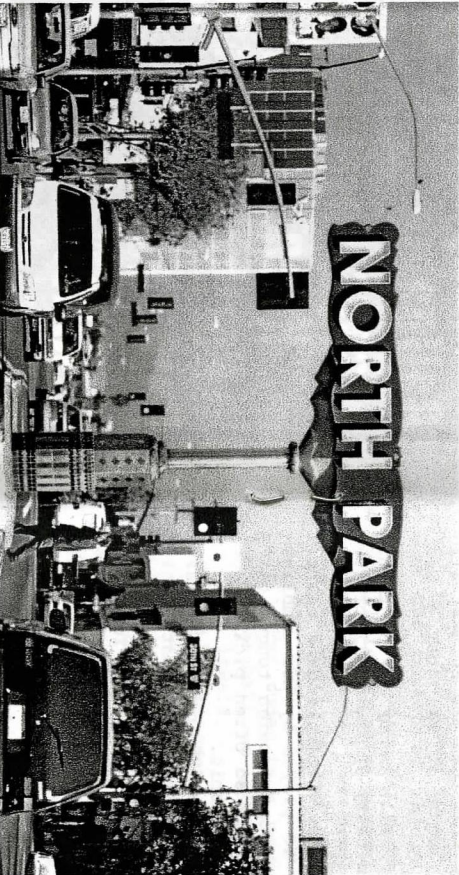
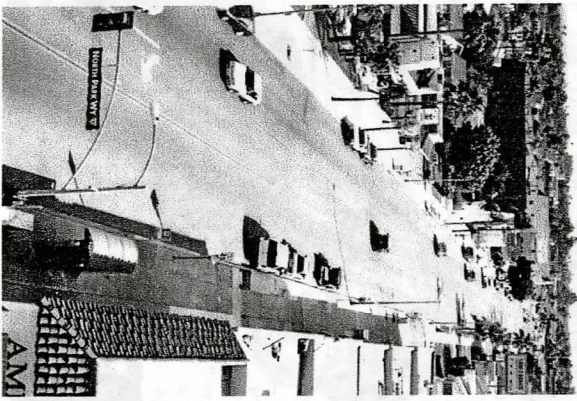
**Teddy
Ballgame
says,
"Keep
North
Park Fast,
Kids!"**





Fast Times Magazine

North Park, California



photos by michael steliga
 ● mopuddin@hotmail.com

Way down low where the streets are littered

Finding fun around the neighborhood



By
**Michael
Steliga**



There is a liquor store in North Park that is run by people who like to rip you off. When I moved there in 2005 this was the closest store within walking distance because the honest one was being remodeled. So this was the one we frequented.

The dude behind the counter likes to test people when they are drunk with his little game of "you got all your change"? He would either over charge you or he would just not give you the right amount back. Hardly can I remember a time when I got correct change on the first try.

In North Park there is a Jack In The Box that specializes in the game of "wanna get to work on time"? They excel at this game and when I play I always lose.

I went there three times before I decided no more. They are experts, and from what I gather have been playing quite awhile. Seasoned Veterans.

There's another liquor store in North Park that is run by a crazed gypsy/chargers fan lady. They like to sell milk that is far past it's prime. Swagger once told me to never buy dairy from them and to just all together not go there. I just thought "eh, maybe it was just a bad week?"

One day I go there to pick up some stuff, milk being one of them. And sure as shit the milk is way past due. And nasty at that. All crusty and shit.

The Crazy Gypsy/Charger Fan Lady likes to play a little game called "guess what I'm trying to tell ya?" The game is played by her rambling on incoherently about some nonsense prattle in some foreign tongue that none of us can figure out the origins of and every so often picking out "Dee Chargers" and "western conference" or some shit.

People in North Park like to name their houses. There'ss The Fast Castle, The Fat Cave ,The Choadin Castle, The Fun Zone, The Fast Block, Fast Flat or Fast Corner, and The House Formerly Know as the Fast Castle has now become what my buddy's and I now call The Discovery Zone.

The Discovery Zone is occupied by kids who give even less of a fuck about the place than the previous occupiers who lost the place due to "not giving a fuck".

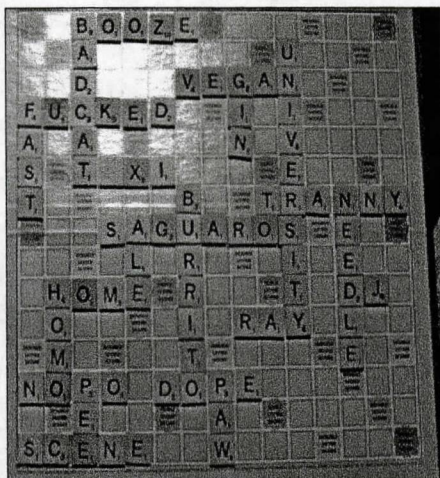


PHOTO BY KATE RONAN

There are rats at The Discovery Zone just as there were rats at The Fast Castle. Fast Rats! They could be heard at all hours of the day and even more at night. Fightin', fuckin' and raising hell. Pretty much doing the same as those who paid the rent.

At The Discovery Zone they play a game called Beer Pong. They even have some cheesy 80's looking poster of the game in the dining room where the game is played. It's a photo of red plastic Dixie cups. High art.

The game is played by bouncing a ping pong ball across a table into your opponent's cups. There are cups lined up at opposite sides of the table filled with beer. When the ball lands in a cup the other person drinks the contents of the cup. The table is covered in stale beer and the ball sometimes hits the floor and bounces about the dining room. There is a cup of water on either side for dipping the ball in before trying to land it in a cup across the table. This is a nasty ass sport and should be avoided at all costs.

Not many games were played at The Fast Castle. Those guys don't fuck around.

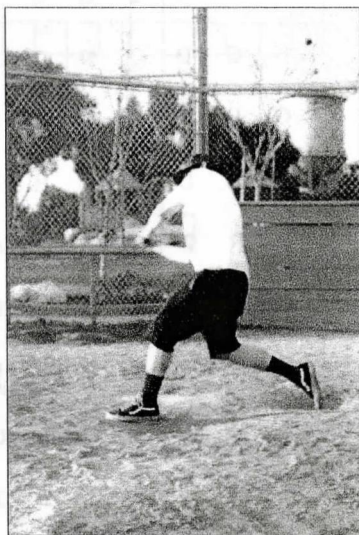
There used to be games galore at The Fun Zone. Surely that is why they call it that. Cards were the usually the game of the day. Poker and Up the River being the most played. But a couple of dudes left and the place just ain't that fun anymore.

When my brother goes out and about in North Park he likes to play a game called "drunken rampage." This is a sport of damage, yelling and slammed doors. To play this game you need Jim Beam, Jack Daniels, and someone saying the wrong thing at just the right time in order to incite a one man riot. He plays this one well, with vigor, and relentless dedication. A true master of the sport. If there were sanctioned competitions I'm sure he would take first each time.

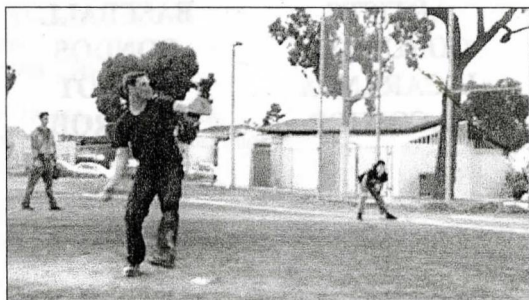
Punk Rock Baseball is played at Ted Williams Field in North Park. It's not league baseball and it's not softball. Softball is for chicks and girly men who are afraid of baseballs. These balls are thrown overhand, none of that pussy underhand shit. And there is always the threat of injury and damage. Drunken fat dude baseball is the game played at Ted William's. The best kind. Baseball is and always has been a fat dude sport. Fat dudes have been around baseball as long as the game itself.

Ted Williams grew up in North Park. I don't know much about the guy, (Proctor says he was one of the greats), but I do know there was a drawn out court battle because his son he wanted his head frozen and shot into space or some shit.

A day at the park: Bad Chad takes a swing at a sloppy slider; McWreckin winds up and blacks out.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL STELIGA



Things you see in North Park

Find all of the words below to uncover the secret of what you really see in North Park.

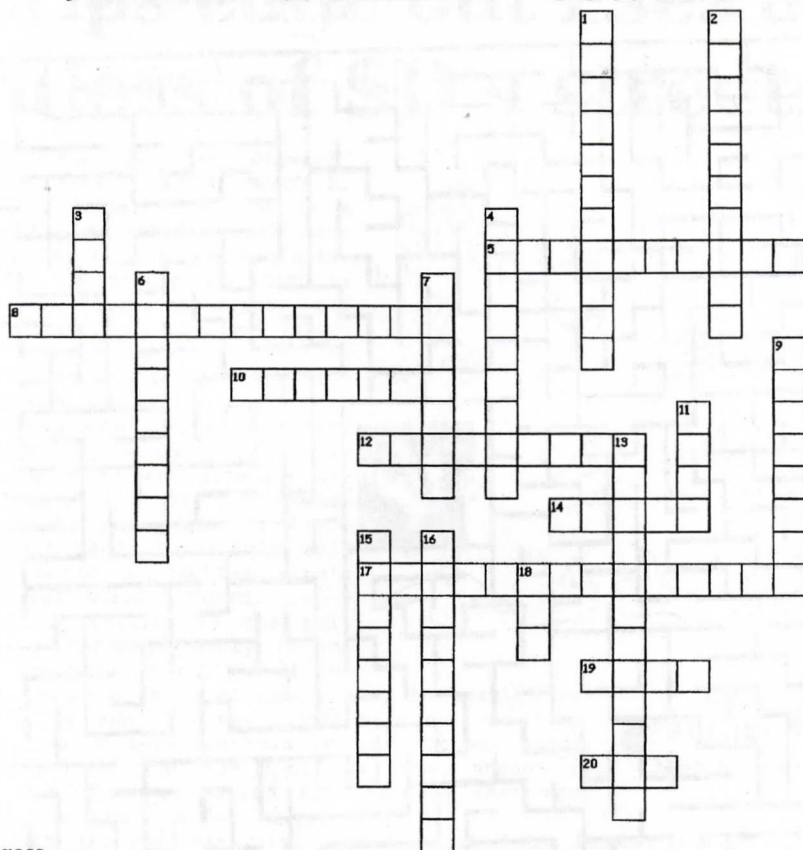
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K M S N B Y I A P H V D Q I L

ARTISTS
CONCRETE
JACARANDA
TACOSHOP

BASEBALL
CONDOS
PARROT
TAXIROB

CANYONS
CRACK
SCENESTERS
TRANNY

92104 trivia crossword



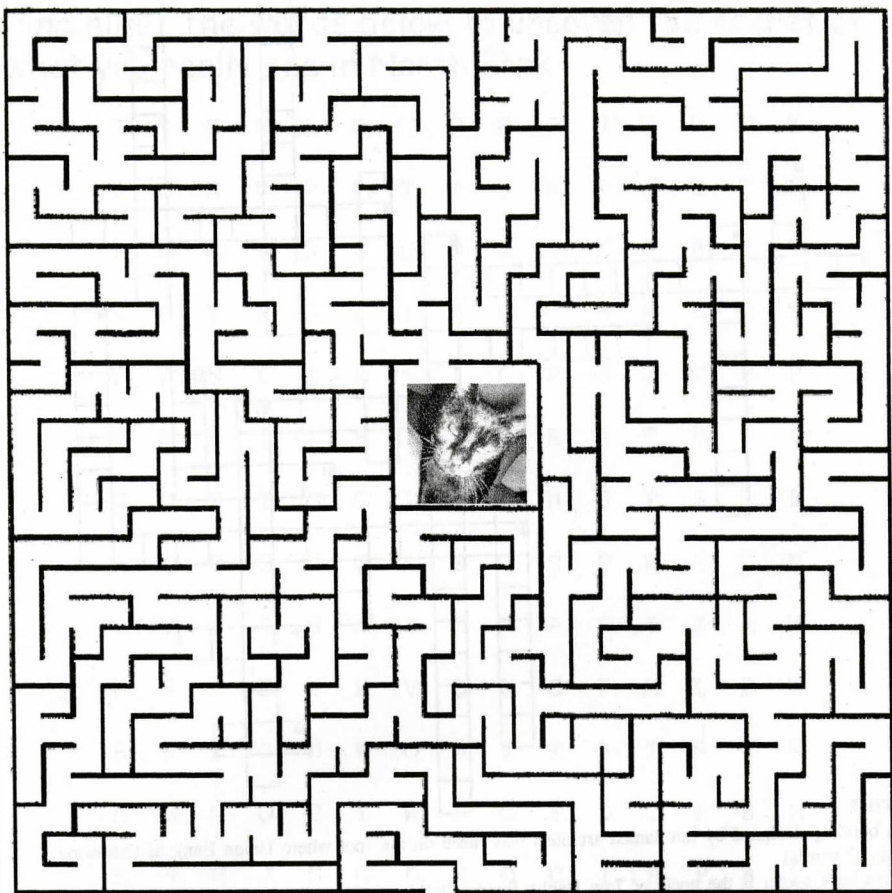
Across

5. A building designed by this famed architect was razed on the spot where Union Bank of California stands (2 words).
8. This bar's owner is the uncle of Tom Hanks' Bosom Buddies costar (2 words).
10. Canyon dividing North and South Park.
12. Predominant style of NP's older homes.
14. Stephen and Mary _____ North Park Theater.
17. Late, great Red Fox Room pianist (2 words).
19. SD's finest pirate broadcaster.
20. You can buy or learn to make art on this street.

Down

1. Throw a disc, go swimming, free oral (2 words).
2. Third District Councilmember (2 words).
3. Number of phat bong rips Josh Mosh takes a day.
4. NP's fancy neighbor to the west.
6. Historic hotel soon to be shadowed by 18-story condominiums.
7. King among men known for superb baking skills and Hawaiian shirts.
9. NP Farmers Market day.
11. Street Ted Williams grew up on.
13. Runs parallel to University through greater NP (3 words).
15. Fast Times first issue was all about this city (2 words).
16. Burrito with carne asada and french fries.
18. Cheap internet and kickass sandwiches.

Help Bad Cat get home



Crips edge out Eses as rulers of SD's streets

Who runs San Diego anyway?

The answer, as of March 2, is the Crips, according to a slightly scientific poll conducted by a local rap Web site.

The 106 people who voted in the poll picked the Crips, with 34 percent, as a slight favorite over the Eses, with 30 percent, according to the poll performed on Rap or Die.

The Bloods trailed both with 24 percent, but the biggest loser according to all accounts are the cops, with only 12 percent.

"Stats and polls iz over-rated," Randy Takeflight said last month on the Web site's official message board.

Early results of the poll tell a different story of who is, in fact, in control of the mean streets of "Dago." According to results released on Feb. 20, the Bloods beat out the Crips and Eses by more than six percent. It was generally agreed that the cops are lame, though 19 percent of those polled did indicate that they feel the cops run San Diego.

"Gangstaz run this city, regardless to Crip, Bloods, Ese or other," Baby Madd Blue said last month on the message board. "We Gangstas come set up shop in the city for some thug shit and watch the repercussions."

Detective Gary Hassen of the San Diego Police Department disagrees: "Law enforcement pretty much controls the streets. Not just the police, but all of the agencies city and county wide. And the public. It's a partnership between the public and law enforcement that controls the streets of San Diego."

The Web site, www.rapordie.com, was started in early 2004 to provide a platform for local rappers featured in the documentary "Rap or Die."



By
Sticky
Manjaro

Show yo' dime piece:

This is Rap Or Die's dot Com's "Dime Piece of the Week." They wanna peep pics of your dime piece also, so dust of that dime piece and send 'em to weeklies@rapordie.com



PHAT BONG RIPS # 3



MATTY AWESOME AND HIS TOKEY-ITE BUDDY LIN
(NO PEOPLE) ENJOY A PHAT BOWL AFTER
DOWNIN' GNARLY BURRITOS ON UNIVERSITY.
'MUY BUENO!' SAYS MATTY. 'GOCHISO SAMA
DESHITAI' SAYS LIN.

Wanna be the next
Phat Bong Rip?

Send us pics of yourself taking
Phat Bong Rips in public and
email them to
fasttimeszine@gmail.com

STUFF YOU NEED SHOPPING IN SAN DIEGO



POOKEL FAN

*Discount International Fashions,
3002 University Ave.*

Cost: \$2.99

What the hell is it? A can of soda? A radio? A fan? I've had it for a month and still can't figure out what the fuck this thing does. The package says it's "FUNNY!" and advertises that it's a radio and fan, a veritable party in a can. But guess what? There's no radio! I think that's supposed to be the funny part. It does have a pretty kickass lil styrofoam fan and hangs on a string around your neck. Taunt Pookel Fan and it'll strangle you. Discount International Fashions is pretty much the coolest store in North Park.

GIGANTIC STATUE OF JESUS CHRIST

*Botanica Santa Barbara, \$75
3617 El Cajon Blvd.*

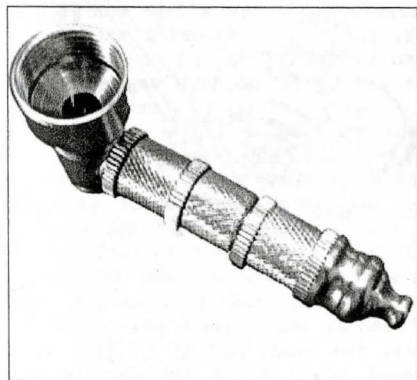
This isn't the first 4'-plus statue of Jesus we've had. My brother Craig got one for XMas (he really digs The Lord), but some drunk ass knocked it over and - like some twisted version of the old sitcom plot - Josh rushed out to find a replacement. The old Big J's robe was yellow but this one is green, which Craig of course realized, but surmised God painted it for him. I mean, he's crazy, not stupid. I never found out who broke it but oh well - break a Papa Jesus from a voodoo store and you have more to fear than a lecture from me.



SWEET ASS PIPE

*420 Smoke Shop, \$5.99
2559 University Ave.*

This Sweet Ass Pipe came from the corner smoke shop, y'know, the blue tie-dye looking place? Apparently it's called 420 (for some reason), but we call it Bongs 'n' Porn because, well, it's the one stop shop for all your, uh, bong and porn needs. Homeboy even tossed in six free Sweet Ass Screens. Don't tell 'em we call it Bongs 'n' Porn, they probably don't like the B-word.

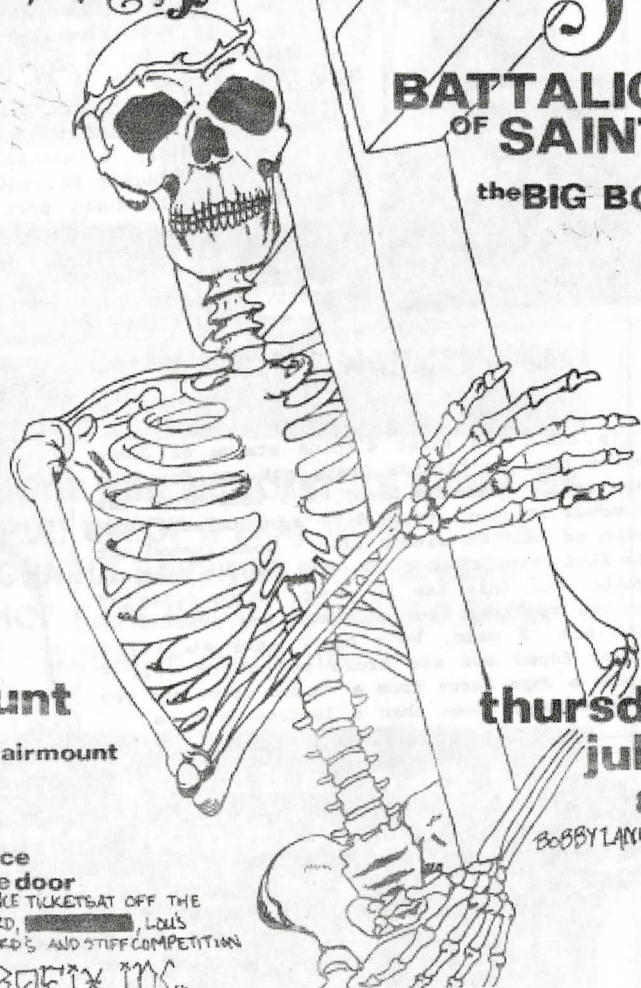


DEAD OR ALIVE
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Dead Kennedy's

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the BIG BOYS



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thursday
july 1
8pm

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\$7 at the door

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RECORD, [REDACTED], LOUIS
RECORDS AND STIFF COMPETITION

RETREAD GRAFTX INC.

The night Jello Biafra came to City Heights

The Dead Kennedys and just dickin' around back in the old timey punk rock days

I woke up one morning to my mother screaming, "Oh my God!" over and over again. My head had been shaven clean, a puddle of puke lay next to the bed and damn if I didn't have an earring. Sean had stolen his mother's earring gun from her work, we all got housed and everyone got earrings. My father promptly beat my ass and ripped mine out.

By
Dave
Dick



The shaved head became a mohawk. Not the pussy "leave three-inch wide strip of quarter-inch hair on your dome that will grow out in a week," or the "Ooh my cousin's five-year old has a mohawk, it's so cute," but a fine coxcomb of spiky eight-inch fuck you for every one that cared to stare. It really meant "I don't belong to your bullshit social experiment, would you mind awfully fucking off." It also meant getting your ass beat on occasion, and getting chased down the street by jackass dirtheads in lifted trucks yelling, "Get a hair cut punker fag."

It was war. We sought each other out, we made our own tribes. We all wore variations of the same uniform. Always boots. Our families sucked, school sucked, work sucked, the town sucked, being underage sucked, the government sucked, love sucked, What are you going to do? Get fucked up with your friends and beat the world from your door.

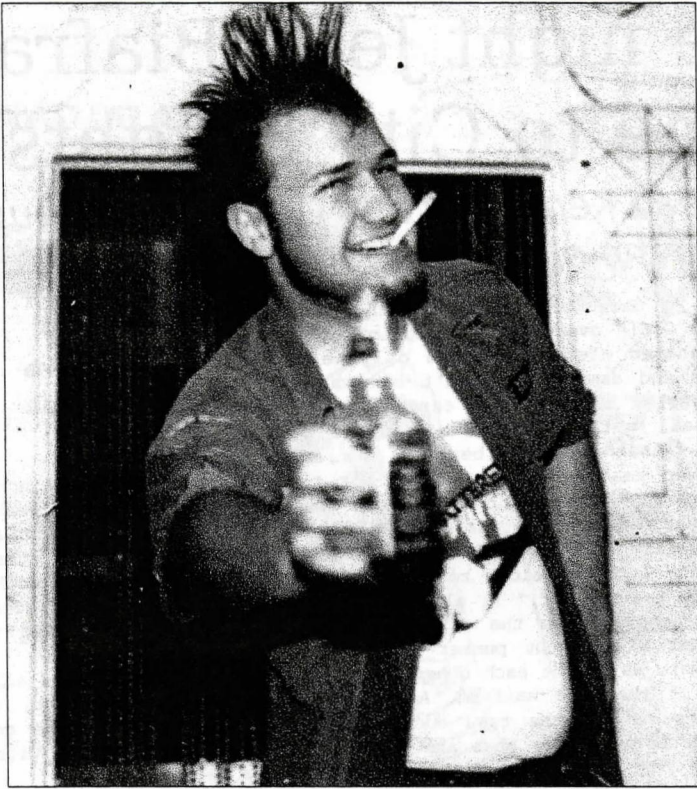
The flyers started going up on the walls in my room. They were like badges of honor saying "I was there." They were also like proof of my secret family of miscreant friends.

We stood out like sore thumbs, so we had to travel in packs for survival. I had about a dozen or so good friends in North Park. Most of us went to Wilson and there were a few kids from Hoover. Everybody was given nicknames - Mark Rude, Terry Tall, Lurch, Debbie Dyke, Terry Marine, Chris Jarhead, the list went on and on. Everyone thought Dave Dick was my punk rock nickname. Whatever.

We would all tell our parents we were spending the night at other kids houses so we could get drunk at Karl's house on Pentucket. His parents were nudist hippies who grew pot in the basement. They had a huge plant called "Atlas" and Karl's dad would constantly be naked on the TRS 80 computer, back in the infantile beginnings of the internet. It actually had a modem that you would put the telephone handset on. Karl's parents were also into spelunking and wife swapping. Sex in the bowels of the earth, that always tripped me out.

San Diego was still LA's retarded little sibling as far as music went. We had some local bands that were really good, but there was a magical allure of how things were so much cooler in far away lands. They most assuredly sucked there too, but hey, where there's life, there's hope.

Thank God for Tim Maze. At least there was a band to see every weekend. Dee Dee Troit and the Cartoons at the North Park Lions' Club was the first show I ever went to. I mean, I saw KISS in '77 at The Sports Aroma and some other big concerts, but this was the first show - real people playing their own songs, raw energy just inches from your face. It was so tangible. You could walk up to the stage and look the band in the eye, they would look back at you, and there was a connection.



Sometimes, they would spit at you. Gobbing was popular back then. The band would start it then the crowd would retaliate and the band would be covered in hanging loog. It was funny a few times, then bands got sick of it. One time at a 45 Grave show, drummer Don Boles stood up, grabbed the mic and - covered in other people's spit - very genially said, "If you expect to rate with the ladies, don't expectorate on the band." That pretty much took care of that.

We'd make the trek to Fairmount Hall regularly, braving the Mexican neighborhoods and the cops in seach of good times. We wore studded belts with heavy buckles outside our regular belts so we could whip them off and take care of business Gypsy style if things got out of hand. There were a few cool Mexican punks like Louis from Tijuana No, but for the most part in our neck of the woods it was "Hey pinchie punker, fuck you," until you bought some local pot and the word got out you were just a freak. It didn't hurt knowing people either.

The people to know were the SDSH - San Diego Skinheads. They were punk rock tough guys, the epitome of punk. They were at all the shows. They ran the social order and culled the herd. If there was a problem they either took care of it, or they started it. They were the double edged sword of social justice. If you fucked up they would fuck with you and tax you.

"Hey man, nice leather jacket, let me try it on." Goodbye leather jacket. "Hey man, nice boots, let me try them on." Goodbye boots. "Hey man, nice girl friend." You get the point.

Alpha males. I never had a problem with them, because I never was and will never be an alpha male. I am a drunk and a music geek, plain and simple. I was fearful of them, but in a Biblical sense. I respected them.

They never kicked my ass or taxed me, but I never didn't say hi to them because I was scared. Art was and still is a good guy as far as I'm concerned. He had bone cancer I think it was, so he just didn't give a fuck. He beat it eventually. But I would look up to him because of his attitude. He truly didn't give a fig about what people thought. He always looked cool as hell - studded belt, engineer boots, leather jacket. He looked like he was in a band and he was always cool. Now he owns and operates the Church of Steel downtown. You may have seen him on that Alt House reality show. Funny how life ends up.

There was one party at my friend Pat Werk's house. Pat was a mod, Pat in the Hat. Pat's folks were away and the party was raging. The mods weren't happy when punks started showing up. If you went to a mod show and they didn't like you they would try to stand in front of you so you couldn't see the band in a usually-vain attempt to get you to leave.

The beer was in the bathtub upstairs. The door was locked for a long time and girls were bitching and pissing in the bushes. Water started leaking through the ceiling. After an investigation the drunken consensus was that ice from the tub full of beer got on the floor, but then some guys from SDSH walked out with beers stuffed in every pocket the toilet was ripped out of the floor. Pat was fucked. Hell comes to your house.

One night we all headed down to Fairmount Hall to see Dead Kennedys and Men of Clay. The hall is long gone and there is now a police sub station there. About half way there this cab pulls over and we all pulled together in a knot expecting the worst. War. Girls in the middle and guys outside. The cabbie roled down the window, and it was one of the older punks that we had seen around.

"Are you guys going to the show? Hop in! This one's on me."

In a second the mood went from "Oh fuck" to "Fuck yeah!" We dogpiled in roman orgy style with - I think it was Yvonne's rather nice fishnet and plaid ass planted firmly in my face. Ah memories. There was a lot of "Is that my leg? Who's hand is that? You're crushing my fucking smokes dude!" and so on.

We fell out of the cab when the door came open, a big pile of boots and studs looking like the one dollar bin at the salvation army with a few 40s of Colt 45 thrown in for good measure. Everyone stood around outside smoking and trying to figure out who had what in the way of intoxicants. Usually the Pippi Longstocking from Hell girls had acid or speed. There were a few guys who would have pot, but it was frowned on as a hippie drug. Lots of stupid diet pills were going around - Black Beauties, Christmas Trees, Robins Eggs ... people thought it was so cool but it was basically just two cups of coffee. Whoop-de-freakin-do. I liked the beer, and if you had a beer I knew your name within moments.

Everyone would get patted down at the door, so you either had to finish your booze or stash it outside. Stashed beer was invariably liberated (free beer is best) if left in a half-assed hiding place.

They hired this old couple as security at the hall but they were all smiles and platitudes if you talked to them, and they would let us get away with practically anything. Vomit surfing was popular on the tile floors. Someone would usually puke in the crowd and Chris Jarhead, myself and a few others would take a running start and see how far we could slide. There would be bald chicks chasing girls with long hair around with scissors in

"We fell out of the cab when the door came open, a big pile of boots and studs looking like the one dollar bin at the salvation army with a few forties of Colt 45 thrown in for good measure."

their hands. You could smoke inside then and the place was a sauna. The walls and windows would drip with teenage sweat.

There was no sound guy playing crappy jazz between the bands. The focus of the show would be the crowd itself between the sets. Chaos was in the air and everyone milled around trying to meet all the people they had never seen before. There was the occasional fight. The toilets were always fucked up. Someone passed out. Someone charmed the hat off the security guard and was being chased around the room trying to trick their pursuer into slipping in a puke puddle. Some of the girls were unearthly beautiful.

As the band finished setting up the crowd ebbed towards the stage. People stalked out the place in the pit where they would either be swept into the maelstrom of violence or try to defend their spot with everything they had. It was all fun and games until some joker would just stand there and hit people as they flew by. Then the band would stop playing and get into a pissing match with the tough guys. The band always won.

I headed outside after the first band to hunt for orphaned beers. The horror was a glut of people trying to flee the ubiquitous cops outside and amid the curious occasional knot of rocker kids, too tripped out or scared to venture into the throng of entropy. I slipped by with Tom and Mike and began to forage, all the while keeping an eye out for Johnny Law. Under a bush we found half-a-twelfer of generic beer, the kind in white cans that said "BEER" on the side in big blue letters. Score! We walked around to the alley and downed our booty while swapping notes on hot girls and where the parties would be after the show. Then a cop cruiser started to roll down the alley, so we ditched the beer and walked the other way, reaching the front door just as the cops flipped their spotlight on us. We showed our tamps and slipped back into the hall just in time, all devilish grins and drunken adolescent swaggers.

There had been a fight while we were outside. One of the band guys' girlfriends got knocked down in the pit pretty bad and her hand got stomped on. It was a bloody and she was pissed, so the band packed up and got off stage.

While the Kennedys got their shit on the stage, the crowd got ready to go nuts. All the kids in the pit were ready to slam and people stood on chairs along the outer rim of the hall. The place was packed and the only way to get up front was plow right through and hope nobody socked you as you elbowed them out of the way. We made it just as Jello started off with some socio-political diatribe that fell on drunken and self-absorbed ears. I couldn't hear half of what he was said because of the fucked up P. A. system.

Then the music. It started as sudden as a gun barrage on a Napoleonic battlefield, the first lingering guitar note whistling like a shell plummeting earthward to rain destruction on the defenseless. The drums and bass kicked in the moment the shell hit and the dance floor erupted in violent undulating waves as the rhythm took hold of the crowd. I was immediately pitched sideways, lifted off my feet and toward the prostrate form of a fellow music lover writhing beneath the weight of the crowd, fighting to find a way back to the surface of the swirling mass. The cacophonous staccato of the guitar was backed up by machine gun lyrics that sounded like an old lady was giving a subversive lecture with a bull horn. Sweaty body parts rubbed against my face as I lost my balance and my legs were swept from beneath me. I hit hard on my elbow and then it was like a ton of sweaty calvary horses flopped on top of me, and I felt the dull thud of boots kicking my ribs. As quickly as I went down, someone grabbed my hand and pulled me from the wreck of bodies on the tile floor.

The song ended and the adrenaline-fueled storm of fists and flesh ceased. Jello ranted some more as the pit untangled itself and people walked around panting for breath, hiking up pants and taking off shirts soaked with sweat. Some guy was looking for his glasses and girls were

looking for small treasures of stomped jewelry. Then the second shell hit and the human tsunami began again.

I saw a guy I knew named Eric wiggle out of the pit to the front of the stage. Jello was jumping around like a madman and as he leaped into the air to accentuate a particularly poignant passage of prose, Eric's fat head got in the way of Jello's boot. How many people do you know who can say they got kicked in the face by Jello Biafra.

The rest of the night was more of the same, the frenzy becoming more pitched as they squeezed out the hits - "Let's Lynch the Landlord," "Viva Las Vegas," "Holiday in Cambodia," blah blah blah.

After the show came the deafening silence when your ears ring like hell. The adrenaline was still pumping as I staggered through the crowd looking for the crew I showed up with. I shoved out the door with the other cattle and started to moo like a drunk holstien and many others followed suit. As we mooed into the night we are greeted by San Diego's Finest, protecting and serving us by arresting some and cowing the rest into pissed-off indignation. The patrol cars lined the block expecting easy pickings tonight.

The kids oozed out of the humid doorway like slimy new eggs squeezed out of a fish, everyone trying to get by the cops without calling attention to themselves. Some kids were already cuffed and cop radios squawked and squelched in the background. My ears were still ringing as I mooed quietly to myself. I didn't see my friends, so I tried to file past quickly. Then I heard a voice that was a little too authoritarian from behind me: "Hey mohawk!"

My insides turned to pure shit and I froze, frowning to myself and rolling my eyes as some girls with dreadlocks walked past giggling. "Busted!" they whispered beneath their breath. Bitches. Cute, but bitches nonetheless. I turned my drunk, underage punk ass around and a big burly bastard with a Horace Brimley-mustachio shined his flashlight in my face, giving me the "Come here jerk" with his finger. Shit. I gave him my best blutarski "who me" pantomime and glanced to either side.

"Nice try smartass," he seemed to shoot out of his eyes as he nodded his head. I started to walk in his direction slowly, suddenly a lot more sober than a I was a few seconds earlier.

"Let's see some I.D." He held out his hand, the fucking flashlight still shining in my face. A few feet away a kid was being unceremoniously guided into the back of a car, a big fat cop hand squashing all his spiked hair as his head was shoved under the door.

I reached into my back pocket and fumbled for my stupid OP velcro ripper wallet. I started to rip it open and CRASH! I heard breaking glass down the block. The officer in front of me put down his mag light and ran past me in the direction of the noise. He's undoubtedly fully erect thinking "riot time" and I wasn't about to stick around and see the shit storm, or for him to come back and finish talking to me. Thank you God. I bolted through the crowd, around the block to the alley where I find Tom taking a piss.

"What's Up Dave?"

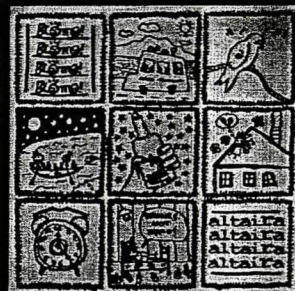
"Fucking cops man."

We headed back toward University and blended into the thinning crowd of jerks, then across the bridge and back into North Park. I heard later the breaking glass was a police headlight. That kid saved my ass. I never found out who it was but I sure was grateful.



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