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THE LATINO MAGAZINE

VOL. 7 NO. 5

EL ANDAR

JOSÉ ANTONIO
BURCIAGA

1940 — 1996

MARGARITA
LUNA ROBLES

JUAN FELIPE
HERRERA

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REMEMBERING

TONY

A CHICANO POET DE AQUELLAS

SPECIAL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS ISSUE

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This Issue 5

Qué Pasa 6

Y SECCIONES

12 CalAndar

21 El Andar Endorses...

22 Tobacco Education



8 LIFE, DEATH AND POETRY: MY DAYS WITH TONY BURCIAGA

"Death still leaves us perplexed."
Margarita Luna Robles toasts life and health with Tony Burciaga.

10 DOCUMENTED LOVE: POETS REMEMBER TONY

Gary Soto, Juan Felipe Herrera and others on the "vato de aquellas."



20 PROPOSITION 209: AFFIRMING REACTION

The right's attempt to dismantle affirmative action is also a gay issue.

18 HELLHOLE: THE REVOLUTIONARY YEARS OF JOHNNY SPAIN

Lori Andrews's biography *Black Power, White Blood* describes the Black Panther's education in prison and life in hell.



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November 1996

The Real Days of the Dead

It's that time of the year again, los días de muertos. This year, we know it's not just an artistic concept or a revival of tradition. Death looks us right in the eye, and Tony Burciaga's recent passing brought out the poets to remind us how Tony lived. But even as we mourn and make our altars, we also have to—in the tradition of Mexican newspapers—laugh at our (tired) selves with a calavera poem:



Calavera para El Andar

De tanto andar y andar
se cansaron los caminantes
la calaca los mandó a nadar
por los caminos navegantes

A pintar estalas en la mar se fueron
todos de jalón y bien jodidos.
ahora podrán descansar
pobrecitos, andaban bien rendidos



Lotería nacional para la urgencia pública, Laura Aguirre

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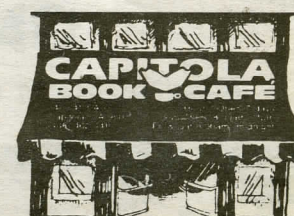
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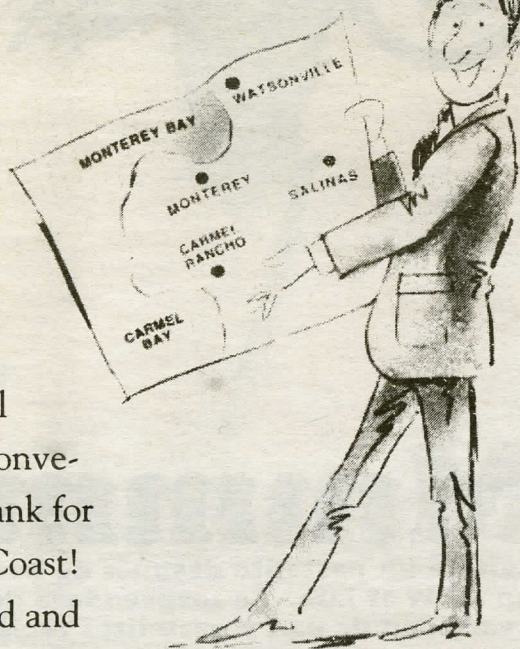
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QUÉ POCA...

Go Figure

Compiled by Claudia S. Meléndez



Guns, anyone?

If you want the world to be a peaceful place, where everyone coexists in harmony with his/her fellow human beings, sell everyone a gun. That's what the U.S. seems to believe. The United States has become the leading arms supplier in the world, selling \$150 billion per year, informed the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). While Middle Eastern countries are the biggest buyers, Mexico is the third leading arms-importer in Latin America. The IISS report adds that a recent increased role of the Mexican Army in day-to-day police activities was prompted by a lack of trust by the general population toward the police force. Zapatistas, EPR supporters and the rest of the population can rest easy now that the Army has more guns to protect them from the evil police force. Go figure.



Those darn beggars

The Justice Department of Nayarit, Mexico (PJE), ordered all elements of the state police force to apprehend "every person that solicits money on the streets, be it a beggar or a supposed member of a charitable institution," according to the Mexican daily *La Jornada*. Juan Ramón Sánchez Leal, head of the PJE, said that the order was to be carried out without distinctions. "There are plenty of places to look for work," he said, "and social assistance is taken care of by the DIF (Integral Development for the Family)."

Don't give U.S. city councils any ideas.

El Barzón appeals to Chucho



In a bold move that will make sinners repent, Mexico's El Barzón movement will request that John Paul II excommunicate Mexican bankers for their usurious practices. Juan José Quirino, national leader of El Barzón movement, a coalition that seeks the abolishment of their debts based on the astronomical interests rates in Mexico, presented his claim at a recent mass in Mexico's City's cathedral. The two-year-old organization's members claim they have repaid their debt. After the mass, Quirino reminded bankers throughout Mexico of the phrase in the 'Our Father': "Forgive our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

Word is spreading that Jesus is setting up a trust fund for the excommunicated broke bankers.



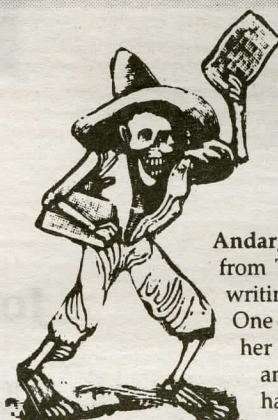
School of the Assassins (I mean, Americas), part II

In a recent visit to Argentina, U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry supported a proposal to create an anti-drug center in Panama.

Panamanian government officials proposed the creation of a multi-national center to control drug trafficking. Perry added that the U.S. does not intend to increase the participation of armed forces in the fight against drugs, but just wants "more regional co-operation" in those matters.

Simultaneously, Perry proposed the establishment of a defense studies institute in Washington D.C., with the purpose of training civilians on national military and civilian matters.

No one should expect a Noriega graduate from that center, of course.



Move over, Adrienne Rich...

Among the tons of mail we get at *El Andar*, we've received in the past an invitation from The National Library of Poetry to submit writing works for a contest with \$1000 cash prize. One of our gullible staff members decided to try her luck, and perhaps prove to the world once and for all what a great artist she really is (Ha, ha, ha). So she sent this cute little poem and weeks later, voilà! The National Library of Poetry responded, informing her that her "wonderful verse" had been selected to appear in *The Colors of Thought*, a collection of beautiful "American" poetry. How exciting.

She could also purchase the book in which her poem was scheduled to appear. Only \$49.95, special pre-publication discount price. She could order as many copies as she wanted, to make sure all her family and friends enjoyed and preserved her art. She could also have her poem "beautifully laser printed on quality vellum within your choice of borders," or read by a professional reader, since her poem "is one of those exceptional poems that can be superbly presented, no only in print, but also through the spoken word."

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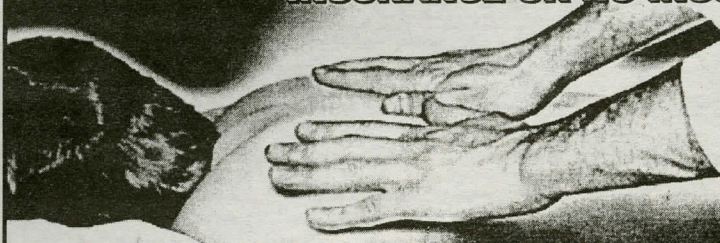
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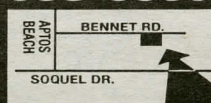
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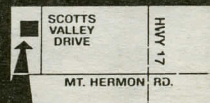
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LIFE DEATH & POETRY

Days with
TONY
Burciaga

Photo, Max Schwartz

Margarita Luna Robles

On September 19 of this year, I woke up at 5 in the morning. I was sad because my friend was dying and sadder knowing that I'd never see him again. I lit a candle. I became terribly distraught. I crawled back in bed and looked out the bedroom window. The sky was gray, the sunlight just starting to add fire to the colors. I closed my eyes, and not wanting to cry, started to pray. I fell into a dream where it was 5 in the morning and my phone was ringing. I was running down the stairs to answer it. I picked up the phone and Tony was on the other line. He told me he was fine. His voice was sharp, clear and happy. He told me he was going to live.

The first time I met José Antonio Burciaga was at a luncheon sponsored by the San José Poetry Center, probably in the spring of 1992. Naomi Clark, then the director, was looking for a local poet to attend. Lorna Dee Cervantes could not make it, so I was invited. The reception was in honor of Tomás Rivera and was held at the Faculty Club at San José State University. Tony sat at the head of the table, I sat at his right, and Francisco Jiménez from Santa Clara University sat at my right. I was terribly uncomfortable about being there; after all, at the time I was terribly uncomfortable just being a poet. Francisco was absolutely kind and a wonderful gentleman. Burciaga, on the other

hand, was absolutely hilarious. I laughed all the time we were there. We discovered we were paisanos, both born and raised in El Paso, Texas. We exchanged phone numbers. From that day on, our long distance bills were never the same.

We never really spent time face to face. I always lived so far away from everyone that I relied on the spiritual connection that exists with distance. In 1985 I was working at the Bilingual Center at De Anza College in Cupertino, the closest I ever lived to Tony. We'd get together for lunch, usually at El Paso Mexican Restaurant (kind of home to both of us) on El Camino Real, about a midway point.

That year, Tony's father died. I remember one afternoon, it almost seemed out of nowhere, that he called. Tony was rather quiet, not his usual playful self. All I needed to ask was, "¿Cómo estás?"

"Pues no bien. My father just died and I'm overwhelmed. You know, my mother died not too long ago. I just wasn't expecting it to be so soon. But, you know, after my mother died, he was just so sad."

We talked about the timing of death. He said "Uno nunca sabe, aunque lo esperamos no lo sabemos." We pondered death's predictability and unpredictability. And even though we may expect death, we are never really prepared for it. As survivors, even though we know the death of a loved one is near, death still leaves us perplexed.

Like two little kids we'd talk about life after death, about the soul. Because I'd lost my fifteen year-old son and my eighteen year-old brother within months of one another, I told him I thought I'd experienced it all. I reflected on the loss of both parents in a little over a year's time; my experience made Tony reflect on his children. I realized Tony and I were at the opposite ends of religion: I was very angry with God for hurting me so bad, for punishing me. What had I done to deserve this? Tony's philosophy was more, "Dios sabe porque hace lo que hace." His faith in something bigger than his life was amazing. We would say to one another, "One day at a time." This to him meant he would appreciate each moment. Me? I was so afraid to die that each day meant I hadn't died but I hadn't lived either. He always made me see things much clearer.

Life and health was what we would toast to as we smoked Marlboros and drank a beer or a glass of red wine. During those years, we never talked about our own deaths. In fact, we talked a lot about quitting smoking and modifying our diets. He was living at Casa Zapata and was constantly talking about the food at the dorm, patting his stomach and telling me it was getting difficult to see the tips of his boots. There were times we'd quit smoking, until we saw each other, then we'd bum cigarettes. Life, death and pleasures.

Sadness has a way of bringing out the humor, and, well, he certainly was a man with a great sense of humor. He didn't want

me to be sad and he didn't want to be said either.

Tony and Juan Felipe Herrera tried to establish a writer's union for Chicanos. Tony believed poets and artists should get paid for their work in the community, for readings and presentations. He was adamant about it, "If you don't give value to your work, no one else will." Of course, this was also because Chicanos were well aware that the poetry scene was very "western" and white. We knew the poetry centers in the Bay Area received grants for reading series, but those series never included Chicanos. If they did, we were expected to be the opening act and services rendered were free. Unfortunately, the writer's union never got off the ground. Tony was left with the burden of organizing meetings and agendas, while many of the Chicano writers were critical of who was the "real" Chicano poet.

Life, death and poetry. That's what our relationship was about. Tony was such a great friend. When I found out he had a tumor, all the deaths in my life surfaced. I didn't want him to die. I didn't want to lose him. I loved him. I remembered I had never told him I loved him. It was difficult to say. I felt like a thief trying to take something that was not mine. And yet, I wanted him to know that throughout all these years I did love him deeply. I went to see him in the hospital and told him.

A few weeks later, my mother called me from El Paso and told me Tony's sister had died. I called him. He was sad. He told me his sister's name was Margarita, she was his younger sister, early forties, like me. Margarita,

Margie. Again, we were talking of the dead.

Tony and I continued our pláticas. "What does it all mean?" In the beginning of his illness, Tony had every ounce of faith that he was going to beat the cancer. His energy and will were up for the fight. His spirit glowed, he was doing everything to cleanse his body, his heart and his soul.

A few weeks later, he went into chemotherapy. A few months later he said the cancer was gone. A few months later he told me there were five tumors in his liver.

He went to the healer, he went for healings. There were so many prayers, prayer groups and candles going his way.

He never lost faith or hope in his life.

The tumors tripled and continued to multiply.

He made life choices.

He wrote.

He spent time with Cecilia, his wife.

He spent time with Rebeca, his daughter.

He called his son Toño to come home.

Sometime last spring, Tony and I were having an unusual conversation: we weren't talking about anyone's illness, death or cancer. I was whining and moaning about how miserable my life in Fresno was and how isolated I felt. After all, I was talking to my friends, so I was just being miserable. Like always, he listened quietly. "Margarita, you have Juan Felipe and your children. You have your health, you have each other,"

he told me softly. "That's all that matters. Nothing else."

In the last twenty months, Tony has rattled and shaken everything I know to be inside me, my heart, my mind, my spirit. He has been telling me things outside the language we know as writing. The night of his death I dreamed that I was in a room full of people, some sort of reception, and I could see his shadow moving in and out of people. I was telling him I could see him.

For the last ten years, we artists have faddishly gone about our ways and constructed our altars with symbols and icons and trinkets we put meaning into. And yes, the net and the lace must be just right. This Día de los Muertos is different. This Día de los Muertos has too much meaning, perhaps, for me to take in. But let me find a beginning.

As a poet, I can write poems until the day I die, but if my concern were only for it to be good poetry, something would be missing. Tony's work was about life, about taking it all in and making it a poem like a crazy phone conversation with another poet. Tony never relied on anyone's rule of aesthetics to write. This I am so glad of, because he left us so much of his real life in his work. Tony's life was a poem.

On this Día de los Muertos I'll have to smoke a Marlboro and blow the smoke to him. I still have a candle burning for him. I still cry. But on that day, he and I will enjoy the flowers.



Margarita Luna Robles, Tony and Margarita's daughter Marlene.
Photo, Adam Avalos.



Ric Salinas and Herbert Sigüenza of Culture Clash with a photo from los viejos tiempos aquellos when Tony was part of the group.
Photo, Eugenio Castro.



An altar for Tony at Drink Cultura, an event honoring Tony on October 13th in San Francisco.
Photo, Eugenio Castro.

Para el "vato de aquellas"

Juan Felipe Herrera

José Antonio Burciaga, "el vato de la divina 'torica," was a true friend, one who would always catch me off guard with his wry humor and his daring. It was his daring that fooled me. José Antonio at first glance didn't appear "revolutionary" or "radical" or even "assertive," yet, at the core of his being he was truly a man on fire. His eyes were always mapping out the larger scenes of cultura and experience, searching for new political models, visual and tactile languages and idioms that we could hold to our breast. It was almost as if his art, his poetry, comedy and Raza journalism were props for the release of something deeper—the voice sparkles from the spiritual realms of his life condition. So deep, perhaps, that only in this feverish manner would he touch our collective, innermost self. Tony, "el vato machín," was willing to sacrifice

everything; he had dedicated his life to let his life light express itself at its most intense level. Remember when he threw a bottle of paint against his own mural in Redwood City? I don't know of any big-time Chicana or Chicano muralist (if they're still around) who has done that, do you? Remember how, time after time, José Antonio would publish in tiny Chicano presses, on post cards, in silk screen panels and come singing letanías dressed up as a sacerdote gone Chicano? Can you name anyone like that? Chale!

Once José Antonio, "el vato de aquellas," said he felt alone, isolated, left out. He was right. José Antonio Burciaga was on his own in many ways. Maybe because he was ahead of us—not behind us or to one side of us. Actually, the ones behind José Antonio where the who had copped out for a ride on the upward main-stream East Coast Vendidoville autobús. Tony, "el carnal de mi cora," leaves us with his tender fire. I hold his flames of courage and kindness as close to my heart as I can. C/S

Letanía para José Antonio Burciaga

Juan Felipe Herrera

Ese Burciaga, vato de la divina 'torica, vato escuadra
ruega por nosotros

ese vato muralista, con delantal de panadero, hacedor de pinturas y nuestras historias en paredones ilegales
ruega por nosotros

ese Tin-Tan del Chuko,
ruega por nosotros

buzo del Segundo Barrio, Casa Zapata y de Menlo Parque
ruega por nosotros

ese poeta de la plebe bilingüe, escritor de la milpa, misterio y esmeralda
ruega por nosotros

ese tarjetero, cuate de vecindades en firme comunicación, cercos sueltos y campesinos en la libre
ruega por nosotros

ese vato, compañero de la Cecilia jefito del Toño y la Rebeca, hermano en la onda bronca
ruega por nosotros

ese cholo de Monterey con lápices y acrílicos y mantequilla y esperanza en la brocha
ruega por nosotros

ese Burciaga, usador de botellas de colores contra los fiscales y sus changos
ruega por nosotros

ese Cantinchuko de bolsa Tijuana, sacos de chiles chicanos y chistes de lobo
ruega por nosotros

ese Tony, profe del tomate, de la sierra en protesta y de los jarochos
ruega por nosotros

ese vato apasionado con letras locas, los nombres de los olvidados y movimientos por la justicia
ruega por nosotros

ese compa de los compas, con los burritos mochos y las tortillas freisbees pa' lonche
ruega por nosotros

ese silk-screen beret, tomando cultura y corazón en vez de Coka-cola
ruega por nosotros

ese carnal con el fonazo político, con la voz urgente y las tardeadas en tu cantón
ruega por nosotros

ese homey del sol total, trozo de pan familiar y luz naciente sobre la mesa del barrio
ruega por nosotros

ese jornalero de tinta voz para el pueblo, voz de oro y consciencia, voz del pobre
ruega por nosotros

ese cura con la corbata al revés sembrando letanías y amores, milagros sociales y flores
ruega por nosotros

ese poetazo de adobe, de pinole y pozole y curaciones y marchas a medianoche
ruega por nosotros

ese vatín alivianado de camiseta tipo camaleón, ascendente de Juariles
ruega por nosotros

ese vato machín con la guayabera tucked-in, jalando con estudiantes y hermanas Carmelitas hasta el amanecer
ruega por nosotros

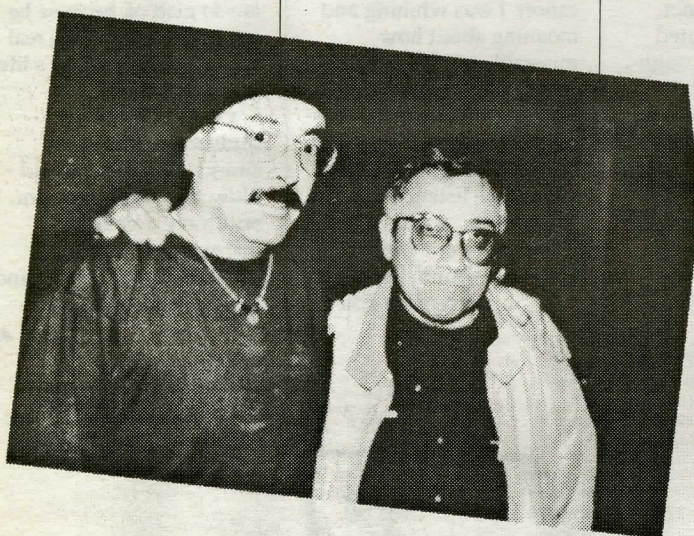
ese Burgie, armando tertulias, rondallas, barbequiadas y lunadas de hermandad
ruega por nosotros

ese Tony con Tony Lamas del Rio Granda en el Bracero Bar, en Madero Roja, dibujando las verdades
ruega por nosotros

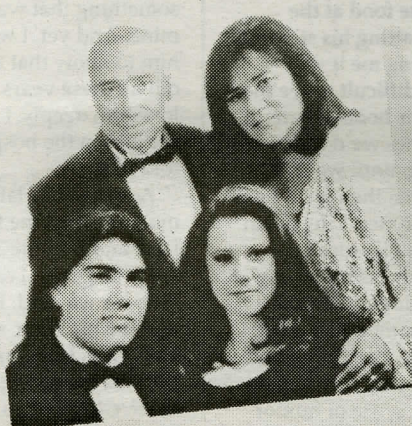
ese Jacalero de mi cora, cantandome San Antonio en vez de Santone,

El Paso del Norte en vez de El Pasowe Sabes qué carnal José Antonio, la verdad es que me canso me canso de no verte me canso de no escucharte de no sentir tu ternura a mi lado pero yo te recuerdo y no me olvido, la verdad es que no sé más que no olvidarte no sé más que siempre escucharte en esta vereda aquí ese Burciaga, ese padrino del divino bolo, ese alacrán buti suave aquí te cantamos, en caló, en calor y puro amor

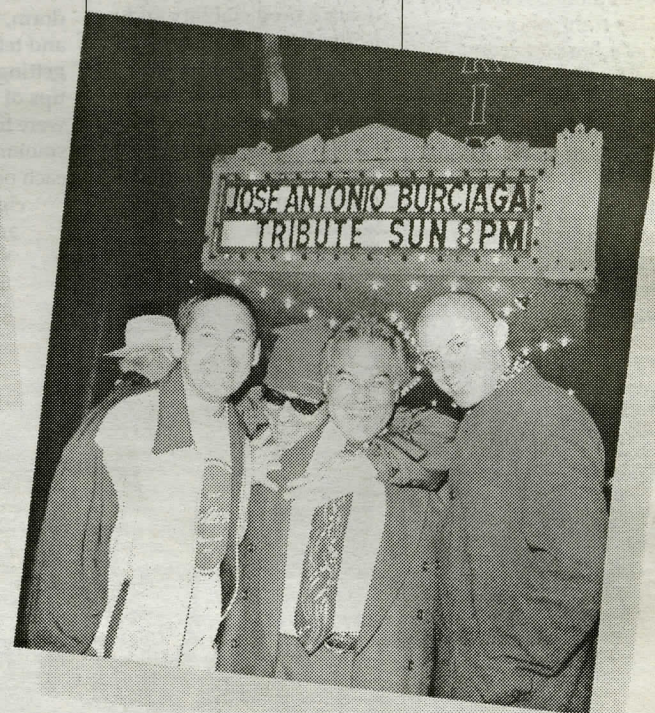
Amén y Con Safos



Abrazados, Juan Felipe Herrera y Tony. Photo, Adam Avalos.



La familia: Tony, Cecilia, Toño and Rebeca. Photo, courtesy of Rebeca Burciaga.



Drink Cultura: Todo mundo estaba ahí. Culture Clash and Luis Valdez. Photo, Eugenio Castro.

Tony and I Do Larkspur

Gary Soto

In February of 1993, Tony Burciaga and I got a small potatoes gig: a reading and booksigning in Larkspur, the cushy bedroom community right smack on the bucolic North Bay. We agreed to a fee of 50 bucks each, a figure that would make our compañera Sandra Cisneros prop her bracelet-jangling hands on the hips and scold us for going so cheap. "You're going backwards," she would have said. Yeah, it was probably true that we, two literary burros working for carrots, were going backwards, but, looking at the bright side, it was an opportunity to sell a few books and yuk it up about Chicano literature being the best.

A few days before, Mary Jane, the organizer of the reading series, called to ask if she could videotape it.

"Why?" I asked.

We might be able to market it to school districts, she told me, and figured that together we might make a little money. I agreed, but warned her that sometimes while I'm doing readings, I say crazy things. I told her that I usually read

weird stuff. My eyes are known to spin as I read like a mad man, the poems only inches from my face. I spray the audience with saliva.

"You'll do just fine," she said. "You're a pro."

The night arrived, and Tony and I arrived, in separate cars, from separate worlds; for Tony was billed as a poet and essayist, and I was a poet and children's writer. We carried in our boxes of wares: way too many books and "Drink Cultura" T-shirts.

The reading was held not in a bookstore, but a well-lit pastry shop. There were a lot of young people that night, young people from the high school who had shelled out ten dollars for the event. For that money, they not only got to hear the two of us, but also to sample three kinds of coffee and a platter of sticky pastries. The place was really clean. The tables didn't wobble, and pieces of paper didn't stick to your shoes when you walked from the front counter to your table.

I also noticed that there was a knot of Chicanas a few years younger than us, but with a touch of gray in their hair—the wisdom of college, I suspected. Actually, they looked great, and were well dressed too. They smiled

at us, and I know my heart lifted a little. I was so happy that these Chicanas had opened up their purses, as well as their hearts, to see two scruffy Chicano poets. One was Deborah Escobedo and another was Irma Herrera, I would later learn.

"Hello," I whispered in my best Julio Iglesias voice.

They smiled and tapped their spoons against their coffee cups. Right then I knew they were lawyers.

Mary Jane set up a video camera in the corner, encouraging us not to look straight into it. She then introduced us, telling everyone that this was a special evening. Tony went first, reading in that cowboy drawl that always fascinated me. I mean, most Chicanos I knew spoke in an urban voice, so when I encountered Chicanos who spoke as if they spent most of their lives branding cows, I perked up.

"Read your stutter poem, dude," I yelled to him.

Tony stuttered, saying, "OOOOOOKKKKKK."

Tony read "Stammered Dreams," then his essay about jalapeños and other pieces that I can't recall. He did his typical brilliant reading, while I sat eyeing the audience.

I followed. I may or may not have had bits of pastry between my teeth, but I knew I didn't read anything sweet. The first poem was called "Behind Grandma's House," which

is about a ten-year-old me wanting to become a boxer. I'm rough in this poem, knocking over all sorts of stuff in an alley and scaring the hell out of harmless cats. The poem ends with a punch—no pun intended—when my grandmother knocks me out for being a travieso. It's full of healthy exaggeration, and so were the other poems I read. But not five minutes into my reading, I started not to like my poetry, an unusual trait for a poet because most of us think we're so cool. I stopped and said, "This poem stinks. Let me try another." I repeated this several times, starting then stopping, which had Tony laughing and begging, "Just finish one poem."

I then read a poem, the complete poem, about my fear of bacteria that a person might catch while standing at the urinal in a men's room.

By then, the lawyer gals were probably wondering "Is he OK?"

No, I was on the edge, I fear, and ended my reading with a poem about a three-eyed toad.

Then there was the Q & A. Tony was smooth, I recall, and civil, and far more serious than me. How so? He described his childhood in El Paso, fondly and with great accuracy. He had facts ready at the tips of his fingers, such fabulous facts about margaritas

(the drink), vitamin C, the G.I. Bill, pilgrims, pendejismo, mixed marriages, and the phrase "con safos." My carnal was on!

A teacher in the audience asked me, "What do you think of Chicana writers?" meaning Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo and Denise Chavez, and others, whom I, of course, admire.

Instead of babbling my admiration, the reading madness came over me, and my mouth answered, "Hey, this is our night. It's your one chance to know us. Let's keep the questions focused on Tony and me!" Tony laughed, in the understanding of the selfish ego writers share.

But by then, Mary Jane stood up and said, "That's about all we have time for. We would like to thank the poets for sharing their work with us." Mary Jane looked at the video camera and she didn't have to tell me or Tony that the footage was useless. What school district would buy a film that included a poet reading only half of his poems?

I sobered up, however, when we started to sell our books—we did a good business, the books flying out of our hands like tamales.

I then approached Deborah and Irma and asked "So how did you like it?"

"What?" one of them said.

"The reading." I sat down and the previously stable chair wobbled under the weight of my craziness. "You know, us poets, we suffer immensely."

Deborah and Irma may or may not have tapped on their coffee cups. I know they smiled, but I suspect they thought I was nuts. That was the last I saw of them for a hell of a long time.

And Tony and I? We went to a cowboy bar three store fronts away from the pastry shop.

"It's my treat, homes," I told Tony. "You drove the farthest."

This was a metaphor and a fact. Tony had driven farther than me to make Chicano literature happen, driven through the 70s, 80s, and a portion of the 1990s. That night he had driven from Carmel. A three hour drive through ugly traffic.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"A Lone Star," he said, "In a bottle."

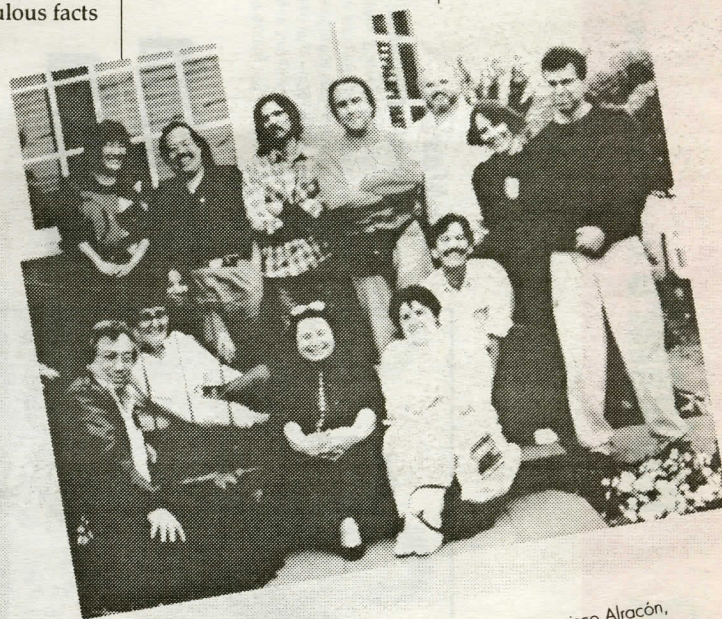
And so it was, Lone Star for both of us. We chugged our beers, counted our money, and swayed to country music on the edge of the sea.



Gary Soto drinking cultura. Photo, Eugenio Castro.



Cecilia y Rebeca. Photo, Eugenio Castro.



La Tribu Chicana 1991: (l to r) Back row, Carolyn Soto, Francisco Alarcón, Danny Romero, Max, Alfred Arteaga, Rosemary Catalas, Gary Soto. Front: Tony Burciaga, Beverly Silva, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Bernice Zamora, Lucha Corpi, Ben Saenz. Photo courtesy of Gary Soto.

Burciaga poems continue on page 15

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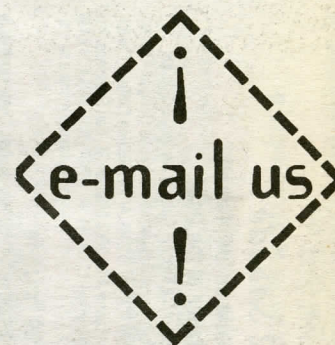
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Su hijo Toño.
Photo, Eugenio Castro.

Apache Skies

Renga: a renga is a collective poem written by more than one poet. In the spirit of community and offering, Apache Skies was written by many poets in attendance at the Burciaga benefit. The last time I saw Burciaga, he had been listening to the weather and the forecaster had predicted "a patchy sky," and he told me he was going to write a poem titled Apache Sky. I don't think Burciaga wrote the poem, so I assumed he left the title for us to do a renga. Thanks to everyone for the lines, and thanks to you, Tony, for the title and the moment.

—Margarita Luna Robles

Apache Skies

a serpent of turquoise, a
serpent of tears
a tender kiss in the desert

coming down with the red
of love
and spirit

Burciaga y yo camaradas
de los cantos
al pueblo forevermente

fountains spew purple
flower

tu poesía seguirá aún
aullando
como un fiero fiel coyote

quiero sentir como el cielo
azulito
bonito

raining arrows
iridescent spirits

Ticlas, land of tents
peoples within touching
the earth

cielo rojo y azul como la
sangre
en nuestras venas

es el camino de siempre
aquí y ahora

Quetzal-feathered tongue
turquoise heart

clouds flying through the
air
as fast as light

el cielo es lo único para la
gente
porque los capitalistas se
han robado todo

hazlo por el paso con
corazón

Apache skies, open the
arroyo
and the world flows
through brimming

stormy, strong, here,
don't go

warm cool ocean breeze

Apache ground

you're a Chicano, you're a
Chicana,
you're a European, a
Eurobeing

Apache sky, suni sun
sipapusoul
Navajo heart and papago
dirt

recuerdo the first time
you read Letanía en Caló

at the Festival Primavera
con el Teatro de la Gente
y todavía se escucha la
respuesta
y resuena la risa de tu
pueblo

blue moon howls
from the subterranean
pockets

cactus cooler colored kiss

frayed hems on the levi
pants
shiny black calcos
hair trimmed to less than a
half inch

Yurok sea tollawa fish

un arbolito de chiles en tu
altar

soy sincero un chilango
que
no habla ingles pero que
a veces se siente Apache
en el cielo

con la coka cola para
quitarle
la cola y ponerle
cultura pa' los jóvenes

patchy white patchy blue
clouds
Apache skies
heaven
siempre

To José Antonio Burciaga,
who taught many of us the
joy found in the commitment
to art, poetry and life.

Tlazolteotl!

Francisco X.
Alarcón

Goddess of Love
Goddess of Death
Eater of Filth
Mother of All Seasons:

Mother of the Rivers
cleanse him
with waters flowing
from the fountain of Youth

Mother of the humming
birds
dry off his last tears
kiss each aching bone
dress him in the morning
flowers

Mother of the Mountains
caress him with murmurs
take him into your bosom
the dream of your deepest
canyons

Mother of the Night
weep with us
light his path with the
glow
of the stars of the Milky
Way

Mother of the Sea
embrace his ashes
turn him into bright red
coral
amidst schools of
laughing fish

Mother of all Seasons
Eater of Filth
Goddess of Death
Goddess of Love

Tlazolteotl!

October 8, 1996

Tony

Phil Goldvarg

José Antonio,
Tony,
bebamos tu cultura,
tus palabras,
tu corazon,
tu alma,

como el Río Bravo,
sangre de tu vida,
you are the Calotec
stream of continuance,
La Lenquatec connection
from la vida loca
to Aztlán,
you unmask the faces
of the six directions,
sabes que hermano,
now we can see
the depth de la Raza
y las lágrimas y sonrisas
de la gente.

Su pluma
is now mightier
than the sword,
sharp cutter
of anglo myth,
reflecting attempted
conquest
back into
los ojos de la muerte
con safos.

You are El Paso,
El Chuco,
breaking the phantom
borders
laid down
by the oppressor's hand.

El Paso es peligroso
por la noche,
but you are the light,
luna-gritero,

paso a paso,
who takes us
to the sun-face
of our ancestors
y la comida Bronce
that nurtures our survival.

Tony,
José Antonio,
brindamos por tu vida,
que rica
como la tierra,
brindamos por tu cultura,
sangre de nosotros.

Sacras, Califas, Aztlán



Los papás, los rucos y los Culture Clash together at Drink Cultura. Photo, Eugenio Castro.

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**INFORMACIÓN SOBRE EL CUERPO
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El Consejo del Ayuntamiento hará nombramientos para varios cuerpos consultivos del ayuntamiento en enero de 1997. En la edición de diciembre de El Andar se publicará una lista detallada de todas las vacantes; sin embargo, después del 8 de noviembre puede obtenerse más información relacionada con estas vacantes en la Oficina de la Secretaría del Ayuntamiento. La Oficina de la Secretaría del Ayuntamiento está en el Palacio Municipal (City Hall), 809 Center Street, Room 9, teléfono 429-3784.

**CITY OF SANTA CRUZ
ADVISORY BODY INFORMATION**

The City Council will make appointments to various city advisory bodies in January 1997. A detailed list of all openings will be published in the December issue of El Andar; however more information regarding these openings may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office after November 8. The City Clerk's Office is located at City Hall, 809 Center Street, Room 9; telephone 429-3784.

**Elect
David Milton Silva**



**to the
Santa Cruz City Council**

CINCO TEMAS CLAVE

1. Aumento de la democracia en el Consejo Municipal: Por medio de una mayor representación proporcional para alcanzar equidad.
2. Solución a la crisis de los indigentes/personas que duermen en espacios públicos: Trabajando junto a otros ayuntamientos en el condado por medio de un programa de Responsabilidad Compartida para que no recaiga la totalidad del problema en el Ayuntamiento de Santa Cruz.
3. Detener la construcción en Terrace Point.
4. Impulso a empresas que fomenten el uso de fuentes de energía alternativa y sostenibilidad; haciendo énfasis en el eco-turismo.
5. Trabajar para cambiar la "mentalidad" del gobierno local hacia la de una imagen de Santa Cruz como un santuario político, económico y cultural, una "fuente de inspiración para el resto del país".

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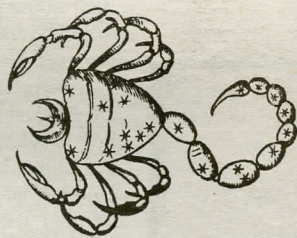
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The Month of Scorpio

By Shaman



Scorpio (October 23 - November 21)

You've got an itch to scratch. It's been building up over time and if you don't let off the necessary steam soon... well, we all know how ugly it will be when you explode. So scratch, scratch, scratch. Get up off of your behind and head towards the action. You'll feel so much better.

Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21)

You always seem to get what you don't want and don't want what you get. A bit cliché, but so is your life right now. Stop the whining festival and do something different for a change. If nobody wants to try anything new, then do it by yourself. Try that new restaurant out, join a health club, etc. The independence will be rewarding.

Capricorn (December 22 - January 19)

Health will be your concern soon. Nothing worrisome, but your food intake will jump with the coming months. Obviously, balancing the snacking with extra exercise will help. Be sure your family and friends get some physical activity as well. A long walk, for example, is the perfect time to gossip with friends or have a heart-to-heart talk with your significant other.

Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)

Family crisis continues. Enough is enough already! Get yourself out of those need-less confrontations. First, if a problem doesn't involve you, stay out of it. If it does involve you, then sit down and resolve it immediately. Don't drag things on when they can be corrected quickly and calmly.

Pisces (February 19 - March 20)

The clocks have fallen back. Please be aware that you are not a clock and need to stay on top of things. You've been diligent in your chores as of late, but burn out is bound to set in soon. Catch yourself in time so you don't mess everything up. No matter how busy you are, please schedule some time for just you.

Aries (March 21 - April 20)

Normally it's preferable to balance faith and reason in your day to day life. As of late however, too much reliance on intuition and emotional beliefs prevents you from facing the facts of life. Step back and reassess those trouble spots. Before taking action, be sure you have concrete proof, not simply suspicions.

Taurus (April 21 - May 20)

A little bird mentioned to me the other day that you've got a secret. A secret what? The darn bird wouldn't tell me. No matter what it is, however, you seem to be enjoying it. That smirk on your face says it all. Just be sure you know what you're getting into.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Is the universe finite or infinite? If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound? It's time to develop the philosopher within. The day to day grind may be too much, and you need some mental stimulation. So go for it. Think deep thoughts, discuss the important issues, keep a journal. It's good for you.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

"Do you know what your problem is?" If you've caught yourself asking that question of others, be they friends, family, or loved ones of some other variety, then you need to stop. Accepting people as they are is a vital life skill. Asking the aforementioned question, on the other hand, is usually a way to avoid asking that same question of yourself.

Leo (July 23 - August 22)

Is that relationship of yours on the rocks? NO! Over-reacting to small problems, while okay and understandable on occasion, has begun to rage unchecked in your brain and has made your psyche go goofy. When you start obsessing about something s/he is not doing with absolute perfection, stop and ask yourself if it's that big of a deal.

Virgo (August 23 - September 22)

Hello! Those lazy-hazy-crazy days of summer are over. Laying around watching the clouds drift by sure is relaxing, but you do have significant projects ahead of you. The holiday season is just around the corner, your room is a mess and you still need to have that yard sale. Get busy.

Libra (September 23 - October 22)

Call it puppy love if you're still deluded. I hate to break the news to you, but it could be the real thing. However, without the "puppy" around, you'll have to start asking yourself the tough questions: where do you want the relationship to go? Does s/he feel the same way about you? Good luck, the fun has just begun.

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*Black Power, White Blood:
The Life & Times of Johnny Spain*
Lori Andrews
Pantheon Books

LIBROS
Book Review

Black Power, White Blood: *The Life and Times of Johnny Spain*, is a journey through the life of a black man who was born in a white family and given up for adoption at age six to a black couple. Johnny was born in Jackson, Mississippi, the result of an affair between a married white woman and a black man. The book narrates the journey of Johnny, a man who went to prison at age 17 for killing a white man.

In the late 1940's, Johnny left the segregated South for Los Angeles. Still a child, he left behind his white mother, who preferred to send him away to a black family rather than see him killed or face humiliation. In the South, Johnny could not go to school with his white brother because they lived in a segregated society. Even the barber wouldn't touch his hair because it was "nigger's" hair. Soon he discovered that though he was too Black for Mississippi, he was too white for L.A. Black kids would call him "yellow boy" because of his light skin.

Lessons from Prison

To get to the reception in his honor at the New College of California School of Law in San Francisco this past September, Johnny Spain had come a long way. He had come to Los Angeles, walked the streets with fellow gang members, had been a Black Panther, went to prison, and taught at Stanford University and UC, Berkeley. On this night, he was surrounded by people who admired his courage, his humor, and his commitment to social justice. Among those present were his former defense lawyer Dennis Riordan, world-famous bassist Herbie Lewis, his biographer Lori Andrews, his friends, poets, and Angela Brown, Director of the Black Panther Party Research Project at Stanford University. Brown told the audience: "This man is a gem."

"Nobody comes out of prison okay," said Johnny at the reception. This black man with light skin, or "a white man with black skin," as he calls himself, learned about Che Guevara, Ho Chi Min, Huey Newton, and many revolutionary movements around the world while at Soledad Prison from one of the proudest Black Panthers, George Jackson. In Soledad, Johnny learned to organize his everyday life and his ideas. He learned to organize his fellow black, Chicano and white prisoners and unite them against their oppressors instead of fighting among themselves.

The San Quentin Six Trial

On July 21, 1969, Johnny arrived at Soledad prison. A few days later, Johnny met George Jackson, who had been imprisoned for a gas station holdup. He lent Johnny book after book, from Calvin Hernton's *Sex and Racism in America* to Che Guevara's *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolution*. Comrade George, as he was respectfully called in prison, had frequent all-night discussions with Johnny. The subjects ranged from Marxism to the Vietnam war to Malcom X. George was convinced that the only solution to social problems was armed struggle, and he viewed escaping from prison as his only

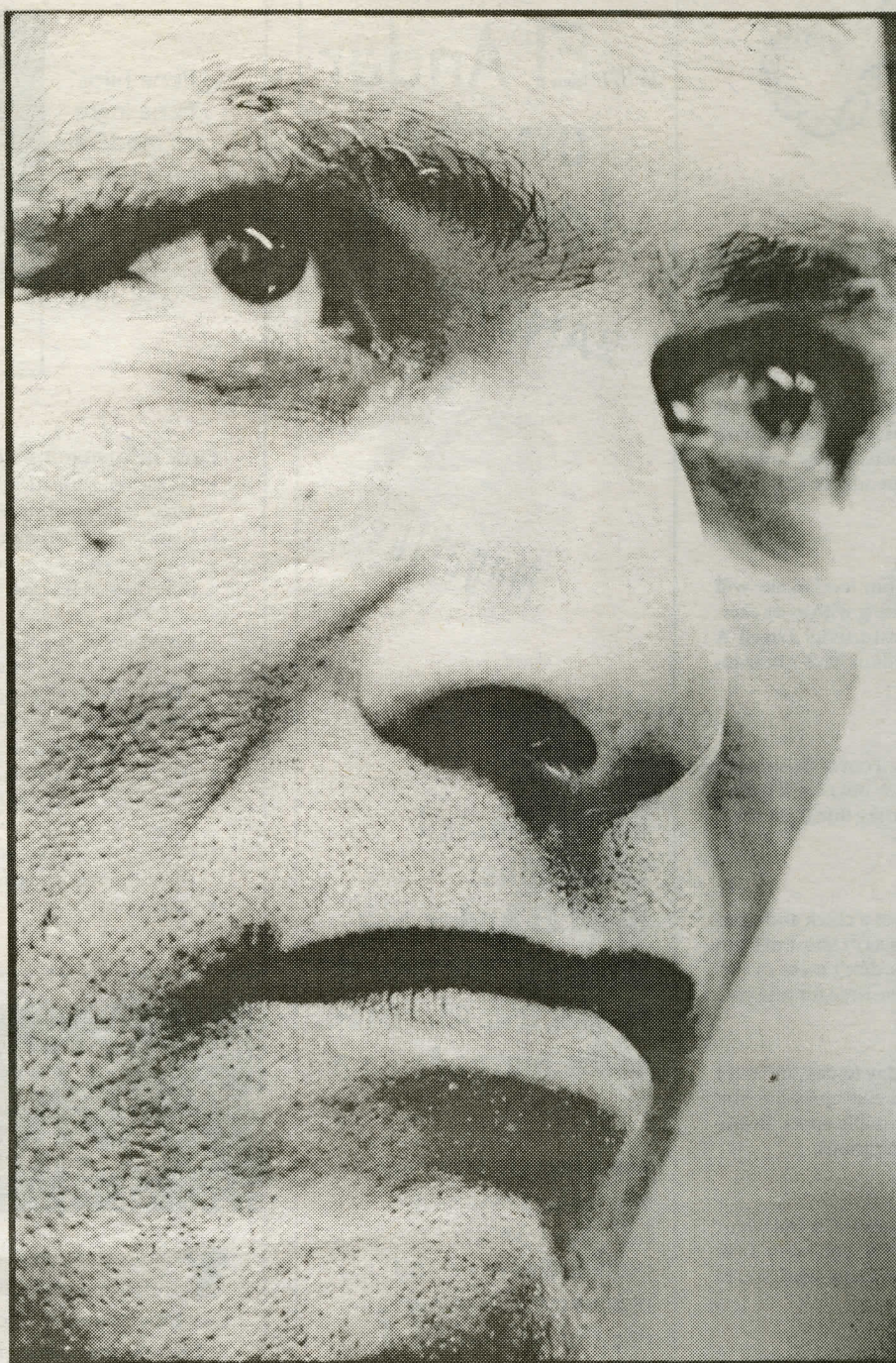
chance for survival.

On August 21, 1971, he attempted to escape, and three white guards and two white inmates were killed in the process. George died in the prison yard a few feet away from Johnny, who was taken to court with five other inmates: Fleeta Drumgo, Luis Talamantez, Hugo Pinell, Willie Tate, and David Johnson. On August 12, 1976, after 15 days of deliberation in what was then the longest criminal trial in California's history, the jury of the San Quentin Six trial found Johnny, the only Black Panther accused, guilty of conspiracy in the murders of Frank DeLeon and Jere Graham. Johnny was given two more life sentences (which were later reduced) for conspiring with fellow Black Panther George Jackson. The trial was in essence a legal battle between the government and the civil rights movement.

"The strip cell had no toilet, sink, or bed, only a hole in the floor. Inmates were not allowed to take any possessions into the cell. Someone, though, had managed to etch REVOLUTION on the ceiling." This passage from Andrews' book describes a man who spent eight years out of a 21-year sentence in solitary confinement. The Black Panther's revolutionary fervor, combined with his endurance and intelligence, helped Johnny survive and eventually gain his freedom.

"Our prisons are hellholes. I wonder how many San Quentins there are going to be, how many more Soledads, and how many more Atticas," said Charles Garry, a lawyer who defended Johnny at the famous San Quentin Six trial in the mid 70s. In California 15 years ago, there were 20 prisons and 20,000 inmates. Today, there are 32 prisons and 150,000 inmates.

I must admit that after reading *Black Power, White Blood*, I have come to terms with my own experience in life. Many years ago, I was attacked by several Black youngsters while jogging in a park at night. The blow on my face with a bottle sent me to the hospital and left me scarred. I wonder now how many young Johnnys are out there. This book has given me a better understanding of present history and our society. In addition it has brought into my consciousness the importance of not falling into the cracks of racism. Finally, it has reminded me of the difficulties found while walking down the path of unity toward common goals. ▲



HELLHOLE

The Revolutionary Years of Johnny Spain

Jorge Chino
Photos by janjaap



Los días festivos se acercan y Joe no tiene a dónde ir.

Bueno, este año es como todos los demás, solo para las fiestas.

Bueno... Hola Joe soy tu prima Juliana de Texas. ¿Quieres venir a pasar las fiestas con nosotros?

Bueno, Si... entiendo que tu hermana padece de asma. No, no pienso fumar, te lo prometo. Bueno, nos vemos dentro de dos semanas.

¿Cómo te fue en el vuelo? Todos nuestros primos están en la casa, y con muchas ganas de verte.

Me fue muy bien en el vuelo. ¿Sabías que han cambiado las reglas para fumar en todos los vuelos? Increíble no poder fumar. No fumar por cinco horas. Qué bueno que deje de fumar ¿verdad? ¿Quién está en la casa?

Gracias, gracias.

¡¡¡Bienvenido Joe!!!

Estoy contentísima de que Joe haya dejado de fumar y de que esté aquí con nosotros.

¿A dónde se fue Joe?

Pobre ves que mal se mira después de fumar por muchos años.

Lo bueno es que ya no fuma. Este es el mejor pavo que he visto ¡Está delicioso!

¿Cómo pudiste mentirnos? Prometiste no fumar mientras estuvieras con nosotros.

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Lo siento pero no puedo dejar de fumar.

LA VIDA DE JOE CÁNCER

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1-5PM**

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For one day and into the night enjoy a festive alternative to an otherwise somber occasion.

FEAST OF THE DEAD PART I

will feature food, music, art workshops, face painting and exciting live performances.

MUSIC & PERFORMANCES

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- 1:00-1:30 Watsonville Taiko-Japanese Drumming
- 1:30-2:00 Markahuasi-Peruvian music
- 2:00-2:30 Esperanza del Valle-Folklorico Dance
- 2:30-4:00 Markahuasi-Peruvian music
- 4:00-5:00 Chuchumbé-Children's Theater & Music

ART WORKSHOPS

Create paper flowers and papel picado (paper banners) and help us decorate our community altar & "cemetery" (located in the plaza)

**PART II
8-9PM**

ALTAR TOUR AND ARTISTS' RECEPTION

An exhibit of altars and installations celebrating the heart and spirit of the Mexican days of the dead. This exhibit gathers together artists who use the form of the altar as a place and shape to build their work.

SHARE IN THE SPIRIT OF FESTIN DE LOS MUERTOS AND BRING AN OFFERING FOR THE COMMUNITY ALTAR.

artists: Pilar Agüero, Silvia Carballo, Eugenio Castro, Janjaap, Carlos Pérez, Joe Rodríguez, Manuel Santana, and René Yañez.

9-11PM

NOCHE DE LOS MUERTOS VIVOS POETRY

Performance and music by: Shirley Ancheta, Tom Calderón, Trinidad Castro, and Jeff Tagami.

11-MIDNIGHT

Muertos Ritual

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Arte Latino would like to thank the following sponsors for their generous contributions: Cultural Council of Santa Cruz County, The Santa Cruz City Arts Commission, TGV, Inc., El Andar Foundation, KUSP 88.9 fm, TCI Cablevision.

Proposition 209: Affirming Reaction

Jack Tilney

Riding the backlash wave from the anti-immigrant Proposition 187, the right crafted Proposition 209, "Prohibition Against Discrimination or Preferential Treatment by State and Other Public Entities," for this November's election. The title, changed from the more Orwellian "California Civil Rights Initiative," misleadingly appears to prohibit "discrimination or preferential treatment." In actuality, it proposes the opposite, dismantling affirmative action programs for white women and people of color.

Affirmative action programs have benefited white women and people of color enormously. The National Association of Manufacturers and the Business Roundtable endorse affirmative action. Thanks to affirmative action programs in education, the percentage of women in undergraduate college programs rose from 30.1% to 41.3% between 1980 and 1990. During roughly the same period, the UC Student Association notes "undergraduate degree awards were up 19% for African Americans, 24% for American Indians, 87% for Latinos, and nearly 150% for Asian Americans."

California has been the center of affirmative action debates for some time. The issue first flared up in the 1970s, when Alan Bakke was denied entrance to UC Davis's medical school, and sued on the basis of "reverse discrimination." The Supreme Court, in its majority 1976 ruling of Regents of the University of California v. Alan Bakke, felt that reverse discrimination had occurred, but upheld the importance of race-conscious remedies to past and present discrimination. Lesbian anti-racist activist Mab Segrest notes the UC Regents failed to present the court with important evidence in the Bakke case: not only did 32 applicants have test scores higher than Bakke, but UC Davis had 5 slots to medical school set aside for the children of rich alumni and public officials: a privilege quota.

Today, however, privilege quotas are not the target. Quotas of any kind are illegal, and affirmative action programs have nothing to do with quotas. Rather, governmental and educational institutions sometimes set up goals and timetables to search out qualified white women and people of color to diversify their workplace. Hiring or admitting unqualified applicants due to affirmative action is a myth.

Gov. Pete Wilson and UC Regent Ward Connerly have been diligently dismantling the UC system's affirmative action policies in preparation for Proposition 209. Passing the initiative will prove detrimental to minority education. A report by the Legislative Analyst states that Prop 209 would "affect a variety of public school and community college programs such as counseling, tutoring, outreach, [and] student financial aid" programs targeting minorities. Women's centers and outreach programs will lose funding. With affirmative action gone, and a planned student fee hike of 50% during the next few years, diversity in the UC system and equal opportunity in education will cease to exist.

Though existing affirmative action programs benefit white women and people of color, another question still arises: "Why is this a 'gay' issue?" The answer is threefold. First, although they are not as visible as white men, white women and people of color make up a majority of the population in California and in the gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgendered (glbt) community.

Second, white people (straight or not), especially privileged white men, benefit from their own type of affirmative action. The group Angry White Guys for Affirmative Action notes, "subsidies for middle-class home buyers, mass transit subsidies for white suburbs, [and] selective allotments for refugees" are all programs which benefit targeted groups. An article in *Crossroads* further notes, "There have always been preferences, yet no one ever said they 'lowered quality' until they began to be applied for the benefit of people of color and women."

Third, the hard-fought battles against anti-glbt initiatives shows a clear link between the right wing's use of "special rights" and "preferential treatment." As the glbt community cheered the Supreme Court striking down Colorado's anti-gay Amendment 2, it now needs to fight an initiative which

Privileged white men have always benefited from their own type of affirmative action. The group Angry White Guys for Affirmative Action notes that subsidies for middle-class home buyers, mass transit subsidies for white suburbs, and selective allotments for refugees are all programs which benefit targeted groups.



is being sold to voters using the same rhetoric and myths which sold a majority of Colorado voters on Amendment 2. As The National Gay and Lesbian task force notes, "It is an illusion to believe that the human dignity and civil rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people can be recognized and protected in a society that is working to dismantle policies geared toward remedying discrimination against any group of people."

Affirmative action is not perfect, and will not end white supremacist patriarchy. However, it is a start toward remedying past and present discrimination and needs to be preserved and expanded. Ending affirmative action will only roll back the gains civil rights and liberation movements have fought so hard to institute. Proposition 209 will severely damage our struggle for a world of social justice and equal opportunity.



The staff of El Andar feels opinionated this month, so here we have our recommendations for the November 5 elections.

Proposition 204 YES Safe, Clean, Reliable Water Supply Act.	Proposition 218 NO Voter Approval for Local Government Taxes.
Proposition 205 NO Youthful and Adult Offender Local Facilities Bond Act.	Santa Cruz County Measure B YES Save our Libraries
Proposition 207 NO Attorneys. Fees. Right to Negotiate. Frivolous Lawsuits.	Santa Cruz County Supervisor 2nd District Paul Elerick
Proposition 209 NO Prohibition Against Discrimination or Preferential Treatment by State and Other Public Entities.	US Representative 16th District Zoe Lofgren 17th District Sam Farr
Proposition 210 YES Minimum Wage Increase.	State Senator 13th District John Vasconcellos 15th District Rusty Areias
Proposition 213 NO Limitation on Recovery to Felons, Uninsured Motorists, Drunk Drivers.	Member of the State Assembly 23d District Mike Honda 27th District Fred Keeley
Proposition 214 YES Health Care. Consumer Protection.	Santa Cruz City Council Katherine Beiers Eleanor Eisenberg Michael Hernández Mike Rotkin
Proposition 215 YES Medical Use of Marijuana.	Watsonville City Council Oscar Ríos
Proposition 216 YES Health Care. Consumer Protection.	San José Unified School District Jorge González Chris Schumb
Proposition 217 YES Top Income Brackets. Reinstatement. Revenues to Local Agencies.	

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María Heredia has worked at ETR Associates for 5 years in the Tobacco Education Clearinghouse and is a current board member at Familia Center.

María Heredia

Each day, more than 200 of California's youth begin experimenting with a drug that kills more U.S. residents than HIV/AIDS, alcohol, cocaine, crack, heroine, suicides, homicides, car accidents and fires combined. What drug could possibly be more addictive and deadly than heroin or cocaine? Consider nicotine, a substance found in cigarettes.

While a large part of the population knows that cigarette smoking is an unhealthy habit, most are shocked to learn the high death rate and huge health care costs related to tobacco use. This is especially disturbing since smoking-related diseases are completely preventable.

Given the facts about the dangers of tobacco use, why have teen smoking rates continued to climb? According to studies published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, cigarette advertising is a more powerful factor in prompting kids to smoke than peer pressure or having family

members that smoke.

In fact, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) published studies that correlate significant increases in teen smoking rates with time periods where tobacco industry marketing doubled and cigarette brand promotions quadrupled. Reports show that teens smoke the most heavily advertised and promoted brands. Changes in brand preferences among youth are also associated with increases in brand-specific advertising figures. 70% of teen smokers polled say they would not have started smoking if they could choose again. If kids can remain tobacco-free through their difficult teen years, then most will reject cigarette use later on in life.

In July of this year, a 1984 R.J. Reynolds report confirmed this correlation. The 77-page document, filed in the discovery process for a Minnesota lawsuit, concluded that R.J. Reynolds has been looking to young adults to become "replacement smokers" for current smokers dying of smoking-related diseases.

Study after study proves that preventing teen tobacco use is a critical factor in improving the

nation's overall health. To work towards this goal, the federal government has decided to step in and regulate tobacco advertising and sales. In August, President Clinton took a more serious look at the issue. After much effort and public scrutiny, tobacco has been reclassified as an addictive drug and is now, for the first time in history, under FDA regulation.

There are two major strategy components to meet Clinton's goal of reducing teen smoking by 50%: Reducing youth access to tobacco products and limiting the appeal of cigarettes to children.

Currently, despite laws that prohibit the sale of cigarettes to minors, children easily obtain cigarettes from vending machines, mail order sales, self-service displays, free samples and the purchase of single cigarettes. The 1994 Surgeon General's report found that youth were able to buy cigarettes from vending machines an average of 88% of the time. The FDA plan continues to prohibit the sale of cigarettes and chew tobacco products to anyone under 18 and requires face-to-face contact and proof of I.D. for purchase of tobacco. Cigarette vending machines and other easy access methods for buying tobacco products will be available to "adult-only facilities".

With help from the FDA, Clinton plans to restrict content and placement of advertising in publications with a significant youth readership, like Rolling Stone and Glamour. Outdoor advertising within 1,000 feet of playgrounds and schools will be banned, as will selling brand-specific promotional items such as t-shirts, hats and water bottles.

Outdoor advertising will be restricted to black and white text only, affecting billboards, transit, and point-of-purchase ads. The exception is "in adult-only facilities totally inaccessible to persons under 18." Tobacco industry events sponsorship will

be restricted to displaying the corporate name only.

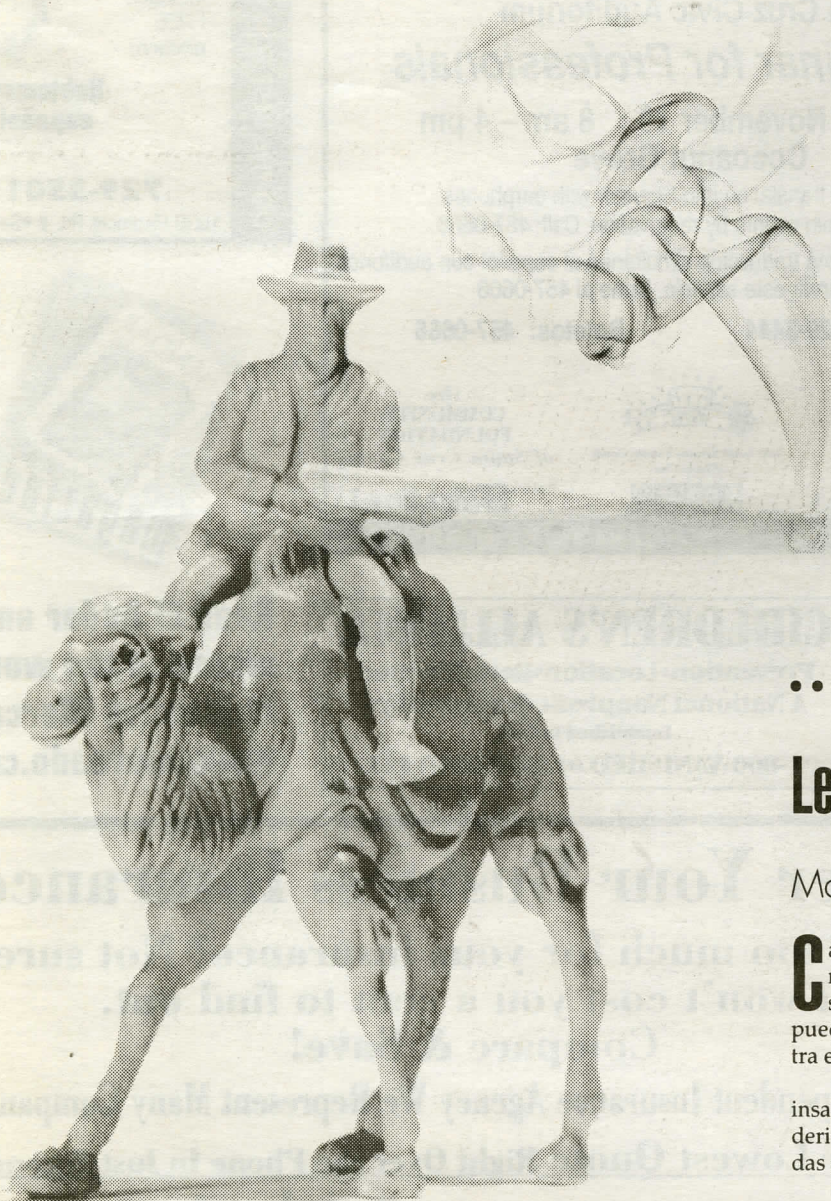
After a history of virtual exemption from much legislative scrutiny, and many loopholes, the Tobacco Industry will finally be required to tone down its aggressive marketing tactics to youth. Current tobacco education programs in place around the nation and continued funding from Prop. 99 in California, coupled with Clinton's new laws, the nation will inevitably see a decrease in teen tobacco use. Changing societal norms may take years, but it is well worth the effort to engage young people in healthy behaviors.

The challenge for the Tobacco Industry will be how to replace the current "replacement smokers." Invariably, the U.S. can expect a rise in the peddling of tobacco products in ethnic communities, to women and the poor. Tobacco consumption and exports will continue to rise in other countries, especially in developing nations where little, if any, tobacco industry regulations exist. Neighboring countries south of the border, former communist countries, the Pacific Rim and any virgin markets continue to be fair game for tobacco companies.

Winds favoring the tobacco industry have changed quickly in Washington. It will be interesting to see how much of the recent legislation Clinton passed remains worded as is, how much resistance the Tobacco Industry puts up, and how much a conservative Supreme Court throws out. What tobacco manufacturers will do next is anyone's guess, except maybe voluntarily contribute funding for effective youth smoking cessation programs.

The "Tobacco Education" series has been partially funded by the Hispanic/Latino Network for Tobacco Education of the University of San Francisco.

Clinton Champions Teen Tobacco Use Reduction



The Smoking Gun Photo, janjaap

Legislación que aboga por la salud de los jóvenes

María Heredia

Cada día más de 200 jóvenes de California comienzan a experimentar con alguna droga que mata a más residentes estadounidenses que el VIH/SIDA, el alcohol, la cocaína, el crack, la heroína, los suicidios, homicidios, accidentes automovilísticos e incendios, todos combinados. ¿Qué droga puede ser más adictiva y mortal que la heroína o la cocaína? La nicotina, la sustancia que se encuentra en los cigarrillos.

A pesar de que una gran parte de la población sabe que el consumo del cigarrillo es un hábito insalubre, la mayoría se sorprende al enterarse del alto nivel de muertes y el inmenso costo médico derivado del uso del tabaco. Es alarmante, en especial si se considera que las enfermedades relacionadas con el uso del cigarrillo se pueden prevenir por completo.

En una encuesta realizada, 70 por ciento de los jóvenes dijo que nunca empezaría a fumar si pudiera escoger de nuevo. Si los chicos pudieran mantenerse alejados del tabaco en los años más difíciles de la adolescencia, la mayoría rechazaría el uso del cigarrillo años más tarde.

¿Por qué sigue aumentando el índice de jóvenes que fuman a pesar de que existen datos que revelan los peligros del consumo del tabaco? De acuerdo a los estudios publicados en la Revista del Instituto Nacional del Cáncer, la incitación para que los jóvenes fumen por medio de la publicidad que se le hace a los cigarrillos, es un factor mucho más poderoso que la presión de amigos en grupo o la presencia de un fumador en la familia.

Legislación por los jóvenes

Incluso, los Centros para el Control de Enfermedades (CDC) han publicado estudios que relacionan el aumento del índice de jóvenes que fuman con los periodos en que la industria tabacalera dobló sus niveles publicitarios y la promoción de cigarrillos de marca se cuadruplicó. Los reportes muestran que los jóvenes fuman cigarrillos de las marcas más anunciadas y promovidas. Los cambios en la preferencia de ciertas marcas entre la juventud también se encuentran asociados con el aumento de publicidad y promoción de figuras específicas en determinadas marcas.

En julio de este año, un reporte de 1984 R.J. Reynolds confirmó esta relación. El documento de 77 páginas archivado durante el proceso de investigación de una demanda en Minnesota, concluyó que R.J. Reynolds tiene la mira puesta en adultos jóvenes para que se conviertan en "fumadores de reemplazo", quienes hoy están muriendo de enfermedades relacionadas con el consumo del tabaco.

Estudio tras estudio se comprueba que un factor crucial para mejorar de la salubridad de toda la nación es prevenir que los jóvenes comiencen a fumar cigarrillos. Para alcanzar esta meta, el gobierno federal ha decidido intervenir y regular la venta y publicidad del tabaco. En agosto, el Presidente Clinton decidió abordar el tema con más seriedad; y, después de mucho esfuerzo y escrutinio público, el tabaco fue clasificado como una droga adictiva y ahora está, por primera vez en la historia, bajo la regulación de la FDA.

Hay dos componentes estratégicos para alcanzar la meta que Clinton se ha fijado, la reducción del consumo de tabaco a un 50 por ciento entre los jóvenes: reducir el acceso que los jóvenes tienen a los productos de tabaco y limitar la atracción infantil por el cigarrillo.

En la actualidad, a pesar de las leyes que prohíben la venta de cigarrillos a menores, los chicos tienen fácil acceso a los cigarrillos a través de máquinas vendedoras, órdenes por correo, escaparates de auto-servicio, muestras gratuitas y la compra de cigarrillos sueltos. El reporte en 1994 del Cirujano General reveló que los jóvenes podían comprar cigarrillos de máquinas vendedoras el 88 por ciento de las veces que lo intentaban. El plan del FDA continúa prohibiendo la venta de cigarrillos y productos del tabaco para mascar a cualquier menor de 18 años y requiere la compra personalizada de tabaco con alguna identificación. Las máquinas vendedoras de cigarrillos y otros métodos de fácil acceso para la compra de productos tabacaleros únicamente serán disponibles en lugares "sólo para adultos".

Además, será más difícil implementar la publicidad del tabaco dirigida a los jóvenes. Con la ayuda del FDA, Clinton piensa restringir el contenido y la colocación de anuncios en publicaciones que tienen un número significativo de lectores jóvenes, como *Rolling Stone* y *Glamour*. Se prohibirá la publicidad al aire libre dentro de 1000 pies cerca de patios y escuelas, además de restringirla a la impresión de textos en blanco y negro, lo cual afectará carteleros, tránsito y puntos de venta. Asimismo se prohibirá la venta de artículos que promuevan una marca de cigarrillos específica, como camisetas, sombreros y botellas de agua. La única excepción será "los lugares sólo para adultos, totalmente inaccesibles a menores de 18 años". Los eventos patrocinados por la industria tabacalera serán restringidos al anuncio del nombre de la corporación solamente.

Después de una historia de falta de escrutinio legislativo y muchos vericuetos, por fin se le exigirá a la industria tabacalera que disminuya su táctica de publicidad agresiva dirigida a la juventud. Con los recientes programas de educación sobre el consumo del tabaco por todo el país y el apoyo continuo de la Proposición 99 en California, compilada en las nuevas leyes de Clinton, la nación verá disminuir el uso del tabaco por los jóvenes. Cambiar las normas de la sociedad puede tardar años, pero vale la pena esforzarse para que la gente joven desarrolle comportamientos saludables.

El reto para la industria tabacalera será cómo reemplazar a los "fumadores de reemplazo" de hoy. Invariablemente, los Estados Unidos puede esperar un aumento en la venta informal de productos de tabaco en comunidades minoritarias, mujeres y niños. El consumo y la exportación de tabaco continuará en aumento en otros países, especialmente en los países en desarrollo donde existe poca (si acaso existe) regulación a la industria tabacalera. Los países vecinos al sur de la frontera, los países ex-comunistas, las Islas del Pacífico y cualquier mercado virgen continúan siendo víctimas de las compañías de tabaco.

Los vientos que favorecían a la industria tabacalera cambiaron con rapidez en Washington. Será interesante ver cuánto de la legislación vetada por Clinton se mantiene intacta, cuánta resistencia pondrá la industria tabacalera y cuánto eliminará la Corte Suprema conservadora. Nadie puede adivinar lo que harán los manufactureros de tabaco, exceptuando, tal vez, el dar una contribución voluntaria de fondos para programas efectivos para que la juventud deje de fumar.

Maria Heredia ha trabajado en ETR Associates durante los últimos cinco años en el Proyecto de Educación del Trabajo, y es miembro del consejo directivo del centro de familia. Traducción: Maria Ambriz

La serie para la educación en contra del tabaco ha sido patrocinada en parte por la Red Latina/Hispana para la Educación acerca del Tabaco de la Universidad de San Francisco.

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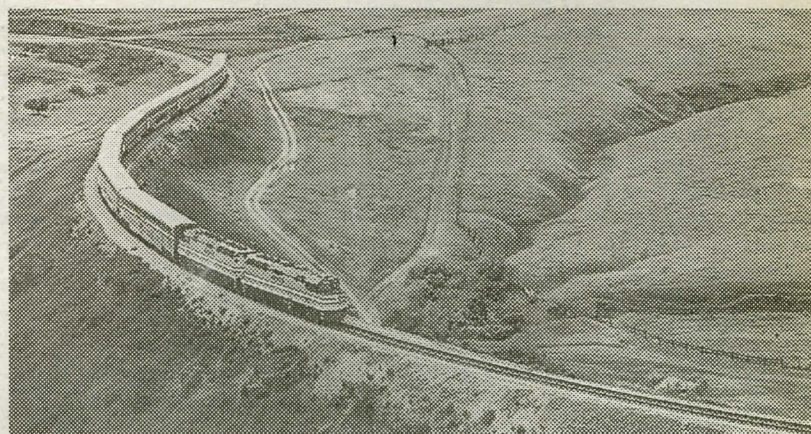
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