

clamor

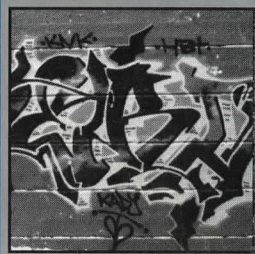
A LOUD AND CONTINUED UPROAR OF MANY HUMAN VOICES



MIKE ALBERS AND KEVIN ZELKO
THE WTO PROTESTS IN SEATTLE



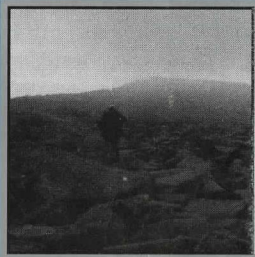
PETER WERBE INTERVIEWS
HISTORIAN HOWARD ZINN



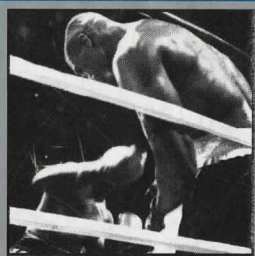
LEE PASADO INTERVIEWS
GRAFFITI ARTISTS
NERD AND EMOTE



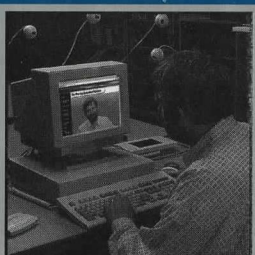
FAYE KOLLY
US POLITICAL PRISONERS



ALEX COUGHLIN
HIKING THE
APPALACHIAN TRAIL



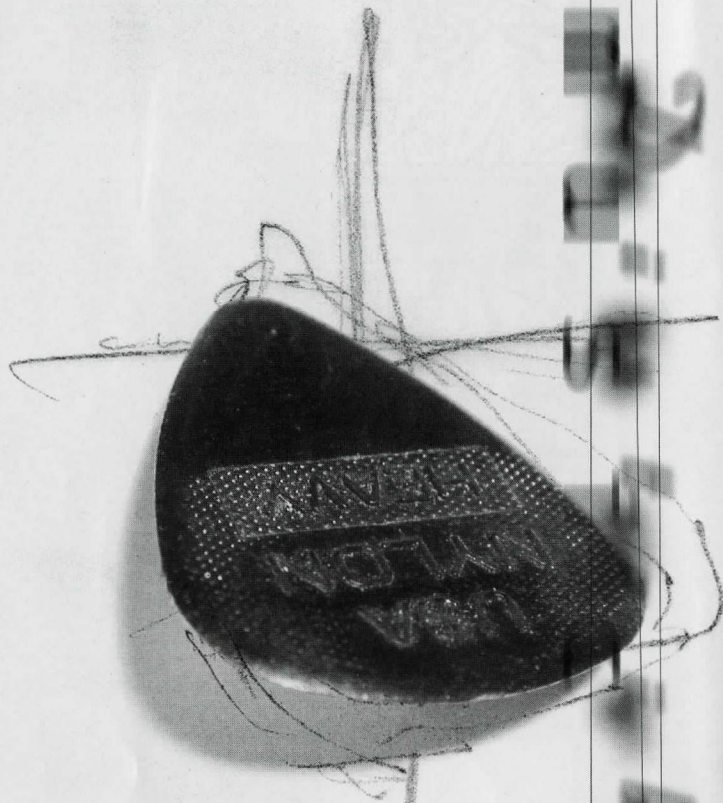
MATT AVERAGE
AMATEUR BOXING



BABAK RASTGOUFARD
RICHARD SMITH
ON INTERNET PRIVACY

No. 1 • FEBRUARY 2000 • \$4.00

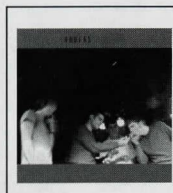
ART • COMMENTARY • CULTURAL CRITICISM • PHOTOGRAPHY • INTERVIEWS • POLITICS • MUSIC



Lumberjack Distribution

P.O. Box 434
Toledo Ohio 43697
tel: 419.726.3930
fax: 419.726.3935

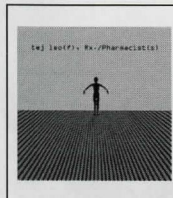
online ordering: www.lumberjack-online.com



Koufax
"self titled"
CDep/12" \$6.00
Doghouse Records



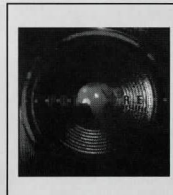
Spread The Disease
"Sheer Force of Inertia"
CD \$10.00
Eulogy Records



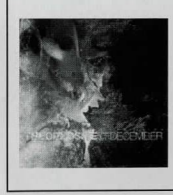
Ted Leo
"Rx. / Pharmacist (s)"
CD/LP \$9.00/\$6.50
Gern Blandsten Records



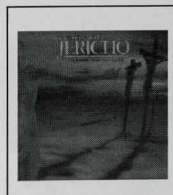
Botch
"We Are The Romans"
CD/2xLP \$9.00/\$10.00
Hydra Head Records



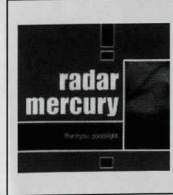
Pressure
"Hardcore Roots"
CD \$10.00
Uprising Communications



Poison the Well
"The Opposite of December"
CD \$10.00
Trustkill Records



Walls of Jericho
"The Bound Feed the Gagged"
CD \$10.00
Trustkill Records



Radar Mercury
"Thank You, Goodnight"
CDep/7" \$7.00/\$3.50
Doghouse Records



Hundreds of new magazines are launched every year in the United States, and presumably an equal number fold in that same time span. The odds of a new magazine being successful are pretty slim – especially in a market such as ours, a market that is controlled by such an alarmingly small number of corporations. So why have we decided to ignore our more sensible sides and launch a magazine like this? Quite simply, because we think it is needed. Right now we see very little promise in mainstream magazines to provide an informative and reflexive glimpse of what it is like to be living in the world today. We don't want articles and features on super models and celebrities – we want to read about ourselves, and people just like us. So we have started *clamor* with the intention of providing a resource and outlet for people to find and express themselves.

As you look through the pages of *clamor*, you will notice that it is a magazine that doesn't behave like most magazines. Advertising is minimal and diverse content makes up the balance. The pieces included in this issue and in future issues display a wide variety of styles ranging from the footnoted informative essay to the first-person story to the photo-essay that allows images to construct their own narrative. Some of the pieces will be self-contained works while others will be works in progress inviting you to enter your own thoughts into the discussion.

In *clamor* you will find something that interests you and connects to your life in some way. By creating a magazine that is about real people and real experiences, we are opening up the often one-sided medium and actively encouraging you, the reader, to participate in the creation of useful media. We invite you to contribute your own thoughts, experiences, opinions, and art to help us fulfill this goal and continue to do so for many more issues. Please contact us with your ideas!

Thanks for reading!

jen angel joan k.

A LOUD AND CONTINUED UPROAR
OF MANY HUMAN VOICES



Pitts Garden, Serenity Squat, NYC
Photography by Chris Boarts Larson
Pages 36-37

politics

- 7 **Sleepless in Seattle:**
Reflections on the Protests that Stifled the World Trade Organization
Mike Albers
- 10 **Further Thoughts on Seattle**
Kevin Zelko
- 13 **My Mom the Anarchist: A Different Take on Work**
Rob Augman
- 14 **"Give Me Your Huddled Masses Yearning to Breath Free"**
...So We Can Jail 'Em : Political Prisoners in the United States
Faye Kolly
- 17 **The Internet and Computer Privacy:**
An Interview with Richard Smith
Babak Rastgoufard

people

- 24 **Who Controls the Past Controls the Future:**
An Interview with Historian Howard Zinn
Peter Werbe
- 27 **The Sweet Science: A Photo Essay on Amateur Boxing**
Matt Average
- 31 **Resistance is as Natural as Breathing:**
A Conversation with Billie Strain
Basil Elias

media

- 36 **One Step Ahead of the Wrecking Ball: A Photo Essay**
Chris Boarts Larson
- 38 **Fight Club: A Critical Review**
Robyn Marasco
- 39 **The Quickening: The Role of the Internet**
in Creating Global Folklore out of Urban Legends
Mike Wendling
- 42 **In Constant Pursuit of Blah:**
Who Needs Sleeping Pills When You Have Mass Media Like This?
Nathan Berg

sex and relationships

- 46 **Oh Baby! Reflections on a First Pregnancy**
Jessica Mills
- 52 **I Don't Want to Dance**
Graphics by Fred Thomas
- 55 **The Art of Pornography**
Jane Graham

food

- 57 **DIY Coffee: Scott from Milwaukee's Fuel Café Discusses**
the Ethics and Politics of Owning Your Own Business
Interview by Dan Gatewood
- 61 **How I Learned to Stop Worrying, and Love Coffee**
Travis Fristoe

travel

- 62 **Picking Locks at Saint Peter's Gate**
The Hiking Adventures of Alex Coughlin
- 70 **The Daily Grind:**
The Stress of Getting from Home to Work and Back Again
Chris Jensen
- 73 **Three Days in a Van**
a Cross Section of Tour
Mike In Abandon

culture

- 75 **I'll Take You There:**
An Oral and Photographic History of the Hines Farm Blues Club
excerpts from the book by Matthew A. Donahue
- 79 **Anything Done, Can Be Undone:**
Confronting White Privilege and Combating Racism
Amy Sonnie
- 81 **Creativity and Happiness**
Vique Martin
- 82 **(Re)Claiming Space:**
Talking with Graffiti Writers in Columbus OH
Lee Pasado

clamor

ISSUE ONE • FEBRUARY 2000

EDITORS
JEN ANGEL
JASON KUCSMA

LAYOUT & DESIGN
JEN ANGEL
JASON KUCSMA

PROOFREADERS
PATRICIA ENGEL, KRISTEN SCHMIDT,
MIKE WENDLING, KATEY WOOD

ADVERTISING
TO INQUIRE ABOUT AD RATES AND DEADLINES,
CALL 419-353-9266

PRINTING:
CONSULTATION/SERVICE PROVIDED BY
CHRIS GEIB AT:
FAST COMPANY
525 RIDGE STREET
BOWLING GREEN, OH 43402
419-354-3278

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY
BRIAN EDGE, PAUL KUCSMA
KEITH MYERS, BABAK RASTGOUFARD
AND ADVERTISERS

CLAMOR IS A BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE. SINGLE
ISSUES ARE \$4 PPD AND 6 ISSUE SUBSCRIP-
TIONS ARE \$20 PPD IN THE US (\$6 FOR SINGLE
ISSUES AND \$30 FOR A 6-ISSUE SUBSCRIPTION
OUTSIDE THE US). CHECKS MAY BE MADE
PAYABLE TO *BECOME THE MEDIA*.

DISTRIBUTION:
WE DEAL DIRECT!
ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION PROVIDED BY:
TREE OF KNOWLEDGE PRESS:
501-374-0371 (SINGLE COPIES)
PO Box PO Box 251766
LITTLE ROCK, AR 72225
LUMBERJACK DISTRIBUTION:
419-726-3930 x 2 (BULK COPIES)
PO Box 434
TOLEDO, OH 43697

CLAMOR MAGAZINE
POST OFFICE Box 1225
BOWLING GREEN OH 43402
CLAMORMAGAZINE@HOTMAIL.COM
419-353-9266 / 419-353-7035

COPYRIGHT © 2000 BECOME THE MEDIA

the expression. the people. the art. the ideas.

CONTRIBUTORS

Mike Allers (p. 7) has published four issues of a zine called *Antipathy*. Although he lives in Oregon, he still pines for his Midwestern roots. Mike climbs trees for a living and swears that he was wearing a green t-shirt during the entire week of WTO protests in Seattle. He can be contacted at PO Box 11703, Eugene OR 97440 or at tac@efn.org.

Matt Average (p. 29) does a hardcore punk zine called *Engine*. Matt's new issue is out now, and he is in the process of starting a boxing magazine which should hopefully be out by the spring. And on top of all that he works at Flipside, goes to school full-time, trains at the gym every couple of days, and he is getting a portfolio together for freelancing. You can write him at: PO Box 64666, Los Angeles, CA 90064 /e-mail: engine98@earthlink.net

Despite his better judgement, the state of modern economics encourages **Alex Coughlin** (p. 62) to continue to stock beer and wine in a retail environment. While transient in nature, Alex has temporarily settled into a Durham, NC unfinished basement with his free-range pet crickets. He can be reached at PO Box 28, Durham, NC 27702.

Basil Elias (p. 31) has been involved in underground/zine publishing and punk community organizing for a long time. His most important work includes his workshops and pamphlets dealing with men confronting sexism.

Travis Fristoe (p. 61) is a writer, librarian, and activist. He publishes a zine called *America?* and is involved with several community based organizations in Gainesville, including the Civic Media Center. He can be reached at obscurist distro: PO Box 13077, Gainesville, FL 32604-1077

Jane Graham (p. 55), although native to the UK, currently resides in Denmark. She publishes a zine called *Shag Stamp*. She is a performance artist and writer as well as occasional dancer.

Faye Kolly (p. 14) is the Program Coordinator for the Refugee Legal Support Service program at the Human Rights Documentation Exchange (HRDE) based in Austin, TX. HRDE is a national not for profit organization committed to defending the rights of immigrant survivors of human rights abuses by providing information critical to their claim of refuge in the U.S. Visit our website: www.hrde.org. **Theodore Hennessy** is an artist and illustrator, currently designing class rings. He also enjoys kickin' it with his wiener dog, Lupe. You can reach him at theodork99@hotmail.com.

Jessica Mills (p. 46) publishes a zine called *Yard Wide Yarns*. When she is not touring the country playing saxophone with bands, she is a substitute teacher in the Florida public schools.

Babak Rastgoufard (p. 17) is finishing a graduate degree in American Culture Studies and also maintains an extremely informative website, complete with text and audio files, centered around genetically modified foods and the main perpetrators (Monsanto), the WTO and the low-power FM/microbroadcasting movement.

Fred Thomas (p. 52) can play every instrument and is in more bands than anyone can ever remember. A self-publisher and artist, he recently retired his Ann Arbor, MI-based record label, Westside Audio Laboratories.

Peter Werbe (p. 24.) is a staff member of the Fifth Estate, the longest publishing English language anarchist newspaper in American history. Sample copies are available from 4632 Second Ave., Detroit MI 48201. Peter is also the public affairs director for WCSX-FM and WRIF-FM in Detroit. His interviews are broadcasted via the Internet at wscx.com and wrif.com in Real Audio, Sundays at 7am and 11pm EST, respectively.

Rob Augman (p. 13) writes a 'zine called *MY VIEWS CHANGE OVER TIME*. It's a collection of personal/political articles like the one featured here in *clamor*. He also is the author of a small pamphlet on Anarchism. You can get these from him for \$1 each. Write him at: PO Box 2671 Gainesville, FL 32601-2671

Nathan Berg (p. 42) is a writer and activist, as well as a city council member in Chippewa Falls, WI. He also plays in a band called Yes, Master and works as a chef. When asked to write a few lines about himself, he gave us this response: "You could also mention that I'm surrounded by Neanderthals or that I'm huge fan of Ally McBeal (that was a joke by the way). Whatever." You can contact Nathan c/o *clamor*.

Chris Boarts Larson (p. 36), In addition to photographing urban and rural decay, for the past 14 years, Chris Boarts Larson has been documenting the punk scene photographically and publishing a free zine called *Slug & Lettuce*. You can write to her directly at PO Box 26632, Richmond VA 23261-6632

Mike Delach (p. 73) has been doing a self-published zine called *in abandon* for the past few years. Maybe the fifth issue won't take him as long as the others have - he has a tendency to disappear for months at a time on some wild adventure or other. You can write him at PO Box 82192, Tampa FL 33682.

Matthew A. Donahue (p. 75) is a multidimensional artist working within the fields of visual arts, music and the written word. He has displayed his art at festivals and galleries across the United States. His musical group, Universe Crew, have three releases on the On-U Sound/Green Tea record label from London, England. His writings have appeared in numerous magazines and journals.

Dan Gatewood (p. 57) is a writer, activist, and public school teacher. He publishes his zine, *Sound Off*, occasionally, and regularly contributes to other publications. He has been involved with a number of activists who are attempting to start a network for radical teachers. He can be reached at PO Box 340954, Milwaukee, WI 53234 or at soundoff@earthlink.net.

Chris Jensen (p. 70) teaches science in a Williamsburgh, Brooklyn public middle school. When he's not dodging motor vehicles, he enjoys making music, writing and skating large concrete formations. He can be reached at P.O. Box 3146, Steinway Station, Long Island City, NY 11103

Robyn Marasco (p. 38) is working towards her Ph. D. in political theory/philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley. During those precious and rare moments that she is not reading or writing papers, she is working on the fourth issue of her own zine *Alice is an Island*. She also contributes regular columns to *HeartAttack* and *Hodgepodge*. Please write her at PO Box 13445, Berkeley, CA 94712, or hereinhell@aol.com.

Vique Martin (p. 81) recently moved from the UK to California to work at a record label. She has a zine and record label, both called *Simba*, and contributes regular columns to *Heart Attack* other magazines. She can be reached at viquesimba@hotmail.com.

Lee Pasado (p. 82) lives in Columbus, OH, but is currently off globetrotting around Europe somewhere. He can be reached care of *clamor*.

Amy Sonnie (p. 79) is a queer/feminist/editor/writer/activist currently working on an anthology for queer youth (Alyson Publications, October 2000). She lives in San Francisco where she is a facilitator/community organizer with the Challenging White Supremacy workshop, and conducts research on anti-racist, anti-capitalist organizing among poor rural whites. She can be reached at Alsonnie@aol.com.

Kevin Zelko, a member of the Huey P. Proudhon Family Collective, is currently a Seattle, WA resident but gets around - and soon will be coming to a theatre near you. His turn ons are Greek Theatre, lemons, Almodovar movies, and waterfalls. He says he is amazed everyday how lucky we are to be surrounded by beautiful, passionate people attempting to create a community that fulfills us all. Kevin can be reached c/o Proudhon Family, PO Box 95516, Seattle, WA 98145 or through email at hueyproudhon@hotmail.com.

The tear gas grenade sailed over the line of coughing demonstrators and skipped across the damp blacktop, casting a billowing line of smoke in its path. It bounced off the concrete curb and stopped, left in peace to belch its noxious contents into the air. A second smacked down on the sidewalk across the street from me and a third ricocheted off a young hippie's chest. He collapsed to the pavement moaning as clouds of teargas plumed skyward. The crowd coughed and screamed before stumbling their way back towards clean air. A person wearing black from head to toe and a gas mask across their face seized the chaos and concealment of the gas as an opportunity to smash out two bank windows with a hammer. As if reminding the individual of the heavily armed cops standing less than 50 feet away, a tear gas grenade struck down a few feet from their boots. With the grace of an olympic skater, the figure stooped down, picked up the burning cartridge and lobbed it back at the police. A hail of rubber bullets from a 12 gauge answered back. But before they could strike human flesh, the figure had vanished back into the crowd.

By the time I managed to navigate a path through the crowd of panicked demonstrators into the open "square," my lungs felt as though they had inhaled a small blast furnace and my dry eyes smarted with pain. "Tear gas sucks..." I thought as I vainly attempted to spit the sour spice of gas from my mouth, nose and throat. After a few minutes of crying and hacking, enough composure was salvaged to take a good look around the streets. A smile crossed my face.

Since around 8 a.m. that morning, I and 50,000 of my closest friends had been occupying a ten block area of downtown Seattle in a protest against the ministerial summit of the World Trade Organization. The international agency was supposed to have been meeting in the large brown building before me but a literal wall of demonstrators circling the building had thus far prevented any delegates from entering. Those who tried were either physically blocked by the forceful bodies of nonviolent protesters or frightened away by the hundred or so masked members of the "black block" who were running around breaking things.

"Affinity groups" of like minded activists had seized every significant intersection surrounding the Seattle Convention Center Sheraton. At each of these intersections protest geometry was in full effect, with lines of riot cops squaring off against lines of protesters. However, aside from the police sailing tear gas grenades into the crowd, shooting rubber bullets and beating the occasional protester with clubs, the lines remained more or less static and the rest of the ten blocks were left free of uniformed cops.

Once out of tear gas grenade range and away from the paramilitary battalions of riot police on the other side of the demo, the area formerly known as downtown Seattle assumed

Sleepless in Seattle



Reflections on the Protests That Stifled The World Trade Organization

by Mike Albers

a festive, almost quaint vibe. Lovers walked hand in hand through the traffic free streets while two different marching bands hammered off renditions of patriotic labor songs. A gang of Santa Clauses walked by chanting "Hohoho, fuck the WTO" and the sidewalks were alight with song and dance. Minus a few ideological disputes between demonstrators, every person I encountered was in good spirits.

By 10:30 a.m., the numbers of demonstrators in the ten block area swelled to somewhere around 20,000 as all present anxiously awaited the arrival of the AFL-CIO organized labor march which was to bring another 30,000 demonstrators right past "our" downtown. Occasional clouds of tear gas and rumors of martial law entertained us in the meantime.

Word soon spread through the crowd that the summit had been postponed and was mere minutes away from being canceled. Elation swelled in the crowd and the chanting and singing only got louder. A hopeful prophecy appeared on a wall in black spraypaint. "We are winning..." It seemed at that moment, we were.

However, as our conquest of downtown Seattle progressed that Tuesday, so did tensions on both sides of the lines. The police began liberalizing their use of force with more tear gas and clubs. Increasing numbers of demonstrators stumbled away from the "lines" with blood streaming down their faces and tears choking their eyes. Undercover cops began appearing at the periphery of the



all photographs courtesy of The Independent Media Center - www.indymedia.org

“liberated zone” beating and arresting random protesters while armored personnel carriers rolled through the streets. Up until that point, I had always thought the use of the term “police state” in reference to the United States as a Leftist delusion. When one is standing face to face with 500 cops in full body armor carrying MP5 submachineguns and throwing grenades at college students, it is difficult to think of a better phrase.

On our side of the lines, things were a bit more schizophrenic. The breaking of glass and defacement of buildings had driven a wedge right through the middle of the anti-WTO movement. In one corner stood the older, more liberal bastions of the resistance. In their own words, they were there to have a peaceful, orderly demonstration in the spirit of the civil rights movement and were particularly wary not to offend the sensibilities of the media or organized labor. At the other corner was the younger, more radical fringe whose disregard for political tact was only matched by their utter antipathy to the WTO and everything it represented. The latter condoned vandalism while the former considered it to be a counter-productive ingredient for failure. The vast majority of the demonstrators (myself included) straddled the fissure somewhere in the middle.

This debate over property destruction is hardly a new one in political activism. In Seattle the debate wasn't taking place in verbose editorial columns or stuffy group meetings, but in the streets with tear gas and rubber bullets flying by. As the day progressed and the tear gas became more intense, so did the vandalism. First, slogans and symbols started mysteriously appearing on walls. Then dumpsters and newspaper boxes began appearing in the middle of streets. And by noon, windows in Starbucks, the Gap, Nike, and Old Navy were shattered. The police were apparently less concerned with the vandalism than they were with the chanting mobs of demonstrators before them, as not a single vandal was apprehended and more than 500 demonstrators would be arrested before week's end.

Although the police didn't seem too phased by some broken glass and graffiti, this unrestrained vandalism was too much for some of the “nonviolent” demonstrators to handle and a few began taking matters into their own hands as self appointed vigilante protest police. I myself experienced more than a dozen episodes in which vandals or suspected vandals were physically assaulted by other demonstrators (who ironically enough were shouting “This is a non-violent protest” while swinging fists

or sticks). It is one thing to sit back and watch a cop beat the hell out of a demonstrator as it must be at least somewhat expected. It is something entirely different to watch demonstrators turn on each other; something frightfully confusing. These tensions would only intensify as the week went on.

At 12:45 p.m. it was announced over the radio that opening day of the World Trade Organization summit had been canceled due to civil unrest. A triumphant cheer went out from the crowd. It seemed that if only for a day, we had won.

Adding more fuel to the fire, the AFL-CIO march, an unbroken line of people almost a mile long, came into view. Cheers went up from the crowd as an estimated 40,000 individuals from the steelworker, teamster, electrician, and longshoremen unions marched into sight. Processions from Vietnamese and Tibetan human rights movements, representatives of the Falun Gong, a religion outlawed in China, and the usual assortment of communist, socialist and Marxist ideologues were in the midst of barrel-chested workers and construction helmets.

Unfortunately, the union march passed right by our little liberated zone without stopping and cast a bit of doubt on the precarious alliances that had recently been formed between organized labor and environmentalists. However, several thousand more people, mostly curious onlookers and bored teenagers, joined in the demo milling through the still obstructed streets, excited by the chaos.

The entire crowd was afire with enthusiasm and energy and almost all present were convinced this was the most amazing demonstration they had ever seen.

I strolled along the streets beaming with happiness as the sun began to plummet towards the West. As an environmentalist who does most of his work in areas where a good turnout for a demo is double digits and most of the population would rather shoot you than look at you, the thought of being in the midst of 40,000 people changing history made me ecstatic. If for only a day, we had won. We had gotten together, organized and showed global power that we weren't going to sit on our duffs while they dragged us, our rights and the Earth down their unobstructed trade path to hell. But the struggle was far from over.

As the shadows grew long and the singing died out, the situation began changing. The mayor declared a 7 p.m. curfew and the lines of riot

cops were beginning to thicken, while the demonstration itself began to change. The older demonstrators had ventured homeward leaving a younger, more angry and more racially diverse crowd to try and hold the streets. The fun, festive city we had controlled only hours earlier had become a war zone. Windows were either boarded up or broken, the streets littered with flaming dumpsters and empty tear gas canisters; every bare wall was covered with graffiti. For the anti-civilization anarchist types in our midst, it was like a post-apocalyptic wet dream.

Shortly after 7 p.m., the dream erupted into a flurry of rubber bullets and tear gas as the police charged and broke apart the remnants of the protest. Concussion grenades echoed through the night while people fled for refuge from the clouds of tear gas wafting down the streets. Seeing the cop-to-demonstrator ratio tipping dangerously in favor of the former and not wanting to be trapped in the city after the curfew, I hastened my retreat out of downtown.

I worked my way back to a warehouse on Capital Hill to try and locate some missing friends only to find a huge meeting in progress. Inside, the tension was high. People argued back and forth about the day's activities, particularly the "violence" of vandalism. Apparently much of the anti-WTO movement had sided with the media's and police's use of the word "violence" to describe the day's vandalism and was scrambling to distance itself from the black-clad vandals. Some made proposals to keep anyone wearing black from entering the "public" warehouse space and to form a brigade to repair the damaged remains of downtown. The sound of demonstrators siding with corporate media and the gas-happy police against their fellow demonstrators created a nauseous feeling in my stomach and sent my blood pressure soaring. The movement which had shut down the WTO for a day and forged the largest demonstration since the 1970s was splitting apart from within. Luckily, my friend Wayne came to the rescue by whispering in my ear. "Dude, there's shit going down a block a way. We need your help."

We skipped out of the building and over to Pine street where a full fledged riot was on the verge of erupting. At the top of the hill, about 500 people stood in the middle of the street yelling and heckling at a row of riot cops lining up at the bottom of the hill. Unlike the daylight demonstration, this was comprised not of chanting politicians, but of young, agitated locals. Consequently, the attitude of the crowd was much more confrontational; nonviolence was the last thing on anyone's mind. A pair of tear gas grenades flew through the air and landed in the midst of the crowd, inciting a flurry of bottles and stones in return. The cops fired several more tear gas and concussion grenades. The blinded, half-asphyxiated mob retreated a block back. A new hail of bottles and stones flew from the crowd, answered by a new barrage of gas grenades. This commotion lasted into the night, as the rioting cops chased the crowd from intersection to intersection in a tear gas drenched rendition of cat and mouse.

The next morning we showed up downtown expecting at least something similar to the previous day's experience. However, having been shut out one day already, the authorities had other plans for us and the WTO. Squads of riot cops were posted at beachheads on every street corner lead-

ing into downtown and armored personnel carriers patrolled the streets. Police stopped and searched pedestrians and those with gasmasks, signs or other contraband were arrested or sent the other direction. I made it through without incident and soon found myself wandering through the now busy streets searching for any sign at all of protest. Sadness filled my heart. One day these streets were alive with energy and hope that we really could have a say in our future. The next day, as national guard platoons fanned out through the streets and cops glared at me from every corner, the streets were reclaimed by the oppressiveness of everyday life, as though yesterday had never happened. A county sheriff deputy told me to go home because there wasn't going to be any protesting here today.

Not seeing my comrades anywhere in sight, I almost believed her; at least until more than 400 of my cohorts caught my eye as they marched up Fourth Street singing that old civil rights movement song "Eyes on the Prize." Just as I had given up, the familiar flame of resistance had re-kindled itself.

Hope blossomed in my chest as I smirked at the cops and joined in the march. For the next 45 minutes the march wove its way through the streets of downtown Seattle while the police scrambled to set up skirmish lines to stop it. After three close calls with routes blocked by rows of cops,

the march funneled into the plaza through a narrow passage between a building and a line of parked city buses. I had seen this trap sprung on marches thrice before and stepped out of the march minutes before a whole brigade of police officers cordoned off the area. 250 demonstrators were arrested, put on the buses and driven off to jail.

The bulk of the marching demonstrators had been arrested and it seemed that the protest had been quashed. Once again, I was wrong. I rounded a corner onto Fifth Street, only to find myself behind 900 or so demonstrators marching towards the labor temple. This legal march was organized by the First Methodist Church and CIO and it was conspicuously free of Johnny Law and his riot cop sidekicks. Without the presence of the police, the march was rather uneventful and lacking the eccentricities of the more radical sectors of the WTO resistance. Dare I say it was somewhat boring.

However, the sound of concussion grenades caught my ear and morbid curiosity compelled me forward. I soon found myself in front

of the Pike Street market in the midst of a situation which threatened to evolve into a riot. A semicircle of riot cops waved shotguns and grenade launchers menacingly at a crowd, mostly made up of confused business people. Apparently, in an effort to stop another march from blocking the street, the police had started launching teargas grenades into the middle of rush hour traffic. Needless to say, random commuters weren't all that excited about being tear gassed and the crowd swelled both in size and anger. Police reinforcements arrived and began dispersing the crowd with additional layers of tear gas and concussion grenades. From that point until the 7 p.m. curfew, the shadowy streets of downtown Seattle were filled with the sounds of battle as multiple different demonstrations and riots escalated concurrently. Police helicopters buzzed in the air overhead, spotlights glaring. Squad cars sped through the empty streets, and the ominous sound of armored personnel carriers rumbled by. Literally hundreds





of police officers and National Guard soldiers were lining the periphery of downtown in preparation for the enforcement of the 7pm curfew. Seeing that the 800 or so demonstrators were no match for such a force and once again valuing my freedom above a futile "last stand," I headed back up the hill, out of downtown.

I went back to the warehouse to try and locate friends, only to find the first night's anger replaced by paranoia. Rumors floated through the crowd that the cops had used nerve gas on protesters and that 1,000 cops were waiting around the corner to raid the warehouse. Anxiety and stress ran high. The makeshift clinic filled up with dozens of people who were having bad reactions to the tear gas.

However, like the night before, the more rambunctious members of the movement found a release of their frustrations in marching up and down traffic-clogged Broadway. For two hours, the 500 strong crowd marched up and down the thoroughfare, certainly disrupting traffic, but harming not a single automobile. School buses full of riot cops began appearing on side streets and by 10 p.m., several lines of riot cops had formed at the bottom of Broadway. Thus began the most severe police crackdown.

Shortly after 10 p.m., the police officers began launching tear gas grenades into the march, regardless of the fact the street was still choked with automobiles and commuters who had nothing to do with the march. Hundreds of "innocent" people were gassed in their cars and on the sidewalks as the police moved in for the kill. By 11 p.m., riot police had lined up and down Broadway and undercover cops in athletic gear roamed the side alley looking for any would be demonstrators. Random passersby were pepper sprayed, beaten with batons and arrested without question

more thoughts on the WTO

It was an intense and beautiful week in Seattle that climaxed on November 30, 1999. Hordes of people had started arriving during the previous days of the WTO meetings for the protests and the activist community thrived. This sense of community was the paramount achievement of the successful protests and direct action against the World Trade Organization. All of the sudden Seattle was full of people acting and supporting other people from all over the world. Instead of the chic city it usually is, Seattle was full of activists carrying banners, puppets, and giving speeches on bullhorns. People were marching and voicing their opinions and reaching out to others, opening up. Friends were finding old friends and all of the leftist stores had amazing support from this community. Left Bank Books which has suffered from the late '90s apathy had their best week of sales ever and the vegetarian restaurants were packed the entire week. The community was coming together to smash global capitalism. What a beautiful thing it was.

The Direct Action Network out of San Francisco did an amazing job of coordinating and doing outreach to get people into workshops, and meetings. They helped to create affinity groups that would take set up blockades in sections of the city to and actions to stop the WTO meetings. The infoshops publicized the various levels of action from setting up blockades, jail solidarity, nonviolent protests, climbing for banner hangs, and many others. The plans were set and the protests went over with much more success than anyone anticipated.

On Nov. 30, I saw some of the most beautiful things in my life. Activists and protestors occupied downtown Seattle for almost 12 hours. The air (until the tear gas) was of a different flavor and it was a carnival atmosphere. Activists dressed up in superhero tights and capes were helping to keep the delegates out of the meetings as blockades using lockboxes, body chains, and tripods to close intersections. There were fences set up with activists at the openings to keep delegates from getting to their meetings. **ACTIVISTS CONTROLLED DOWNTOWN!** At one blockade, I heard that a Chinese delegate was trying to get through and the appointed gatekeeper asked him "how do you feel about Tibet?" and the delegate responded with, "that's China's land!" That delegate was rejected from access through the gate. It was just so empowering to see that activists had created a world free from the power hierarchy of big business and police rule. Seeing the festive people and the massive solidarity amongst all aspects of activists was so uplifting. People were dancing in the streets as drums and bands played. I've never had all those freedoms and feelings rushing through me....The revolution of the spirit was happening to tens of thousands of people at once.

Communities and activists forged bonds and worked for the same goals. Eventually the police state was declared and riot squads started terrorizing the activists and protestors. But actions against the WTO did much more than simply stopping the meeting. Before the protester were televised, the average American had little knowledge of the WTO purpose and what it stood for. Now it's a household name and most people know that a lot of people aren't in agreement with the WTO's policies and that many of the protestors looked just like the average American. Getting the message out was only part of the aftermath. Most of the activists and protestors had never felt the body euphoric state of mass protesting and marching and having successful outcomes. This is bringing new life to activism on all sectors of environmental, labor, and human rights issues. There is momentum from the success of the protests of the WTO that activists will take home with them, just in time for the new century. The actions of the left have been quiet for a long time and it was about time we made some noise. Communities were built, nurtured, and now must keep progressing forward, working for a better world.

by Kevin Zelko

and often without reason. More than 100 injuries were reported and 50 complaints filed against police during the night. At 4 a.m., the crackdown finally was called off.

The next day the press was ablaze with reports of police excesses and the mayor publicly asked for the forgiveness of those who were wronged by police. From this point on, the police assumed a different, more conciliatory role. Smiles and acceptance replaced tear gas and armored personnel carriers while the marches were met by police escort instead of police intervention. The ever diminishing numbers of demonstrators marched and chanted while the WTO vainly attempted to resolve its stalemate.

There was a well attended but tame march on the jail in support of the prisoners from the previous day's demonstrations and a pair of marches for International Agriculture Day on December 2nd, but by Thursday night, it was clear that in Seattle at least, the WTO resistance had been extinguished.

As I head back to my home in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon, I have a mixed bag of feelings on the events in Seattle. On the one hand, I feel inspiration and pride swelling in my breast that so many people showed

up to try and resist one of the most egregious political developments of the decade. The fact we took over a city for an entire day fills my mind and heart with the hope that we really do have a say in what happens in the world.

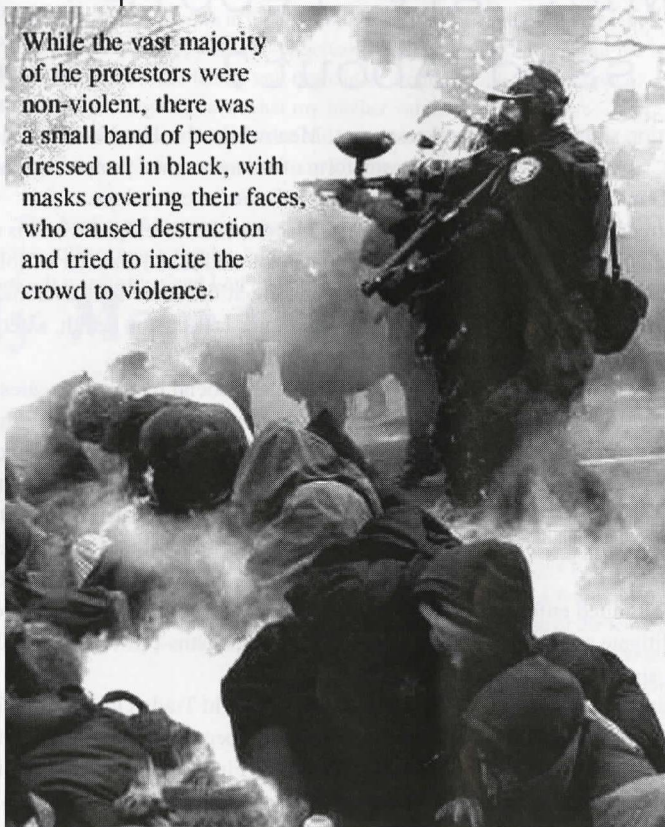
On the other hand, I am amazingly distraught by some of what I saw within the movement itself. There can be no excuse for protesters physically assaulting one another over a few words written on a wall in magic marker or turning in other demonstrators to the police. If we aren't united within ourselves to such a degree that we can suck up our proud politics for a few minutes to give a fellow demonstrator the benefit of the doubt, there are some seriously finite limits to what we can accomplish. Furthermore, as the tension of the week escalated, it likewise illuminated some other substantial weaknesses within resistance movements in general. For one, even though it seemed every third demonstrator had a cell phone or walkie talkie, there was a decided lack of good information floating around. Rumors were allowed to circulate and germinate into truth and by the middle of the first day, a conservative 75 percent of what was being said was conjecture or exaggeration.

Secondly, as tension increased, most of the movement fell victim to its greatest enemy, drama. The tear gas apparently sapped the movement of whatever humility or rationality it may have possessed, and by the end of the first day, there was an

over-exaggerated sense of seriousness to everything. This pseudo-seriousness not only helped cauterize the divisions within the movement itself, but also contributed to a general sense of animosity that was to linger throughout the rest of the conference.

In the end, more than 150,000 people took part in the anti-WTO protests in Seattle. After its opening day setbacks, the World Trade Organization met and proved to be as haphazard in nature as its nemesis on the streets. At the close of the conference, no consensus had been reached and it appears that the WTO may be falling apart from within. In the wake of the protests, the Chief Stamper of the Seattle Police Department resigned and the city has launched a full fledged investigation of the week. The Nike and Gap stores fixed their broken windows and erased graffiti, while the media settles back into its dull role as harbingers of bad news. But underneath the veil of normalcy, a seed has been implanted in the hearts and minds of everyone present during those days; a seed that gives us a glimpse of the possibility that lies within ourselves and our communities for changing the world.

While the vast majority of the protestors were non-violent, there was a small band of people dressed all in black, with masks covering their faces, who caused destruction and tried to incite the crowd to violence.



What the Hell is the WTO?

The WTO is anything but a surprise guest at the international table. It is the most recent development in a historical trend stretching back to the final blows of World War II. Like GATT, NAFTA, and several more acronyms before it, the WTO is yet another building block in the almost five decade long implementation of the neoliberal economic model. Under neoliberalism, financial interests and government team up in an effort to create and maintain a global free market in which capital and industry can function uninhibited by any external factors.

The World Trade Organization itself was formed in 1995 as a by-product of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) with three major aims, "to help trade flow as freely as possible, to achieve further liberalization gradually through negotiation, and to set up an impartial means of settling disputes."¹

Through a series of principles including "Most Favored Nation" (MFN) status and National Treatment (NT), the WTO seeks to legally obligate nation-states to provide non biased and equal trade standards between all organization signatories in all aspects of economics.

Beyond the aforementioned principles, the WTO maintains a specific agenda to achieve its goals. As part of the agreement, the 135 member nations are bound by several other agreements under the tidy three letters of WTO. They include:

- Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)
- Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS)
- Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMs)
- Agreement on Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs)
- Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM)
- General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)
- Agreement on Agriculture (AOA)
- Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC)

Unlike various other international agencies with limited enforcement powers, the WTO carries with it the power to litigate and punish member states for violations of the agreements. As signatories to the WTO, all member nations place their policies, foreign and domestic, under the scrutiny of tribunals located at the agency's headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. These tribunals hear disputes between member states and are charged with the ability to enforce the agency's findings with economic sanctions. As of November 1999, the WTO tribunal has completed 24 cases against member nations for violations of the WTO and its subsidiary agreements.

The WTO has perhaps the most diverse range of detractors and naysayers of any entity in history. From dreadlocked hippies with drums to reactionary ideologues like Pat Buchanan to black clad anarchists and barrel-chested steelworkers to small farmers and environmentalists to child laborers and militia groups, all have substantial qualms about the nature of the WTO and its agenda.

Small farmers, both in the developed North and the Third World, fear the WTO for its control of markets and technical inputs. Under subsidiary agreements completed during the Uruguay Round of negotiations in 1994, specifically the Agreement on Agriculture (AOA) and Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), small farmers are forced into a model which favors large operators and corporate inputs.

As a result of policies already instituted by the WTO and GATT, small farmers across the globe have been put out of business by unequal trade policies, the proliferation of patented seeds, coerced into growing products for export rather than domestic consumption, sued by transnational corporations for utilizing second generation seed stocks. They face an even bleaker future if the WTO continues on its path.

Environmentalists and animal rights advocates are fervently opposed to the WTO for its ability to render environmental regulations inactive as barriers to trade. For example, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act, as well as a whole plethora of other laws protecting animals and the environment stand as Nontariff Barriers to Trade (NBTs) and as such, are technically in violation of the WTO and GATT agreements. With almost all legislation protecting the

environment and animals voided, or in the process of being voided, by the agreements, citizens have lost perhaps the most effective tools available to them in preserving their natu-

ral resources. Meanwhile, the Third World will be prohibited from enacting any form of environmental protection that could possibly be construed as being a barrier to commerce.

Organized labor in the developed world is upset because the WTO at once facilitates the additional transfer of jobs to Second and Third World nations, while at the same time establishing a comparative advantage for economies lacking the health, safety, and other regulations won by labor over the past 80 years.

Human rights and social justice advocates are concerned because WTO similarly undermines laws protecting the public. For example, significant food labeling policies, meat inspection, and drug pricing regulations in the developed world are in violation of WTO. In Korea, food safety standards were dissolved under WTO, the EU has been forced to lower its meat inspection policies and in perhaps the most famous case, the UNICEF code on breast milk substitutes was subverted.² Furthermore, laws protecting against toxic pollution, child labor, and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have likewise been dismissed by the WTO.

Politically, the World Trade Organization has been portrayed as a threat not only to the people and national sovereignty, but as an evil threat to democracy. First of all, the WTO is intransparent in nature. Meetings and tribunals are held in secret with no public input, much less participation. Secondly, its policies have already started undermining the ability of individual nation-states to make and enforce laws, even those mandated by a popular vote. To anarchists, conservative isolationists and activists from all sides of the political spectrum, the undemocratic nature of the WTO is only enhanced by the pervasiveness of corporate influence. Large corporations have designed much of the WTO's agenda and have subsequently benefited the most from it and the neoliberal model in general.

¹ WTO Secretariat. Undated.

² In this instance, two large corporations had been marketing a powdered milk substitute to illiterate peasants in Guatemala with photos portraying plump, healthy babies. However, when made with local water sources, the formulas ended up killing several hundred babies and as a result, UNICEF passed a resolution to relabel the packages of breast milk substitutes.

"The Feminist Movement was a horrible thing," she said upset and honest on the warm carpet of my sister's bedroom floor. Bolting out of frustrations, unaware or unconcerned with where the conversation would head, is what I found so intriguing about her. Those involved in politics don't do that. They map out their conversations the night before. Next to their suit and tie, their notes and outlines on yellow pads remind them where not to go in a conversation. But there she was, talking before she thought, and I just listened along. She had no direction on the subject, just a frustration to vent with no direct link to what caused it. She just voiced her anger and sometimes it would hit on unexpected territory.

"The Feminist Movement was a horrible thing," she said upset and honest. There I was, her middle child, in a rare conversation between the two of us. At the time I was still living at home. My brother was off at college. My sister was out all night. My dad was still at work; he found the graveyard shifts easier, more exciting and better paying than the normal dayshift. I had an hour before going to my own graveyard shift, so we found the time to talk. She's a family woman who spent her days off rounding the five of us up, packing us into the car, and driving out of town for a night or two. "Quick get-a-ways" is what she'd call them. Our family has always been close. And family vacations never ended in arguments or even discomfort. We were always tight. We were lucky that way. My mother felt a great warmth in family, a trait passed down from her father. On every holiday we were together, never actually celebrating the holiday but the tradition of having a close family unit that can sit around a table for a couple of hours to talk and laugh. That's what my mother values most in her life. She always wanted to get married and raise children. And now with her children all grown up and out of the house, there is a little time to reflect on where we've been.

"The Feminist Movement was a horrible thing," she said, upset that my sister was still not home, that my brother was off at college, that my dad was still at work. It was just her and I on that quiet carpet watching the slowly moving

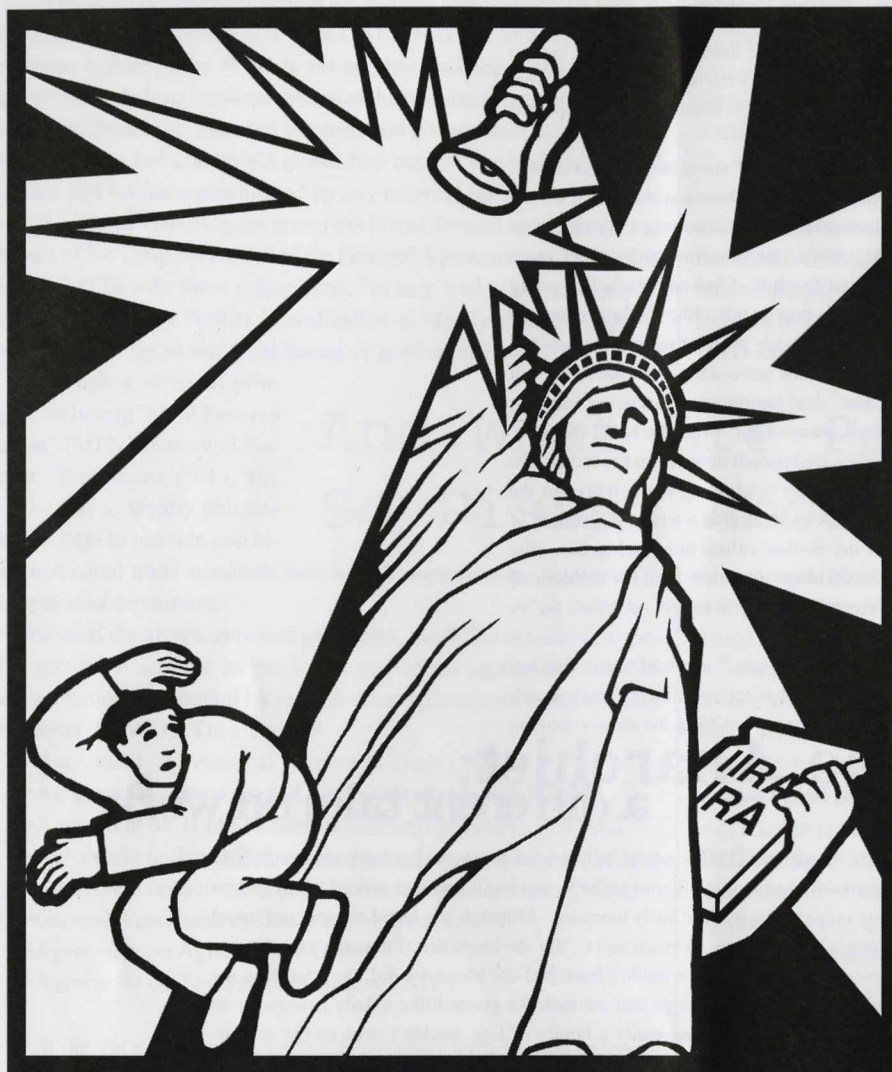
My Mom the Anarchist: by Robert Augman **a different take on work**

night through the front window. In those last few years our busy-ness and hectic schedules meant eating dinner alone in that big house and waking up that same way to go to work in the early morning. Although she loved her job, she loved being with the family so much more. But she knew that if it weren't for the two household incomes, we wouldn't have had the house we did, the education we did or even the basic things that we took for granted like a daily newspaper or new socks. A family, especially a family of five, couldn't exist on the sole income of one parent. "And because of the feminist movement it became essential for both parents to work, leaving nobody to raise the children," she sorrowed. Whether her analysis of the effects of the Feminist Movement was correct or not, what she was really saying was something quite huge. She was saying that mothers' work goes unaccounted for. Without recognizing it, she was saying the same thing that the feminists were. What I heard, over the hum of the frogs that gathered by the window in summer heat and the hum of the computer monitor that softly lit the room, was that plenty of essential work goes unaccounted for. Without knowing it, she was saying the same thing the anarchists were, that work can't be measured and we're wasting a whole lot of precious time trying to tally it all up.

The time that could have been spent with the family, she spent in the office. Ironically, she spent it as an accountant, doing the job that keeps the numbers balanced; the job that supports the ideology that she was criticizing. It's the job of checking and balancing the price of one's labor against the price of one's property. In her case, it was expensive real estate; large family homes like our own that require both parents to be in the workforce to make ends meet.

"The Feminist Movement was a horrible thing," she said through her tired eyes and loose lips. Through creative interpretation, I heard it differently. What I heard was that the "wage system, the money system, and living in constant checks and balances is detrimental to society because it makes us work in jobs we find uninspiring and unimportant rather than pursuing work we find essential and are equally passionate about." And so I agreed. I gave her a hug goodnight just in time for me to drag my feet out the door to head off to work. My Mom the Anarchist.

"GIVE ME YOUR HUDDLED MASSES YEARNING TO BREATHE FREE"



...SO WE CAN JAIL 'EM

BY FAYE KOLLY

ILLUSTRATION BY THEODORE HENNESSY

You are in prison, yet you've committed no crime. In fact, you are fleeing for your life. Human rights workers, union leaders, indigenous rights activists, community leaders, innocent civilians caught in war, and those fleeing religious or gender based persecution are detained by the US government as a matter of US immigration law. Currently, there are hundreds of people who are jailed in the US upon entry to this country because they came attempting to flee life-threatening situations in their homeland, situations that arose because they were denied basic freedom, some freedom which they hoped the US would be able to offer them.

Gaining asylum in the United States is a difficult process. If a person decides to leave their country of origin and file for asylum here, they must navigate through a complicated bureaucratic process. About four of five affirmative asylum applications are rejected.¹ An individual filing for asylum must prove they have been or will be subjected to persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. The burden of proof is on the individual. No legal representation is granted in these proceedings. The process is long, taking from a few months to several years to reach a final decision on a person's claim. To better understand this process, take for example this case:

**The character described below is not real, but represents a true scenario which many have faced in whole or in part.*

XX is a 24 year-old university student from YYY. As a student activist, she planned democracy protests, participated in an organization which promoted the rights of women and

was openly critical of the policies of the current regime. Over the past year she has received several death threats and warnings to cease her involvement in her current activities. One of her close colleagues "disappeared" two months ago and was later found dead on the outskirts of the city bearing torture marks. Just a few weeks ago she was kidnapped on her way home from the university. She was detained, interrogated, tortured and raped repeatedly by security agents in a clandestine prison. After two weeks, and only by sheer luck, she was able to escape when a prison guard recognized her as the daughter of his friend.

Knowing returning to her house she would put her family in danger, she made the difficult decision to sneak out of the country. She could not get official government permission to leave, so she obtained a fake passport. She managed to borrow enough money to buy a bus ticket out of the country and a plane ticket to the United States from a third country.

Eventually, she arrives at JFK International Airport. Since she does not have proper identification, and she is questioned by Immigration and Naturalization Service (herein INS). She does not speak English. She is detained for several hours at the airport until an interpreter can be found. What follows is a likely scenario:

Step 1:

An INS officer, with the aid of an interpreter, questions her regarding her passport. She admits that it is a fake. This admission is an immediate problem. Entry to the US with "false" documentation is a crime under immigration law. The officer has the ability to stop the interview at that point and place her in expedited removal back to her home country, with no chance for an appeal or for further explanation. It is up to the INS officer to continue to question her reason for coming to the US. If she can admit to the officer that she was fleeing for her life then the officer can proceed to the next step. If, however, she does not, or feels she cannot, tell the officer why she is in the US, then again she may be placed in deportation proceedings.

Remember: She has recently fled life-threatening circumstances. She was tortured and raped by authorities in her home country. She may or may not be able to explain the entirety of the situation to the asylum officer. She does, after all, have good reason not to trust a person in government authority.

Step 2:

Let's say that she is able to adequately explain her circumstances, or the officer is able to decipher that she may be in danger if she were returned to her home country. The officer then must conduct a "Credible Fear" interview. It is in this interview that the asylum officer will decide if she is eligible for asylum. She will be asked a series of questions to determine whether or not she is telling the truth. Let's say that she is able to prove credible fear in her interview. She does this by telling the officer that she was involved in pro-democracy protests and received threats. She does not tell the officer about her imprisonment, torture or rape.

Step 3:

She is then placed in INS "custody". Asylum seekers who enter the U.S. with "false" documents are mandatorily detained. She is sent to an INS facility, which looks much like a prison, to wait. She has been in the United States for about a week. She is told that she has one year to fill out the application form for asylum called the I-598. Remember, she does not have access to an attorney and, at this point, probably does not have access to an interpreter.

Step 4:

While being detained she becomes depressed. Every night she relives the traumatic experiences of the past. She also misses her family and her country. She does not understand why she is wearing prison garb or why she is being treated like a prisoner. She does not have access to medical attention for the physical trauma suffered while she was tortured, nor does she have access to counseling for the emotional and spiritual scars. No one around her speaks her language.

Step 5:

The facility in which she is located is overcrowded. Approximately 40% of persons in INS custody are imprisoned in INS facilities. The other 60% are placed in contracted facilities, which can include city, county, state or federal prisons². XX is moved to a county jail in Pennsylvania in handcuffs and shackles. She doesn't even know where she is. She is now housed with US citizen criminals. Contracted facilities often house immigrants with no criminal records with convicted criminals. She is allowed 1/2 hour a week for outside "recreation". She still does not have access to legal or medical help. She is more isolated now than before.

Step 6:

After three months, she is able to procure the help of a fellow detained asylum seeker to help her fill out her application for asylum. The fellow detainee is not an attorney, but can at least speak some English. Assuming the paper work for the asylum application is accepted, a few months later she will be able to see an immigration judge. A hearing date is set for her asylum claim. She asks the judge to release her from jail. The judge also sets a date for a bond hearing. Since she is not a U.S. citizen, she does not have the rights that most of us take for granted, such as the right to legal representation, due process or release on bond.

Step 7:

A month later she goes to court for a bond hearing. The court secures a translator for the proceeding. The INS attorney states that bond should be denied because she is a "flight risk". Afterall, she entered with fake documents. Additionally, she has no family or organization to support her if she is released. XX tries to explain that she would not try to "escape" from the INS. She would just like to be free. She tries to explain to the judge why she had to obtain false documents. Bond is denied.

Step 8:

After being detained in the United States for approximately six months, XX finally has her asylum hearing. She does not have legal representation at the hearing. She does not have corroborating evidence of the persecution she suffered. She only has her word. The trial attorney presents arguments in which the attorney indicates that the story of "harassment" which XX suffered is not enough to constitute torture. In fact the attorney argues that if she were really in fear for her life, why didn't she leave right after the first death threats?

Through her interpreter, XX is able to explain that although she feared for her life, she stayed at her home because that is where her family and her life were. With the aid of an interpreter, she is able to explain that it was not until a close friend was extrajudicially executed and she herself was jailed, tortured and raped that she left the country.

Remember that she did not indicate these specific facts in her initial credible fear interview or her asylum application. The fact that she has not previously testified to this abuse will, in the eyes and arguments of an INS attorney and the immigration system, cast serious doubts on her credibility and thus, her eligibility for asylum.

Outcome:

In this scenario it is likely that her claim will be denied. XX may appeal the decision, if she is able to understand, or she may be deported. If the judge accepts her testimony, and if the INS attorney does not object, she may be granted asylum. Even if she is granted refuge in this country, she still must face the prospect of rebuilding her life here.

If she is denied, since she is from a country with which we do not have diplomatic relations, she may be held in jail indefinitely. Hundreds of Cubans, Iraqis, Somalis, Iranians, and others from countries with which we do not have diplomatic relations will languish indefinitely in jails across the United States. They are people swept up in diplomatic and political situations beyond their control.

The practice of detaining refugees has risen significantly due to changes in the immigration law, and this trend shows no sign of abating. Conditions in detention centers are detrimental to the distressing situations in which asylum seekers find themselves. Delays in immigration proceeding, lack of adequate health care for trauma victims, and isolation

tion inevitably leads to depression and frustration amongst asylum seekers. Suicides among asylum seekers in the Elizabeth Detention Center in New Jersey rate about one a month.³ As journalist Elizabeth Llorente pointed out, "It is a cruel irony: men and women, who tell of fleeing for their lives, planning their own deaths."⁴

There seems little hope of changes in legislation or INS regulations to protect the rights of those fleeing persecution to the U.S. Changes in immigration law affecting asylum seekers stem from the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA), which makes the detention of asylum seekers who enter without proper documents compulsory. As described in the case of XX, it also mandates a one-year filing deadline for asylum applications. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been working to establish some level of fair treatment for detainees. These efforts have yielded few results.

A possible solution although unlikely, is to repeal the sections of IIRAIRA which call for a filing deadline, expedited removal, and the criminalization of those who enter without proper documentation. The INS can protect, rather than exacerbate, the treatment of victims of human rights abuses by having a fair and consistent parole process: allowing access to counsel, friends, family and NGOs and the humane treatment of refugees, such a freedom from restraints like handcuffs and better access to medical treatment. The INS must be held accountable for the treatment of those persons in its custody.

The United States has had a long history of offering refuge to those fleeing persecution. But we are now a country that violates that precedent and the international laws we have established to protect those who are trying to escape death or physical harm.⁵ Asylum seekers are not criminals and therefore should not be treated as such. Violations of international law and human rights on the part of our government are nothing new, but the jailing and indefinite detention of asylum seekers is one of the most recent and appalling abuses.

To find out more about the condition of asylum seekers in detention seek out these sources:

Amnesty International, "United States of America: Lost in the Labyrinth: Detention of Asylum-Seekers," AMR 51/115/99,

Human Rights Watch, "United States, Locked Away: Immigration Detainees in Jails in the United States," September 1998, Vol. 10, No. 1.

UNHCR's Guidelines on applicable Criteria and Standard relating to the Detention of Asylum-Seekers

To become a pen pal to an asylum seeker in detention you can contact:

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS)

Detention Watch Network

700 Light St.

Baltimore, MD 21230

Phone: 410/230-2700

Fax: 410/230-2890

Footnotes:

¹ Pistone, Michelle R., "New Asylum Laws: Undermining an American Ideal," CATO Institute, March 24, 1998. Statistic from U.S. Department of Justice, 1996 Statistical Yearbook of Immigration and Naturalization Service, Table 27, p. 87.

² Human Rights Watch "United States Locked Away: Immigration Detainees in Jails in the United States," September 1998, Vol. 10, No. 1 (G).

³ Llorente, Elizabeth, "Lacking Liberty, some detainees attempt death," May 24, 1999, Bergen Record Corp.

⁴ ibid.

⁵ U.S. asylum law is derived from the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the convention's 1967 protocol. This protocol was ratified by Congress in 1968 and made into law by the Refugee Act of 1980.



Underground Publishing Conference

featuring workshops, discussions, films, speakers, distributors, readers, writers, and friends

In June of 1999, the small town of Bowling Green, Ohio played host to a nationwide zine conference. Zine readers and writers came together to talk about the culture of independent publishing. Participants proposed and conducted panel discussions, workshops and mini-lectures covering the politics, economics, ethics and aesthetics of the zine world. Insights were shared. Friendships were forged.

We are planning to do the same thing in June, 2000, and the scope of the conference has been expanded to include an even wider range of underground publishing projects. Whether you're into zines, comics, independent newspapers, pamphlets, tracts, or books, there will be something of interest to you at the UPC. UPC is also taking suggestions for proposed panel discussions, workshops and speakers, so let us know what you would like to see at your conference. There will be a large hall reserved for tabling and just hanging out, so get in touch soon to reserve a space! Hope to hear from you soon and see you in June!

for more information,
contact jason at:
216 South Church Street
Bowling Green, OH 43402
upcon2000@hotmail.com
419.353.7035

**June 10-11
in Bowling Green, Ohio**

The Internet and Computer Privacy:

An Interview With Richard Smith

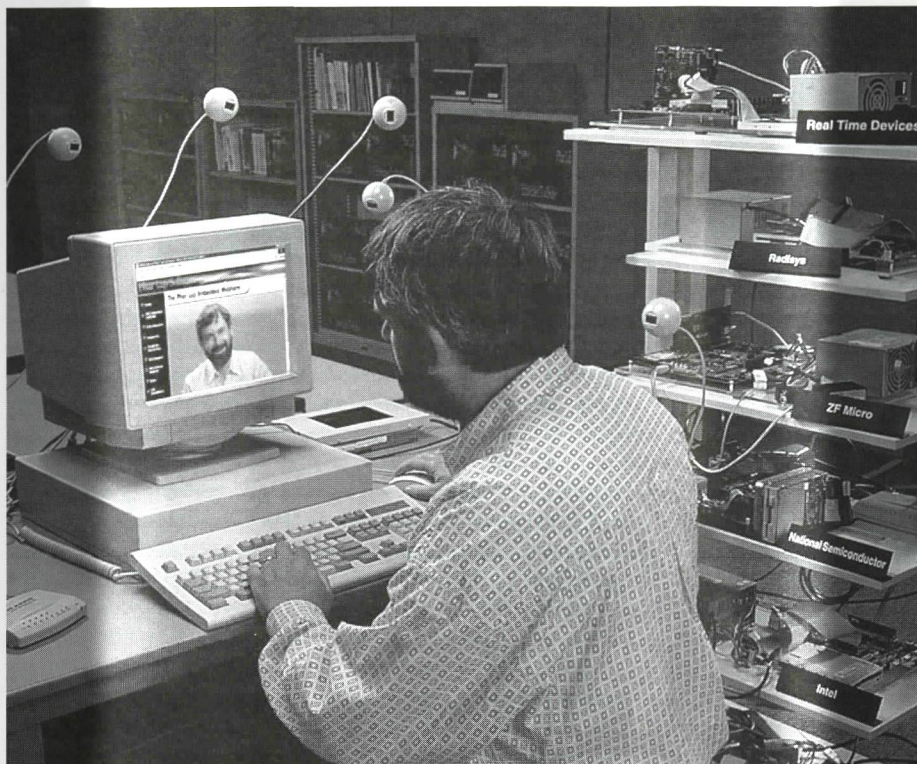
by Babak Rastgoufard

Today personal privacy is increasingly threatened as more and more information about our lives is monitored and collected and stored in computer databases. This is part of a larger phenomenon explored by William Staples in his 1997 book, *The Culture of Surveillance: Discipline and Social Control in the United States*. Staples approaches privacy by rejecting "the idea of a highly coordinated, state-driven, 'Big Brother' monopoly over the practice of watching people" and instead explores how numerous "small, often mundane, procedures and practices – the 'Tiny Brothers'" play an increasingly important role in our daily lives. For many these meticulous rituals that occupy daily life collectively represent a fundamental threat to personal privacy.

One of the most conspicuous and easiest to understand examples of this phenomenon involves credit and debit cards. Each month a credit card user receives a bill and an itemized list of purchases. In this scenario a credit card company's ability to track purchases is fairly straightforward and easy to understand; this is why when people want to anonymously purchase an item and protect their privacy they will use cash and not a credit card.

Other scenarios however are somewhat less conspicuous. A good example of a less conspicuous privacy invasion is supermarkets' use of discount cards. These supermarket cards typically give users a discount on selected products, but their primary purpose is to give supermarkets the ability to track purchases and create shopping profiles (based on the personal information collected when cards are distributed); supermarkets can then sell this information to marketers or use it themselves to increase sales. Such profiles can be used to promote products to a targeted group of consumers, or they can be used to help a supermarket arrange items in their store in a manner that maximizes profits. In this scenario the supermarket does not tell consumers exactly what sort of information they are collecting (in fact they tell consumers the cards are benefit given to loyal customers), but it is still relatively easy to understand how this method allows a supermarket to collect information about consumers.

However, some consumer traps are neither disclosed nor easily comprehensible; in which case an individual's privacy is easily violated. Unfortunately, instances of this type of privacy invasion are on the rise and frequently involve personal computers. While computers allow users to create documents, access vast amounts of information, and send mail across the world, they also secretly open a number of doors that can potentially compromise an individual's privacy. □□ Personal computers are versatile tools but their versatility often makes them difficult to fully understand. This combination creates a situation where



A Few of Smith's Recent Discoveries

Microsoft Office 97 Document Fingerprinting . Smith discovered that when a "Word, Excel, or PowerPoint file is saved for the first time, it is assigned its own unique serial number. This serial number is the form a 32-digit GUID (Globally Unique ID). The last 12 digits of a GUID will most likely contain the MAC or NIC address of Ethernet adapter of the person saving the document. Since Ethernet addresses are unique, this serial number in theory would allow a document to be traced back to the computer it was created on." He later used such information in March 1999 to track down the Melissa virus author.

Windows98 Registration Wizard . After Smith identified Office97's use of GUIDs he discovered that this same number is "then passed on to Microsoft through the Windows registration process." This discovery meant that Microsoft could potentially take a Word document and use information obtained by the registration wizard to identify its author.

RealJukebox . In November 1999 Smith discovered that RealJukebox (an application bundled with the popular RealPlayer player) sends information to RealNetworks about "what music CDs I listen to, along with a unique player ID number that identifies who I am. I also found that the RealJukebox sends back to RealNetworks, on a daily basis, information on how I am using the product. It reports things like how many songs I have recorded on my hard drive, the type of portable MP3 player I own, and my music preferences. This monitoring system, built into the RealJukebox software, has the potential for being used as a powerful profiling system to help market new CDs and related products at the expense of personal privacy." Later that week Smith discovered a similar hole in the RealNetworks's RealPlayer.

MS 1999 Annual Report . Soon after Microsoft posted its 1999 annual report as a Word document Smith discovered that it was created on a Macintosh computer. This discovery was made because Microsoft Word embeds private information (Metadata) in the document file. According to Microsoft, "Whenever you create, open, or save a document in Microsoft Word 97, the document may contain content that you may not want to share with others when you distribute the document electronically. This information is known as "metadata" . . . Here are some examples of metadata that may be stored in your documents: Your name, Your initials, Your company or organization name, The name of your computer, The name of the network server or hard disk where you saved the document, Other file properties and summary information, Non-visible portions of embedded OLE objects, The names of previous document authors, Document revisions, Document versions, Template information, Hidden text, and or Comments.

the opportunities for privacy invasion are vast but the ability to detect and understand such invasions is limited.

With this in mind I decided to talk to Richard Smith. He has been an instrumental force in discovering computer security holes that compromise privacy, and an instrumental force in fighting to protecting computer privacy. Smith has discovered and publicized numerous techniques that secretly violate individual privacy (see inset at left)

I wanted to get Smith's opinion on a range of privacy topics in order to better introduce people to what he is doing, and to the larger issue of computer privacy.

Smith is president and co-founder of Phar Lap Software, Inc., and he is also a computer security expert. But for me he is an unrecognized leader in defending consumer privacy and computer security. I asked him about this:

In my email I mentioned that I felt you are undertaking a one-man crusade to protect computer privacy. Is that an accurate or semi-accurate description and something you can comment on?

Well, I would not say it's one man – by any stretch. There's plenty of people out there – plenty of organizations and individuals looking at this issue also.

I guess what I do a little bit different than other folks is look at sort of the technical side of things. Which is what is possible here in terms of companies and organizations poking around at what we do. And you know the web has a certain design to it and there are ways of doing monitoring and tracking and that's what I sort of get into – discovering what people are actually doing out there.

Related to that – a couple days ago I did a Lexis-Nexus search on you and I didn't find as many stories as I thought I would. I know you've made a [large] number discoveries and I initially thought I would find more [stories when I did my search]; but then I realized that lot discoveries I've seen on your website are not really publicized. Do you feel there's a large discrepancy between the number of issues you discover and the number of issues that are publicized?

No, pretty much every thing makes it in there. You just used the wrong search engine. I mean, I looked at the New York Times over the last year and I think I ended up in 20 different articles.

Yes. They seem to cover you[r discoveries] and the Boston Globe would have you as well, but aside from those two –

Oh, and it's a lot of the trade press. And recently some stuff in the Washington Post and also the [Wall Street] Journal; but a lot of it, CNET and Wired will do stuff.

Well perhaps a more important discrepancy is between the number of discoveries, whether publicized or not, and the number of discoveries that are

0
1
0
1
1
1
0
1
0
1
0
1
0
1

actually fixed. And, do you think that is an accurate representation?

Well most things, companies do make an attempt at of addressing – and some times very quickly. Like recently we had the whole thing with RealJukebox

How did they respond?

They [RealNetworks] had a patch the same day for basically all the issues that I brought up for RealJukebox the same day the Times article hit.

But not always. I mean there are there are some things that people do half a fix or sometimes people ignore. But for general things the companies do seem to make an attempt. They may disagree sometimes with the severity of the problems, that sort of thing, but they tend to fix things.

In November 1999 a number of consumer privacy groups approached the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and asked them to examine consumer privacy. The groups' primary concerns involved the practice of data profiling. These groups were particularly interested in banner ad companies' ability to place ads on multiple web sites and subsequently use these banner ads to follow people on the web and generate user profiles (i.e. determine what a user's interests are in order to delivery tailored marketing and advertising products).

Earlier that year DoubleClick Inc. announced a \$1 billion merger agreement with Abacus Direct Corporation. DoubleClick is a major Internet banner advertising company and Abacus is a major catalog buying behavior database manager.

Abacus Alliance's press releases claim the company's database "contains records from 1,100 merchandise catalogs, with more than 2 billion consumer catalog transactions representing virtually all U.S. consumer catalog buying households." You can get further information about Abacus services by visiting their website: <<http://www.abacus-direct.com/>>.

Meanwhile DoubleClick's press releases claim their company is a leading global Internet advertiser that provides "comprehensive global Internet advertising solutions for marketers and Web publishers. Combining technology and media expertise, DoubleClick centralizes planning, execution, control, tracking and reporting for online media campaigns."

The combination of DoubleClick's Internet presence and ability to use cookies to follow users around the Internet and Abacus's vast consumer database allows the new merged company, which operates under the name DoubleClick Inc., to merge an Internet user's online habits with their real world habits and identity. For DoubleClick's customers this means the ability to "provide highly efficient, targeted and measurable marketing and advertising solutions through the Internet and other media." For consumers this represents an unprecedented level of monitoring. A lengthy discussion of this topic, including both general and technical viewpoints, is available at <<http://slashdot.org/yro/99/10/22/0249212.shtml>>.

I asked Richard Smith what he thought about consumer privacy and the growing world of online profiling:

Where do you think the responsibility should lie? Obviously in something like RealJukebox they [RealNetworks] came in and immediately fixed it. Should the consumers have to take a more active role? or should it all be up to the software makers or should privacy be left to a third-party? I mean there's been a lot of talk now about the FTC getting in with data profiling.

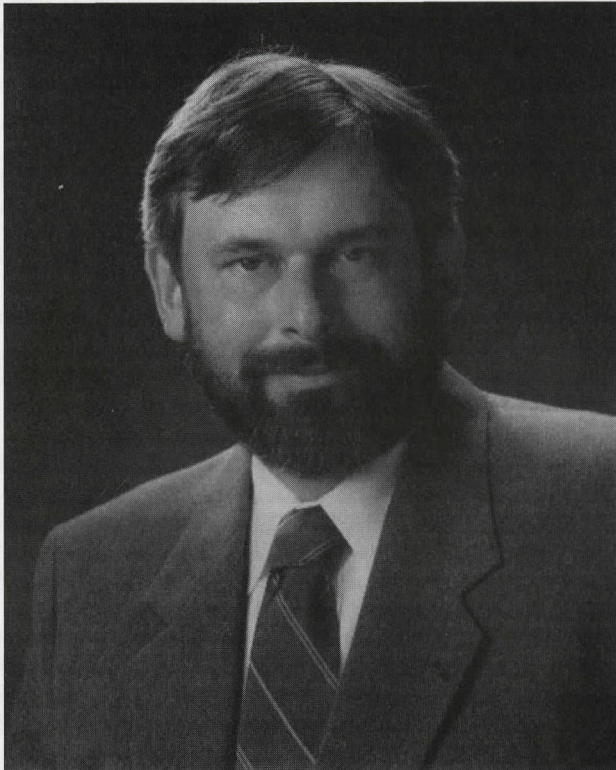
Yeah. Well I think ultimately we're going to have to have laws that basically set some rules about what can be done and not done.

I would say its naïve to think that we won't have that. The industry keeps talking about self-regulation and all this other stuff. But in every aspect of our lives we have laws that regulate what people can do and not do. And there will be some in this area also, for sure.

Do you think that's beneficial? Inevitable? Or both?

Well I mean it's just part of life. There will be good and bad things about whatever laws they come up with I'm sure. But overall we'll need basically some ground rules that people know. Even businesses – you know even though they may claim they are against regulation and that sort of stuff – but when push comes to shove they don't mind it because it means that everyone plays by the same rules.

Just one example, which we have now, is with the banner ad companies. This is an area you mentioned with online profiling and the FTC. DoubleClick, the largest banner ad company, is moving toward identifying people on the web. In the past banner ad companies said, "no we don't know who you are. Therefore it doesn't matter if we profile you." But we're just seeing a steady drift towards identification



0
1
0
1
0
1
0
1
0
1
0
1
0
1

Glossary

Cookie - A small text file placed on your computer by a web server that is used to identify and/or track a user.

Cookies can contain information (either temporarily or long-term) like a username and password for the sites that require such (Hotmail, My Yahoo!, New York Times), the contents of your online shopping cart, or they can simply contain a unique id number assigned to you by a web server to track your movement on that web server's web pages.

The important thing to understand about cookies is that that information contained in a cookie can only be used by the web server that sends you that cookie. For instance if you visit www.salon.com and receive a cookie that cookie can be used whenever you visit any page on Salon Magazine. If you then visit www.amazon.com and receive a cookie from Amazon that new cookie can be used whenever you visit any page on Amazon, but the Amazon web server can not use the cookie given to you by Salon Magazine, and vice-versa.

Until recently cookies were only found on the text portion of web pages. In most situations when you visit a website the text and graphics you see are sent to you by that website. For instance if you visit www.salon.com and read a story on George W. Bush's presidential campaign the text and graphics you see are sent to you by a Salon Magazine's web server. If you then go to www.espn.com to read a sports story the text and graphics you see are sent to you by an ESPN server. However, cookies can also be placed on graphic files: this allows online banner advertising companies to place a cookie on their graphics (i.e. the banner ad), which are typically sent from the banner's web server and not the web server you are visiting. By placing a cookie on a banner ad, one web server (i.e. the banner ad company web server) can continually monitor a user's movement across the web. For instance in the example above if the same banner ad company had a banner with a cookie on Salon Magazine that banner ad company would be able to track what stories you read on Salon Magazine (as well as Salon Magazine if they also sent you cookie). If after reading about George W. Bush you went to ESPN then Salon Magazine can no longer track you, but if ESPN has the same banner ad company then that banner ad company web server, which is the web server that placed the banner ads on both Salon and on ESPN, can track which stories you read on both Salon and ESPN. This is a completely hypothetical example, but you can see what this scenario leads to when one

and tying that to personal profiles. Now I think some of their [DoubleClick's] competitors are probably dead-set against that move and they probably wouldn't mind some sort of regulation in this area - in terms of not allowing identification of people.

You mentioned DoubleClick, one of questions I wanted to ask later, but will jump to now is regarding web-bugs. Is that what they [banner ad companies] are using [to identify and track people] and using an IP address or an email address?

Even the industry says people don't know about this stuff, but that's because they haven't told them. Basically what goes on with online profiling - when people hear about it it sounds pretty sinister and basically it is - the idea is that banner ad companies are placing banner ads all over the web on different websites. But they have - within the banner ad itself - a cookie associated with it. So they're basically in a position to watch people as they go around the web and figure out what their interests are.

So if you go to say ESPN or you go versus the New York Times versus - whatever site - they can look at [your profile] from the sites you go to and the pages you visit [and] make some guess at what your interests are. And so they build up these personal profiles. And these profiles consist of two hundred to three hundred different categories - interest categories that you may have - and they rate you from zero to one. Zero means you don't have any interest in something and one means you have an extreme interest. And what these categories are - they generally don't publish this information, but one can guess - things like cars, sports, hobbies, fishing, all the sorts of things people might be interested in. And from that profile then the next time you come to a website they get a cookie sent in when it [the browser] requests the banner ad and they do a quick lookup at your profile and decide which ad to present to you. And so they're basically in the snooping or monitoring business. And people are kind of surprised by all that.

And now like you said they are associating it [the online profiles] with people's names and actual identities as opposed to just general traffic.

Right. And DoubleClick wants to go to the next step then and be able to do more of what I would call "truth in marketing" - which is tie your real-world identity with [your identity] when you are on the web. And they're buying a direct mail company to do that so they have a ton of names and address from catalogues and such.

So if spam isn't bad enough, then you're going to get physical spam.

Right. That's basically it. It will work somehow that way. You'll start getting junk mail that's related to your web habits - one can imagine that [will happen].

And so when that happens - when DoubleClick does it they have lots and lots of competitors and we will probably see similar moves by other companies. And we'll see this drift toward more invasive marketing. And at the same time we have the FTC starting to look at this - and they have been looking at it for a while.

But even the industry realizes they have a problem here - a big PR problem that they're spying on people and that's kind of difficult to explain to people. And so they're trying to do that now - to come up with some sort of PR campaign to explain to the public what they do. My own view is - I'd like to personally see that done. And a lot of other people in the privacy business would [also] like to see it explained better about what is going on.

That's one of things I'm trying to do - because I think that once the public gets a better idea as to what's going on here there will be a lot of pushback and people will begin to fight this more. Right now they [individuals] literally don't know it. And I know lots of people in the computer business, people who are very technical and aware of the web - you know they do website development themselves - and they're not aware of this monitoring that's going on.

So you are seeing web bugs in emails? Like SPAM emails or just -

Juke emails - these are from legitimate companies. However, I don't why I got on their mailing lists in some cases. For example eToys sent me a thing about Christmas toys or whatever and it was an HTML-based email message and inside the message it had a web bug and what that allows them to do is see if I have read the message or not . . . When the message is read they have an image tag that sends out a request to a server and it includes my email address in that request. And so they get this feedback that I've read the message or not. So I sort of said, "Hey why are you guys spying on me?"

It seems [to me] like that can really open up things - [for instance] with the online vendors like Amazon or something - I assume if you use them you'd get email from them and presumably it would html email and it would contain the same type of thing [i.e. web bugs].

Right. Well I just got one from Barnes & Noble and I asked them why. The answer I got from Barnes & Noble was, "we want to know if you can do HTML or not - if your computer supports it." And well that

may be true but it's still –

It's certainly a strange way to go about it. A little radio button or something when you signup [would accomplish the same thing] –

That would be an easier solution. But there are some evil uses of these web bugs in email which allow synchronization of an email addresses to a cookies – and that's what really bothers me a lot about it. I haven't found anyone doing it yet, but I keep asking.

Related to profiling, a lot of your other discoveries have involved the transmission of a GUID – obviously RealJukebox was using that, I think, and the Microsoft Windows Registration [wizard], and the Microsoft Word files. How would compare that [GUID] to something like say a cookie?

Well, they're similar. But cookies have certain restrictions, but it's all the same sort of thing. In both cases they're numbers that can identify who you are. And the more they are used and the more they are sort of stamped on things the more they can be used for tracking. Historically, it's been considered sort of a bad idea for us, for the world, to keep using the social security number over and over again because that allows you to match up data between databases.

Yes.

But frankly we got a lot of ways to match up [data] nowadays. You know, phone numbers, email addresses, all these things can be used for that. With the GUID stuff – there's sort of a couple different aspects of it. The one story that I did with Microsoft and Word documents – basically Word documents are being stamped with a GUID and if you have an Ethernet card in your computer then it was putting the hardware Ethernet adapter address –

Yes, the MAC address

The MAC address in documents and then a little bit later I discovered they [Microsoft] were generating a GUID when you did your registration – sending your GUID in also [with your registration information].

So you can see in that situation you have a match-up there. Which is why they would be in a position – given a word document – to go to the registration database and say, “who has this MAC address.” You know they didn't [intentionally] design this system [to work that way] – it doesn't make sense that somebody would do this type of tracking system but they did create it. It's just like the SSN issue. If you keep using the same number over and over again you can build fairly interesting tracking systems.

So here we have a situation – it's probably unprecedented in human history – we had a company being in a position to see who's writing stuff. So you know once that sort of came all out they said, “uhhgr we don't even need these GUIDs in word documents so we'll get rid of it and stop collecting at registration time.” But other companies have sort of done the same thing. RealPlayer and RealJukebox are both other examples of the same idea: when you register the software they would send in a number and then when they [the software programs] were doing various kinds of transactions on the web [i.e. play an audio file] it would provide that [same] number and it would allow tracking to be done.

Now in terms of cookies. Cookies are numbers also but they're restricted – to be used on one website. The sort of original design of cookies was that if I go to a website – you know if I go to Yahoo! it would give me a cookie and then I go over to Microsoft it gives me a separate cookie but no two websites have the same cookie.

It's an attempt to get rid of the social security [number] problem [of everyone collecting the same number] – which is everyone has a different number and it makes it tough to correlate information that way. Now with something like RealJukebox – excuse me RealPlayer – what it does is it sends the same GUID when you watch a streaming video thing or listen to a real audio clip, they are sending in the same GUID to all the different websites and so that violates the cookie rule – in the sense that they are sending the same number to everyone. So in essence a GUID in RealPlayer functions like a cookie but it's kind of worse because it's the same cookie to all websites.

Yes. It follows you.

So it follows you around. And the RealPlayer issue has not [been resolved] – I am not quite sure what RealNetworks is doing there. They came up with a patch for RealJukebox that fixed all the problems. With RealPlayer though they have a separate problem and I'm not sure exactly how that's being addressed.

[It appears as if the new version of RealPlayer, RealPlayer 7, will allow users to disable transmission of a GUID]

I remember when that was announced [the problem with RealPlayer] – I think it was last Friday –

or several large banner ad companies place ads on numerous different web sites.

More general information about cookies can be obtained at: <<http://www.junkbusters.com/ht/en/cookies.html>>

Ethernet card – This is a piece of hardware commonly used to connect computers in a network; all new Macintosh computers contain a built-in Ethernet card and almost all computers (both PC and Mac) connected to a network (such as an office building, dorm, computer lab, etc.) have an Ethernet card. In addition, most home computers that use a cable or DSL modem (high-speed modems) also have an Ethernet card. A small number of home computers not connected to a network will still have an Ethernet card. Most Ethernet cards are connected to a network by a cable/jack that looks like an oversized telephone jack.

(If a computer does not contain an Ethernet card, Office 97 will generate a GUID that contains a fictitious MAC address that is the same for all machines without an Ethernet card).

GUID – Global Unique Identifier. A GUID is basically a 128-bit digital fingerprint. There are several different ways to generate a GUID, but they all function similarly: assign a unique identity (number) to a computer and subsequently use this number to monitor or track certain computer activity.

Technical information on GUIDs can be obtained at <<http://www.microsoft.com/asf/spec3/c.htm>>

MAC – media access control. This is a twelve-digit identification number used in networking. Every Ethernet card (aka NIC – network interface card) has a unique and permanent MAC address. Microsoft has placed MAC addresses within Word documents and within GUIDs.

Technical information on MAC address can be obtained at <<http://www.cavebear.com/CaveBear/Ethernet/>>

spam – junk email

Web bug – A web bug is a graphic image, which is often transparent and only one pixel [very small – the size of a dot] large, used to monitor who is reading a web page or email message. More general information about web bugs can be obtained at: <<http://www.tiac.net/users/smiths/privacy/wbfaq.htm>>

then I went to their website Monday or maybe two Fridays ago and they said they would have something available Monday, but I never saw anything. If it was there, they hid it pretty well.

Just one last thing with the GUID, I think you mentioned this [already]: Do you think it is more neglect or is it deliberate thing, or perhaps a little bit of both? [For instance] MS sort of said, 'oh we didn't really plan to use it – but it just ended up staying in the word documents'.

OK, first –GUIDs first of all were not invented by MS. They are something that were created 20-5 years ago at I think Apollo computers. And they're sort of like super-serial numbers. You can have computers [spend] all day long generating these things and they identify anything you choose to identify – a program, a file, a person, a computer, whatever. And they're just a really cool idea from a technical standpoint as serial numbers. Because you don't need a central authority creating them. They're basically so large you just generate them at random [and] probability says that no two computers can ever generate the same one. So it has the very good characteristic of allowing multiple people to be creating them and no conflicts occurring. Now what people didn't think about, was the tracking ability – by including the MAC address in there then they suddenly can be used for tracking because all the different GUIDs created on one computer will have the same MAC address in it.

YOU CAN HAVE COMPUTERS [SPEND] ALL DAY LONG GENERATING THESE THINGS (GUIDS) AND THEY IDENTIFY ANYTHING YOU CHOOSE TO IDENTIFY - A PROGRAM, A FILE, A PERSON, A COMPUTER, WHATEVER.

Although studies provide evidence that Internet users have some general concern regarding privacy, there is a growing practice of giving products away (email, access to stories, free programs, etc.) for free in exchange for personal information. These so-called "information-for-benefits" programs are expanding both in scope and controversy. I asked Richard Smith what he thought about companies that defend this practice

by claiming they are entitled to collect information because they are giving away a product for free.

Do you think consumers should draw a line between receiving free services in exchange for an intrusion of privacy? Of course, there are extreme scenarios where people receive a free computer and Internet access if you give a company, you know if you tell them everything about you. But there are also more common scenarios like my ability to read the next day's New York Times before I go to bed in exchange for letting the New York Times know exactly which stories I read. Should we draw a line anywhere there?

The whole idea is, well, stuff is free; you have to give up something. I guess I don't have a problem with it unless it is [not] disclosed.

The main problem I have is a lot of this stuff is never talked about. You know, companies don't say what they are doing with their thing. Most people may know "Yeah, let's see if I go to a website they probably realize that I'm reading this story. And if I read the printed edition," you talked about the New York Times, "they have no way of knowing if I read this story or not." Unless at the bottom it says: "call this number and get a dollar."

So there's some implicit knowledge here that I think a lot of people would have, yes there some tracking that can be done on the web that can't be done in real life. But there's a lot of stuff people don't have a clue about. For instance if you use a search engine, whatever string you search gets passed along to a third party ad company – and that's not disclosed, and no body without a lot of checking would ever notice that. So sometimes service providers – like you said – will say, "We give it to them for free, so we can take what we want." But that's not a very fair or reasonable arrangement. If people go in with the attitude: "we'll make a deal here – we'll tell you what we're doing here." Then I have much better feeling about it. But the idea that just because it is free we can grab what we want, doesn't make much sense.

And we can share it with whomever we feel like and we're not going to tell you.

Right – the direction I come from on all this stuff is that information about myself belongs to me. Marketers like to say, "we collected this information we can do what we want" and if there were no rules they would – they would give it away for nothing. And I come at it from a much different angle – which is: information belongs to me and you can't give it out.

Someone at EPIC, which is an organization – an electronic privacy group down in Washington – made a really interesting comment, "Mickey Mouse has more rights than we do when it comes to copyright." When you think about it for a second, if I sent you a picture of Mickey Mouse as a GIF file that might be a copyright infringement; if I send off a bunch of bits that describe you that's not a copyright infringement. So it's kind of interesting because all we are talking about is bits of information. We have copyright laws that prevent one person from copying artistic work but we don't have any laws that protect information about people.

Definitely an unique way of looking at it.

And so that's where I sort of come from: the information about me, whatever it might be, and however it might be gathered, belongs to me – it doesn't belong to the marketers. And so this presumption that they can take it and trade it – well they are stealing stuff and that's the way I look at – much like if you take

Web Sites Focusing on Privacy Issues

[www.tiac.net/users/smiths/
Richard Smith's Advanced Web Pro-
gramming Page](http://www.tiac.net/users/smiths/Richard_Smith's_Advanced_Web_Programming_Page)

www.epic.org
Electronic Privacy and Information Cen-
ter

www.cookiecentral.com

www.junkbusters.com

www.microsoft.com/security/

[www.nytimes.com/library/tech/refer-
ence/index-privacy.html](http://www.nytimes.com/library/tech/reference/index-privacy.html)

www.slashdot.org/yro/

www.truste.org

a copyrighted work and give it to someone else and duplicate it, that's considered theft.

Do you think privacy and anonymity is something not enough people care about? You hear it talked about and you see all these percentages that only 12% really care and we talk about some of the technical aspects – especially the way DoubleClick uses [the same] cookies on different sites – do you think people really don't care or they are just not informed?

It's a combination of things. Really a whole list of things here. One is people literally don't know the level of monitoring that is occurring out there. If you compare what's going on today versus ten-fifteen years ago – it's incredible the amount of monitoring that goes on. We have supermarket cards and things like this – it's 1984 type stuff but the way I like to put it is, "it's 1984 but with a yellow happy face."

Overall most of it is benign – it doesn't really have a [direct] negative impact on people so they just say, "I don't care because it doesn't impact me. It doesn't impact my pocketbook or my personal life, so why should I care?" And that's just a basic human thing.

So one of the things I like to do is try to point out is, "here's some reasons you may care down the road." And when we get into the legal realm all this tracking can be used in ways we don't want. The classic example is divorce. If we get into a divorce situation people can dredge up all this monitoring that has been done of us [and] stuff we may not want known.

Yes – you mentioned divorce and supermarket cards. I think a couple years ago there was someone out in California and he was in this divorce situation and they determined from his Safeway card that he liked to buy a lot of beer. And so they were [using this to] question his moral character because he bought beer at Safeway. They were able to track that down and figure out how much beer he bought or something like that.

I have heard some similar stories about those cards. They take on a slight amount of urban legend quality but it's still exactly what we are talking about here – how that can be done. I heard someone was suing a supermarket for a slip-and-fall accident. And so they dug up the same thing with alcohol and said no you're a boozer – that's why you fell.

It seems like a number of universities are violating student privacy as part of an mp3 crackdown. So they're [creating] a line between privacy and piracy.

It's a very interesting subject. It's one of reasons why I got into RealJukebox – the monitoring aspect of it. One is for marketing reasons and another is possibly for piracy prevention.

So do you think then – I don't want to say it's justified – is it less offensive when they have defined purpose that is very narrow, like "we want to crack down on this segment."?

No it doesn't make any it any more justified. Like in the case of RealJukebox, there was a total disclosure problem here. Again, they were taking information off your computer and sending it out. They were literally stealing stuff – in a literal sense.

When I talked before about marketers taking information, well if you are using the web you are in essence voluntarily sending some stuff in – I still think you own that information – but in the case of RealJukebox they are taking stuff off your computer.

I was looking at a variety of music products, it wasn't just RealJukebox, I was looking at Winamp and Windows Media Player and I was looking both at information being sent out the wire and what was being stored in files. With the idea here's a marketing use for this information, but the other one was maybe there's this piracy prevention use. And I didn't really find anything of interest in that area, but I was looking.

Finally, what would you recommend for consumers?

If you see any monkey business going on – ask the vendor what's going on. Because usually one of things that does happen is when you start talking about things vendors do react. It's tough sometimes because it takes some time to get hold of the right people. But the small example is when I see web bugs being used – you have to go look for these things – but when I see them being used in email messages now I shoot off a message right to the vendor asking them what the hell's going. And sometimes they feel embarrassed enough that they'll say ok maybe we don't want to do that anymore.

PEOPLE LITERALLY DON'T KNOW THE LEVEL OF MONITORING THAT IS OCCURRING OUT THERE. IF YOU COMPARE WHAT'S GOING ON TODAY VERSUS TEN-FIFTEEN YEARS AGO - IT'S INCREDIBLE THE AMOUNT OF MONITORING THAT GOES ON.



who controls the past controls the future...

an interview with historian Howard Zinn
by Peter Werbe

When Matt Damon and Robin Williams, in the Academy Award winning *Good Will Hunting*, begin trying to one-up each other by naming radical writers they have read, Damon trumps Williams' mention of MIT social critic Noam Chomsky by suggesting Boston University historian Howard Zinn's book, *A People's History of the United States, 1492-Present*.

This notice in a Hollywood film translated into additional sales of 100,000 copies for Zinn's already wildly selling radical history text, first published in 1980 by Harper Perennial. With a twentieth anniversary edition in the works, the book has sold over 650,000 copies in the last two decades and has become a bible of sorts for numerous media stars and social activists.

Its unprecedented sales recently prompted Fox Television to put up \$12 million for a new mini-series based on the book. The series is scheduled to air some time in 2000.

The book has spun off a series of teaching editions, wall charts, and abridged versions. The 79-year-old Zinn is also author of several personal memoirs including, *Declarations of Independence* (HarperCollins, 1991), and *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train* (Beacon Press, 1995) which include his experiences as a World War II bombardier and activist in the civil rights and anti-war movements.

His latest book is *The Future of History* (Common Courage Press, 1999), which records a series of interviews done with David Barsamian over the last ten years.

He spoke to *clamor* from Cape Cod.

Clamor: In the book you've done with David Barsamian, he says you're fond of quoting George Orwell's dictum from 1984 that, "who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past." Does that speak to the title of the book?

Howard Zinn: I suppose so in that what Orwell was saying and what I am repeating approvingly is that history is controlled. So much of the information in our culture is controlled and if you control our past, then you can control our future. In that sense our future history, the future of the human race, depends on who tells the story about the past.

As an example, if American history is told as a series of great military adventures, that will tell young people militarism is something to be valued; that military heroism is the highest representation of good character. And that will insure our future will consist of more military adventures. So by presenting that kind of a past, you create a self-fulfilling prophecy about the future.

On the other hand, if you do what I think we ought to do when we tell history, without ignoring the fact that we fought wars, you emphasize not the heroism of military leaders or people in battle, but those people who have always struggled against war. Those people who believed in peace. The people who opposed the Mexican War because they saw it as a fabricated war designed to simply amass more territory, take territory away from Mexico. Those people who opposed World War I. Those people who opposed the Spanish-American War. The people who opposed the Vietnam War. I think of the anarchist and feminist, Emma Goldman, as one of those people. She went to prison during World War I for opposing the war.

I think the most neglected story of the Vietnam war is the resistance to it. Not just on the part of civilians here at home, but on the part of GIs and the movement of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War organization. There has been so much talk about the military side—should we have done this, should we have done that, could we have won, did we win the Tet offensive, did we lose the Tet offensive? If the story of the resistance is told to generations of young people, I think it would imbue them with a very strong feeling that it's a good idea to oppose war.

Clamor: How does one know when to oppose war? You pointedly left World War II out of that series of wars you listed in which you were a combat flyer.

Zinn: I did pointedly leave it out because it was the most ambiguous of situations. In the question of just and unjust wars, some wars are so obviously unjust and so obviously done for profit and power and expansion—the Mexican war, the Spanish American war, World War I, the Vietnam War, the Korean War, the Gulf War. Some wars are obviously wrong. Maybe I should leave out the Korean war since there is still a lot of uncertainty among the American population about the Korean War.

World War II is called the “good war.” “Saving Private Ryan,” Steven Spielberg’s movie, exalts the war as a good war, even while showing the horrors of D-Day. Still, the horrors had a context of being in the end necessary because it was a good war.

Having been a bombardier in the Air Force in World War II and dropped bombs, even though I had been an enthusiastic volunteer and had been persuaded that it was a just war, I came out of that experience persuaded that war simply doesn’t solve the fundamental problems we face as a human race. That we have to find solutions other than war. That even though the cause may be just, and I distinguish between a just cause and a just war, even though the cause may be just, like fighting against and resisting fascism, but doing it via war, the mass slaughter of people, 40-50 million people killed in World War II, I don’t think is the best way to solve that problem, the best way to support that just cause. I think the human race has to find more imaginative, more ingenious ways of dealing with tyranny and aggression than simply indiscriminately killing large numbers of people which is what war is all about.

Clamor: When we are talking about history, we are talking about national histories. All national histories are triumphal in nature, even when they are the history of great losses, for instance, like the Serbian myth about Kosovo. As a historian you are interested in portraying accurately what happened, but nation states have a different intent.

Zinn: You are absolutely right. Nation states are determined to exalt what that nation has done, especially in war, and to turn every situation into a triumph, as you pointed out in the case of the Serbs, so that even in defeat it is looked upon as a heroic moment in history. But I think it is the responsibility of citizens in a democracy to think independently of the nation state. There is a mistaken notion about patriotism which is encouraged in our educational system and in our culture because the nation state has a lot of power over the cultural and educational systems. It says that to be patriotic, which is a good thing, means to support your government in the sense of “my country, right or wrong.”

You hear that in young people who are going off to enlist, “I have to fight for my country.” My point is that the nation state, the government here



...who controls the present controls the past.

and anywhere in the world, is not the country, it is not the people. To be patriotic in the best sense in the United States is not to support whatever the government does, but to support whatever the best principles of our society are. Very often, the government acts against those principles.

I see the principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence as being noble and good principles. That is, the Declaration of Independence says government is an artificial creation. Government is not the supreme order of things in this society. According to the Declaration of Independence the government is an artificial entity set up by the people to achieve certain ends—life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, equality. And when the government, as the Declaration says, becomes destructive of those ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish the government.

That’s a very revolutionary statement made at a time when the United States was breaking away from the nation state of England. Then, when the United States was itself a nation state, it forgot about that principle of the Declaration of Independence and the document was consigned to being displayed on classroom walls but not paid attention to. To me, being patriotic means to think independently, to support the principles of life and liberty and equality, and, as I see the history of nation states, including the history of the United States, most nation states act against the principles of liberty and equality. They act on behalf of a relatively small group of wealthy and powerful people who are in charge of the nation state. We know that’s true of countries which we call totalitarian or tyrannical; there it is obvious. In the U.S. it is not so obvious because we have three branches of government and we have elections and we have a certain amount of freedom of the press and free speech. Because of that we are deluded into thinking the government represents us, but I don’t think it does.

Clamor: I mentioned earlier that as an historian, you are interested in finding out what actually happened, but I posed the question as if historians are people in the physical sciences, as if you were looking at bacteria under a microscope. Like all the social sciences, history is very politicized. I think people have a legitimate skepticism these days. They are not buying the official myths as they did in other periods, but how does one know who to believe? How can you do a reality check between what Howard Zinn is writing and another interpretation?

I recently interviewed the conservative, William F. Buckley Jr., about the Cold War. How does someone reading an interpretation by Buckley of this period and then reading Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States* and getting a 180 degree opposite view reconcile two contradictory versions?

Zinn: It’s not easy to answer the question, how do you really get the truth when it is so complex and historical reality has an infinite amount of information in it. The only advice I would give to somebody who is trying to sort things out is to say, get as much information as you can. Get as many diverse viewpoints as you can and see what makes more sense to you.

Listen to Buckley, listen to me, listen to Gar Alperovitz who writes the

continued next page

history of the atomic bomb or listen to Marilyn Young who writes the history of the Vietnam war and listen to the official histories of the Vietnam war and the official line and decide on what makes sense. Ultimately, it is an individual decision, but the important thing is to have the diverse viewpoints to choose from. The problem with history and with information in the press is that too often we do not get a full spectrum of views to choose from.

Take the recent situation in Kosovo where we did get a full picture of the horrors inflicted by the Serbs on the people of Kosovo, the Albanians, who were searching for independence. It was a horrible story, but there is another set of facts that has to be paid attention to and I don't think the media really played this up. Most of the refugees streaming out of Kosovo, most of the terrible things done by the Serbs, happened after we started bombing. In other words, our bombing intensified and worsened what was happening, five-fold, ten-fold. This is a very important fact and there are also other very important facts to consider which were completely ignored by the press and by television.

If you just listened to the Administration's side you would say, well, this is a humanitarian effort. We care about what is happening. The people in Kosovo are being mistreated. But there is other information you need. You need to know that at the same time the people in Kosovo are being subjected to terrible things by the Serbs, the people of Iraq are suffering and dying by the hundreds of thousands as a result of the sanction policies of the U.S.. You have to know that the ethnic cleansing that has been going on for years in Turkey—people uprooted from their homes, from their villages, thousands of people killed, and that Turkey is a U.S. ally and has done these things to the Kurds in Turkey with American military equipment.

Now, if you added that to the picture, not forgetting what the Serbs did in Kosovo, it wouldn't be a simple affirmation of, "Oh, we are doing good things there because our government is concerned with what happens to people." Then you would be skeptical of whether, in fact, our government cares about what happens to human beings and you would wonder what other motives there are for the bombing of Yugoslavia.

Clamor: Let's return to alternate versions of history, for instance, the Cold War. The official version is that after World War II and the defeat of the Nazis, the U.S. found itself in a confrontation with another hostile power—the Soviet Union—which, like the Nazis, was equally bent on world domination. We had to defend Europe from imminent Soviet aggression, and at home there was an internal subversion threat from people who were loyal not to the U.S. government but to the Soviet Union and its plans for world domination. Although there may have been some excesses in the zeal in which internal communism was combatted (such as McCarthyism), ultimately it was an important cause.

Zinn: Hmm, the business of the Cold War and its origins. There have been dozens of volumes about that, and who started the Cold War. Did it start because the U.S., this kindly nation, saw the Soviet Union, this evil empire, bent on world domination, so we built up our forces? That doesn't make sense. It doesn't conform to the historical record.

There is no evidence that the Soviet Union was bent on world domination. American intelligence experts have said since then, the Soviet Union had no intention of invading Western Europe. The Soviet Union did want to control Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union was expansionist with regard to Eastern Europe. I am not trying to paint the Soviet Union as a nice power. All that I am saying is that the Soviet Union had designs on Eastern Europe to influence and control Eastern Europe just as the U.S. had designs on control and influence of Latin America.

In other words, they saw Eastern Europe as their sphere of influence. The U.S. has always seen Latin America as its sphere of influence. Both powers have been expansionist, both powers have been ambitious, both powers have wanted to have more and more influence in the world. Both are imperial powers. The U.S. was always ahead in the arms race. The U.S. was

the first to build and use the atomic bomb. The U.S. had a huge arsenal of nuclear bombs and the Soviet Union was constantly trying to catch up. So, it's not a matter of one being a hero and one being a villain, one being good and one being bad. I see it as two empires vying for power in the world.

Internally, the U.S. government used the hysteria of the Soviets as a basis for destroying whatever atmosphere of freedom existed, through the U.S. House un-American Activities Committee, the FBI keeping files on millions of people. And, it was not just McCarthy, but democrats and republicans alike; Truman also. The loyalty oaths he instituted in 1947, and Hubert Humphrey with his sponsorship of the Communist Control Act.

Clamor: Was there ever an authentic internal threat from communism?

Zinn: That was a figment of J. Edgar Hoover's imagination.

Clamor: Why the hysteria? Was there any economic or political gain for anybody to create this hysteria in the late '40s and early '50s?

Zinn: I think there were political gains for both parties. It's always a political plus for a party when it can create an internal enemy. First, you artificially create an enemy. After all, the Communist Party in the U.S. was not in a position to overthrow the government or do anything important. The Communist Party was really quite weak and what the government was really after was not communists, but anybody who had anti-government views, or was critical of American foreign policy.

The FBI kept files on white people who met with black people. There was stuff in their files on so-and-so who attended a Paul Robeson concert. The major victims of McCarthyism and the Cold War at home were not Communists. The major victims were ordinary Americans who were dis-

senters from the establishment. People in Hollywood, who were not about to overthrow the government. Writers and directors who were liberals, progressives, maybe some of them were members of the Communist Party; I don't know. But it was an effective way for both major parties to gain political credits with the American people.

Also, and this is very important, it became the Soviet Union abroad and the so-called communist menace at home that was the excuse for building up a huge military machine. We spent tril-

lions and trillions of dollars since World War II, on the basis of an overblown, over-inflated threat of world domination, money which could have been used to make this an ideal society, to wipe out poverty, wipe out homelessness, create universal free health care for everyone. The amount of money which has been wasted, and continues to be wasted in building up a huge military apparatus, is based on threats that are more imagined than real.

You see it today. Now that the Soviet Union is gone, they don't have that reason for a military machine, so you invent other reasons. You take little pip-squeak nations around the world and say North Korea is a threat, Iraq is a threat, Serbia is a threat. On that basis, you waste \$200-300 billion dollars worth of the taxpayers' money annually on military apparatus.

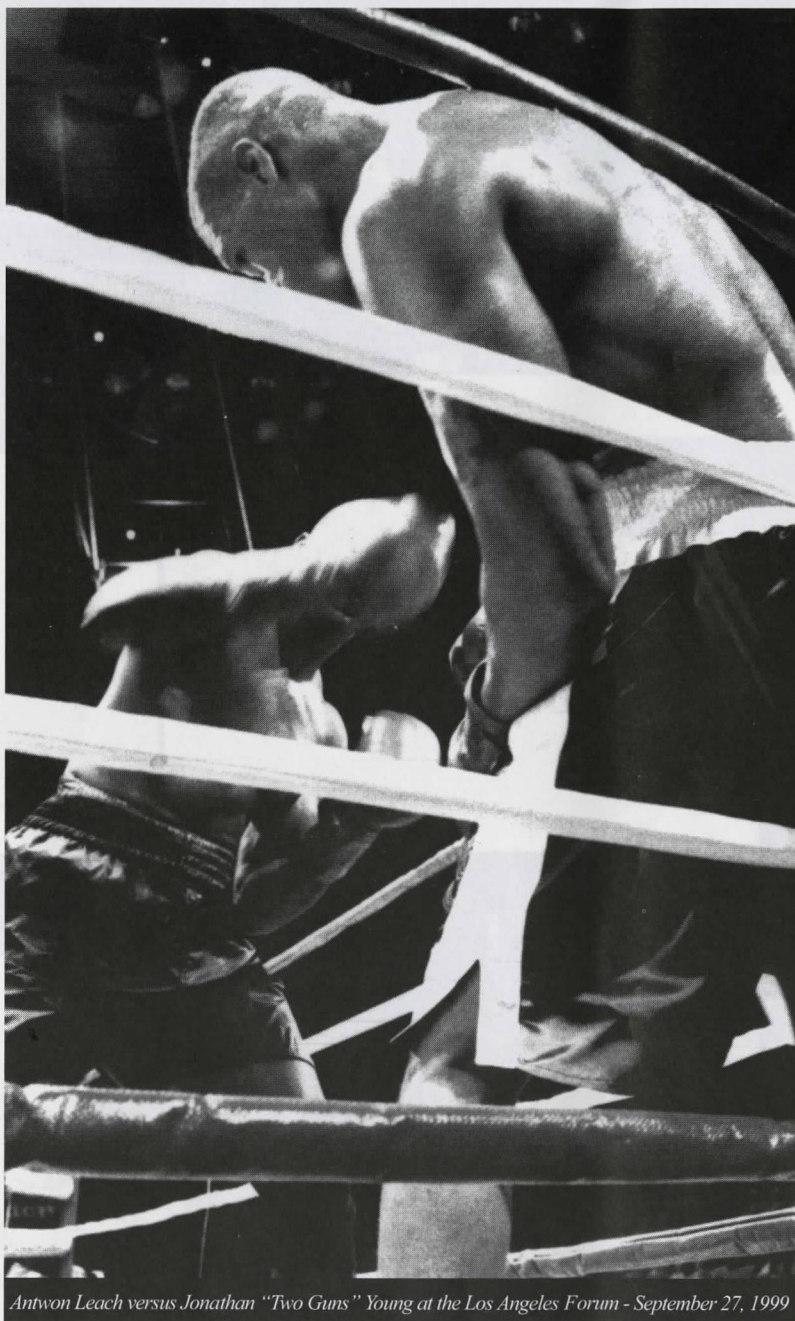
Clamor: I know in your book *People's History of the United States*, you show evidence that after World War II there was a fear in the ruling circles that the economy could collapse since the U.S. was suddenly left without an enemy to justify large war expenditures. Does the U.S. operate on a permanent military economy?

Zinn: No doubt about it. The military budget has absorbed a huge, huge amount of the wealth of the nation. On the one hand, you might say it has staved off an economic crisis. On the other, it has wasted our wealth. We could stave off an economic crisis by having huge public works programs in which we used the money spent for nuclear submarines and jet aircraft, and use that money to build our cities, clear up our lakes and rivers and take care of our people.

I think the human race has to find more imaginative, more ingenious ways of dealing with tyranny and aggression than simply indiscriminately killing large numbers of people which is what war is all about.

The Sweet Science

by Matt Average



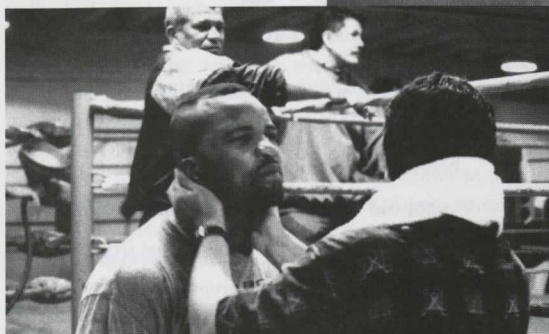
Antwon Leach versus Jonathan "Two Guns" Young at the Los Angeles Forum - September 27, 1999

From the gym to the ring, boxing is essentially a lifestyle. Many top fighters have been training since they were as young as eight years old to get where they are today. In the gyms you can see the generations from the past to the present on any given day. Old fighters from the '50s, '60s, and '70s are now training the youth in the sweet science, passing along gained knowledge and history which, in turn, will be shared by the next generation.

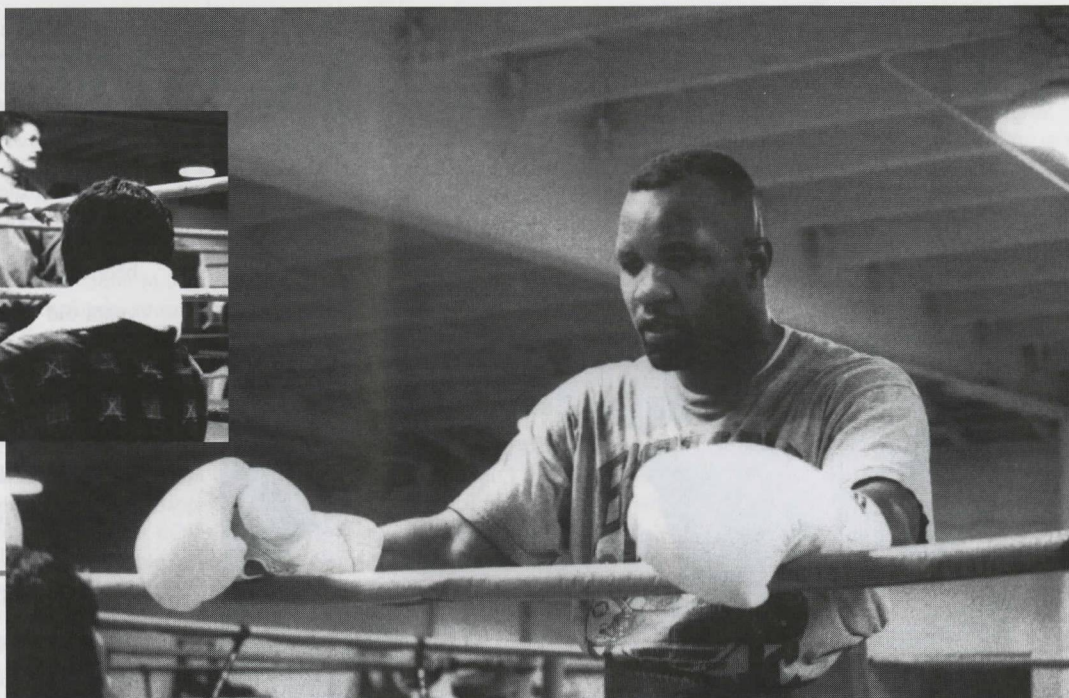
Fans will often drop in on their lunch break to watch their favorite boxer spar in preparation for his next fight. Old timers hang out and recount the old days for anyone interested and they tell the stories with a gleam in their eyes. They talk about the greats they saw, and how things used to be locally; and about how so-and-so changed their name to fit whatever ethnic pride was dominant at the time just so they could box; or how this guy died in the ring; or how that guy was a great fighter; or who had too many vices; or what gym was the best.

People used to pay a quarter to watch fighters spar at Los Angeles' Main Street gym back in the '50s. They would crowd into the balcony area, side by side, to get a view of the top fighters at the time. An ex-employee told me that the gentleman who took the change at the door died quietly on the job.

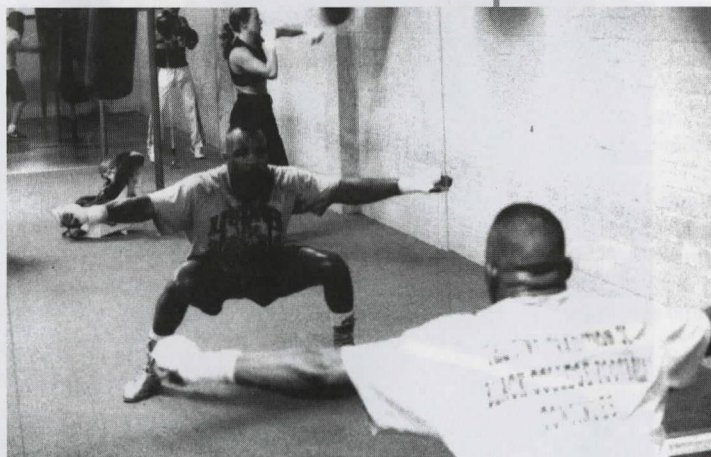
The fights themselves are an unbelievable event—even the small fights in front of crowds no larger than 200 people. All walks of life can be found—from pimps and movies stars to the average citizen. Various stages of human drama unfold, whether it be a fighter sucker-punched and struggling to remain in the battle before falling face down minutes later, or a crowd on its feet cheering wildly as two young men slug it out toe to toe, from corner to corner, ending the fight in a draw, or when the hand is raised of the winning champion.



Pat Thorns being interviewed by Fox Sports at the Los Angeles Forum - July 28, 1999



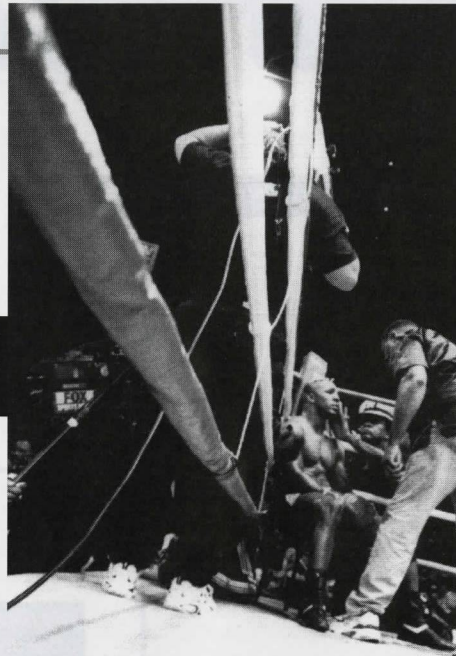
Reggie Johnson working out at the Los Angeles Boxing Club in the Spring of 1999



Reggie Johnson working out at the Los Angeles Boxing Club in the Spring of 1999



Andre Cray knocked down at the Los Angeles Forum - July 28, 1999



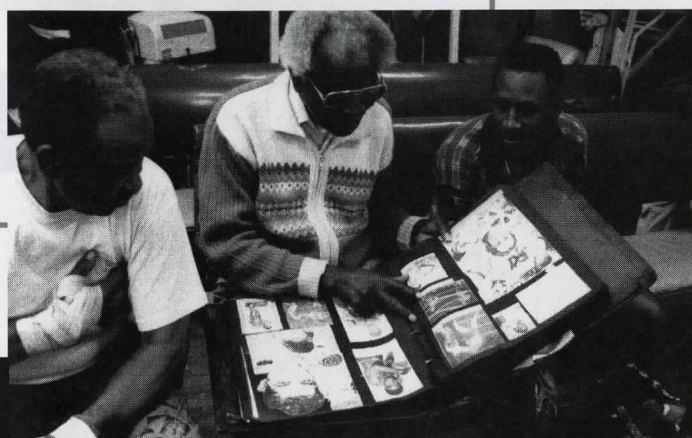
Jonathan "Two Guns" Young in the corner at the Los Angeles Forum - September 27, 1999

Andre Cray at the Los Angeles Forum - July 28, 1999





Ken Aulsey KO'd in the first round - July 26, 1999



Old Timers looking over a scrapbook at the Broadway Street Gym - Spring 1999.



Jonathan "Two Guns" Young (foreground) and Antwon Leach (lower right) at the Los Angeles Forum - September 27, 1999



Resistance is as Natural as Breathing: A conversation with Billie Strain

by Basil Elias

Billie Strain is an activist, writer, poet, artist and playful friend. Her life story and work for justice have inspired me and so many others in ways that words could never describe. I wanted to take the time to ask her questions so she could share her visions with you.

My name is Basil. I am a student of life and am committed to seeing the end of oppression. I hope that this conversation will open new doors for you.

WARNING! This interview contains graphic depictions of abuse.

Basil: When did you first get involved in activism?

Billie: I've been socially conscious ever since I can remember. My mom always talked about the civil rights movement as something that she felt a part of, and an important period in time. I was raised with stories about protests she had been to and voter registration and stuff like that. It was part of what normal life was to have a consciousness about that. Although as a single mother working five 12 hour days a week and on weekends, it wasn't something that we did that often, going out and going to protests. We did go to a few really big protests and stuff like that. When I was in sixth grade, I wrote an article called "Thou shalt not kill with nuclear weapons," and submitted it into a contest, and I won the contest. In elementary school, I also wrote this poem called "If I had my way" and it said things like, "If I had my way, everyone would keep the peace", and "If I had my way, President Reagan would resign". Me and my mom used to heckle him when he came on TV - we hated him. I grew up in that kind of household and then branched out into what I was really interested in, which was punk. Through punk I started getting a consciousness in terms of specific issues. I started going to meetings of a group called Positive Force, when I was 16.

Basil: What year was that?

Billie: 1990.

Basil: That was when you started doing activism on issues that you were more interested in?

Billie: It was when I started to pursue activism through something I was interested in, which was punk. Positive Force was an overall general political group that pretty much took the left position on most issues and did a lot of benefit shows. It's been around since the mid-eighties and it's still around. We would have political events like show movies and have punk percussion protests and everyone would bring things to bang on and be really loud. It was fun.

Basil: What kind of issues did your mom bring into your life?

Billie: My mom gave me a consciousness about racism as a black and white issue, and about sexism. Those were the two issues that were prominent. On a different level we talked a lot about class oppression, but more on a day to day financial struggle level. There was no curfew in my town but there was a curfew in my neighborhood and the police came to enforce it. This definitely gave me a consciousness. I felt like I was poor. As I got older I started becoming embarrassed for people to come over. My mom, on the other hand, has always been the "fuck the owning class" kind of person and didn't care what people thought.

Basil: So, she gave you race as a black/white issue, sexism, and taught you about class oppression?

Billie: Class as a lived experience. Not like the word classism was ever spoken in my house. I remember the first time I mentioned to my mom that we

were working class was when I was in college and I was really scared. I called my mom up and was trying to figure out how to drop the issue. I was afraid that she was going to invalidate what I was saying and I was in college and in this whole "identity politics" thing. It really mattered if I was *truly, genuinely* working class (laughs). Now I couldn't give a rats ass for anyone else's validation for who I am.

I just want to say right now that I do not see these social issues as separate. They can be looked at separately, but they all fit into the same picture. They are all connected. I don't see these issues as competing because they are all connected.

Basil: Before we go on any further, let me ask you this. What has social activism been to you?

Billie: The word activism is obviously centered around the word act. And an act doesn't necessarily have to be a physical act like going out to the middle of the street. Activism means, I have a vision for the kind of world that I want, and that vision has to do with compassion and justice, and I'm willing to take action toward that goal. That's how I see an activist. I don't agree with what everyone who's an activist is doing. To me, "activism" implies working for something beyond your own self-interest, even if your work benefits you as well.

Basil: What are some of the issues you've dealt with as an activist?

Billie: The Community for Creative Non-Violence is a homeless shelter in Washington DC, and was started with a specific vision for social change. On Saturday nights Positive Force staffed two overnight volunteers at the CCNV clinic. I was already comfortable with CCNV cuz I had been there before and I had worked there before with my mom. So I coordinated the Saturday night volunteers for a while with Positive Force. I spent a lot of Saturday nights at the CCNV shelter. A couple times I did meals on wheels, which was delivering meals to elderly people who were low income. I also helped organize some of the benefit concerts. We would do benefit concerts for different organizations and write a booklet that had articles and different people in Positive Force would write about what they thought about the issue. At the end of my senior year of high school, I organized a benefit concert for the Washington Area Clinic Defense Task Force. It was a lot of work. I also was trained as a clinic defender. I was escorting women to the clinics through protestors and stuff like that. I felt and still feel strongly about women's reproductive freedom.

Basil: What year was that?

Billie: In 1991. Which was also the year that riot grrrl started. Then my activism totally took off in a different direction. I started getting into fanzines and writing and talking about being a sexual abuse survivor.

Basil: What is riot grrrl, for people who don't know?

Billie: Riot grrrl was a group of girls, mostly age 14-25, that got together to talk about sexism and then did projects out of those meetings. For example, fanzines or activism or concerts. When riot grrrl first started, it was met with a lot of resistance. One of my roommates was physically assaulting me in my house because he hated riot grrrl.

Basil: Did stuff happen a lot like what happened with your roommate?

Billie: Yeah. People were threatening us. It was a bunch of girls getting together to talk about sexism. A lot of people (especially men) felt threatened by that. There were two ways that a lot of men reacted. One was totally being like "fuck you, you're fucked up for doing this" which was sometimes backed up by physical violence, and another big group of men in the punk scene were like "oh this is really great, let me help you." There were a lot of men who were paternalistic and who wanted to "help" us do our feminism thing. These men considered themselves feminists. Riot grrrl was a really significant time in my life because it started the summer I turned 18 and all of a sudden I'm launching off this nationwide feminist movement. I learned

so much from my involvement and I'm glad that I stuck with it when it was difficult. I'm still marginally involved. I'm on an email list and I still work on riot grrrl projects with people. I became a riot grrrl as I became an adult and I'm still a riot grrrl.

Basil: What does it mean to you to be a riot grrrl?

Billie: In 1999 what it means to me to be a riot grrrl is

- I am not bound by other peoples opinions of what I should or shouldn't be as a woman or as anything else
- I am totally dedicated to the struggle for all women's liberation from all forms of oppression
- I am totally dedicated to critically and lovingly supporting other people who are working towards women's liberation

That's what it means to me right now. That's not what it meant for me in 1991.

Basil: You left doing specifically feminist activism...

Billie: I slowly moved away from the nationwide community that was loosely structured around riot grrrl and fanzines. I did things in the middle of all the riot grrrl stuff like Food Not Bombs and...I don't even remember. I started Riot Grrrl Press. I left the riot grrrl community because I was in the spotlight and I wasn't able to be. I wasn't able to take criticism and separate my shit from what other people thought or said about me or about anything. So I started doing activism that didn't put me in the spotlight and I stopped doing as much performance, but stuck with my fanzines.

I got involved with the Big Mountain Support Group (BMSG). For anyone reading this that doesn't know, Big Mountain is in Arizona and living there are traditional Diné (Navajo) people that the United States government and the Peabody Coal Company are trying to kick off their land. Working with the BMSG was really awesome because, aside from one person who was really domineering, everybody else had the understanding that it was in all of our best interests to work well together. I came out to the group as being an abuse survivor and having multiple personalities early on. In the BMSG we wanted the way we ran the group to reflect the goals we were working toward. To be respectful of each other and to deal with issues of privilege. I'm still distributing the organizing manual that we did, and trying to keep up with what's going on at Big Mountain and the other people I worked with, even though my health has been really awful. It is very important to me. Through that I got really intensely involved in doing anti-racist activism in a concrete way.

Basil: You said that all these things are connected. How would you say that? How is being a sexual abuse survivor, doing meals on wheels and working with the BMSG connected?

Billie: I came to this understanding through my self and my experiences. I haven't explicitly talked about this yet, but I was brutally abused when I was growing up. I was in fear of my life constantly. I have consistently intuitively understood injustice on a very personal level. Through the abuse that was perpetrated on my body, mind and spirit, I came to understand that people are capable of deliberate cruelty. Because I understood that people are capable of murdering innocent children and babies even in their own family, it was no shock to me that the United States government was/is perpetuating genocide here and in other places. I came from a basic level of belief that atrocities happen. I believe that people who look really good on the outside and to the public eye can do really fucking evil things. A lot in this society is based on appearances and making things look like they're okay when they're totally not. There wasn't a time when I thought "I can't believe the US government did that" or "I can't believe that these horrible things are happening in the world." It was like, from the core of my being, I understand this.

Oppression happens to people in their bodies. When someone is suffering because someone else is using power to control them without their

A lot in this society is based on appearances and making things look like they're okay when they're totally not.

consent, that's basically what oppression is to me. There's a difference between having power and having power to control people. I consider myself a powerful person, but at the same time, when I am not able to eat, when I don't have access to medical care...that's oppression. I have power to direct my own life but I also deal with oppression as someone who is poor and disabled. The reason I am disabled is because of the abuse, which created a series of locks on the doors of what I can do in my life that I'm now picking.

Basil: At what age did your abuse begin?

Billie: This is the memory that I'm most confident about because the memory is the clearest. I remember my dad coming into my room and having a hard on and sticking his penis into my mouth. At the time that I was having this memory I had no teeth. None of my teeth had come in.

Basil: You were an infant.

Billie: Yes. It really makes me sick to say it.

Basil: What other kinds of memories do you have? Was it just your dad that abused you?

Billie: I know that my dad is not the only person that abused me sexually, and I know that my mother and my father were physically and emotionally abusive to me. Both of my parents were severely physically abused as kids, and my mom was sexually abused as well. My parents participated in, and forced me to participate in, abuse that was perpetuated by numerous adults. It was organized and deliberate. The abuse involved being tortured and forced to watch others be tortured. Being forced to witness murders, and whether they were real or faked I have no idea, but the way they affected me as a child, I saw them as real. They wanted me to think that it was real and I did. Many of the things they did to me were to deliberately create dissociation so I would not be aware of the abuse and so I wouldn't remember it. Some of these people were in prominent positions in our society, and some of them were just regular people with regular jobs. I believe that I was abused as part of mind control experiments that were done by the US government and in particular by the CIA. These were related to the MKULTRA experiments that are totally documented. I think so because the information I have come up with in my memory process corroborates it with other people's stories down to the detail. I was far from the only person involved. Other survivors have testified in the US Congress about this. So it is starting to come into public light. Right now I'm in the middle of getting those memories. I've worked through a lot of the incest memories. These mind control and ritual abuse memories are really difficult and I'm facing them right now.

Basil: You said that you are just getting the memories now, and you've talked about dissociation and about how when you were young and being abused you weren't aware on a conscious level of what was happening. Can you explain that?

Billie: I'm not a shrink and I'm not an expert, so I'm gonna explain this from my own perspective. So, I'm a baby, and laying in my crib and something is happening to me by one of my parents who is my anchor to the world. I have no idea of where the hell I am. This parent is subjecting me to something that totally violates our relationship and I don't have any logic to rationalize it. I don't have anything except the bare experience of it happening. My dad is raping me. So, what am I gonna do with this information? I can't understand it. There are three possible responses to ongoing abuse like this- you die, become psychotic or dissociate. While the event is happening, my mind, through its own intelligence and creative process figures out a way for me to not have to be there while my dad is raping me, and that is dissociation. There's mild forms of dissociation, for example, when you're driving down a highway and you get to your exit and you're like, damn, how did I get here. That's mild dissociation. But what happens when an adult rapes an infant is probably going to be severe dissociation because that infant has no way to comprehend what is going on. Their mind takes them somewhere else. Some part of my mind did know what was going on but it wasn't the part that went through every day. That part was like- if you want to look at it like a locked filing cabinet, and the abuse could unlock that filing cabinet. These people

that are doing systematic abuse, they know what they're doing, and they have figured out ways to manipulate this. For example, in one of the filing cabinets, is this part of me has learned how to enjoy being raped, how to enjoy having sex with adults when I'm six. They know how to call this part out of me and tell me to have sex and rape me and I can look like I'm enjoying it. This subconscious part of me, that I as the person who goes through my day to day life am not aware of, knows how to enjoy being raped and they're good at it. The fact that they know how to do that makes me be able to go to school every day and be in first grade classes. Because, on a day to day level, I was not conscious of the abuse.

I had a memory a while ago of being in a laboratory setting and these people were banging my head against the floor saying "your name is Laura, your name is Laura". They were throwing me up against the wall and banging my head against the floor (crying) telling me that my name is Laura. That was one incident where they deliberately created a part of me that they could control and call out. And they did that through torturing me. And maybe people who are reading this are not thinking about this, but banging my head against the floor was a really smart way for them to abuse me because if they do it right no one will ever see the fact that my head is completely bruised. It was a part of me that they could damage and not be detected. Another thing they did was to cut me on my labia with razor blades because the skin of the labia heals really fast and doesn't scar easily (crying).

Basil: let's take a break...

When someone is suffering because someone else is using power to control them without their consent, that's basically what oppression is to me. There's a difference between having power and having power to control people.

Basil: I'm just trying to make sure that I understand this. The alters are created from dissociation?

Billie: They can be created deliberately by the abusers or

they can come as a natural response to trauma. So I have a bunch of alters that were "born" through specific types of abuse that I don't know if

my abusers know about them or not, but they weren't deliberately created by the abusers. I also have ones, for example Laura was deliberately created by someone else so they could have someone that would answer to them. The insiders are great and I really appreciate them. I love them, because they saved my life. And they are me- parts of me. If it wasn't for them I wouldn't be here right now. Because how could I get through every single day of my life, being a six year old kid getting raped and tortured and going through all these crazy experiments where they're sticking electrodes in me and doing crazy shit to me like I was a lab rat. This stuff was completely incomprehensible. I could not process what was happening to me at all and these subconscious parts of me took over during the abuse so I could live.

Basil: You've talked a few times about getting these memories now, and I was thinking that it would be helpful if you could talk a little about what it's like to recover a memory when so much time has passed?

Billie: First of all, let me be really clear. I have multiple personalities, and that's an integral part of how I get memories in my healing process. A lot of times I'll get information from another part of myself. I get the body symptoms, like for example, when I was remembering being given LSD, I had the body symptoms. My face broke out, I was really achy, my stomach hurt, I felt like I was tripping. That sucked but it was a very mild body symptom compared to some of the others I've had. These scratches and marks appear on my body that are from things that happened years and years ago. Now I've got a huge tumor on my ovary which, in my opinion, is another physical manifestation of what happened. I don't really know how to explain that. Yesterday I had a really sharp pain in my asshole and it was a body memory

of being raped. I used to not know. I used to have these phantom pains and not know. I would get the information, I would get the body stuff and I would get the emotions, but I wasn't able to put them together. I was thinking "why am I thinking these weird thoughts, obviously this didn't happen or I'd be really upset," and then two days later I'd be sobbing or screaming at someone in a rage and I'm getting these shooting pains in my uterus or pelvic area and I'm not thinking these things go together. Now I can say, when I get this pain, I might know the source of it and I might not, but I can know that it's possibly from something that happened to me. If I get the other pieces of information; I get the emotions and I get the cognitive aspect then I can put it together like it's this huge fuckin puzzle, and I'm getting one tiny piece at a time. I go through the cognitive, the emotional and the physical aspects of the memory, and I also deal with the suffering that I went through on a spiritual level. A lot of times the spiritual aspect is not connected to individual memories but just an overall trying to get reconnected to the great mystery, to the universe, to everything that is.

Basil: Can you talk more about Multiple Personalities and how many alters you have?

Billie: We usually call ourselves the inside family. There's definitely more than 30 now. I know that I have deeper levels of alters, most of whom I haven't met.

Basil: How long has it been since you first met an alter?

Billie: The first distinct alter who identified herself came out in 1995.

Basil: So, for the past 5 years, you have been meeting alters and recovering memories?

Billie: I was recovering memories before that. When I moved out of my mom's house, I immediately started dealing with it. Riot Grrrl had a lot to do with this because the other people who were trying to get all these girls together were talking openly about sexual abuse. I really knew that I had been sexually abused but I just held on to the information on a subconscious level until I moved out. As soon as I moved out it all started coming out. I started thinking about it and talking about it and writing about it. It was "I'm gonna go fucking crazy if I don't get in front of a typewriter or write this down right now".

The first step in my healing process was to just acknowledge, consciously, that this had happened. I went through a long period of just dealing with that. "Was I abused or wasn't I? I'm fucked up. I've got all these problems..." Still really hating myself.

I wrote a piece for a riot grrrl fanzine and the gist of the piece was that my dad had sexually abused me and had totally distorted my self image to the point where I hated myself. At this point the way I resisted hating myself was to say "I might hate myself, but I hate you more". Even though I don't feel that way anymore, I'm glad that I was able to say that. To say "Fuck you FUCK YOU I FUCKING HATE YOU FOR DOING THIS TO ME" was acknowledging that it was wrong. I didn't deserve it. There were slow realizations over the years. I was doing a lot of writing and public speaking-performance art and spoken word- about sexual abuse. It was really fucking intense. I don't know if it was the best thing for my healing process. But one thing it did was help me realize that I totally wasn't alone in what I was dealing with. Because I got so many letters, I was approached by so many people when I performed.

Basil: Who had been abused as well...

Billie: Right. Totally.

Basil: What were some of the steps in your healing process?

Billie: Doing public speaking and getting memories was what we did to heal

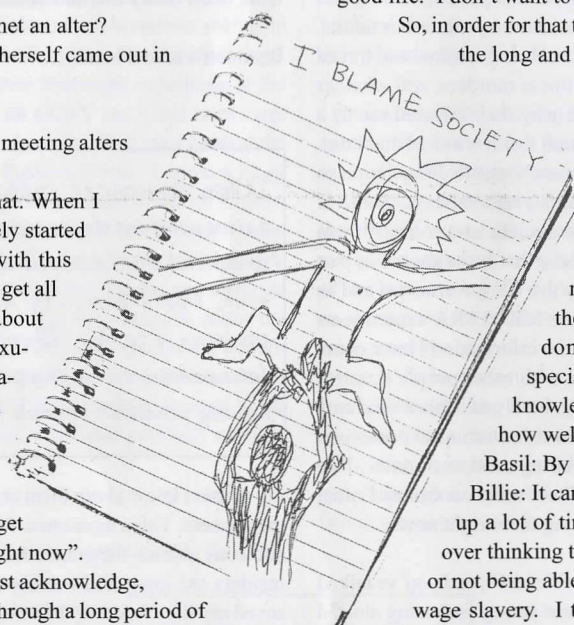
for a long time. Then I started doing *The Courage to Heal Workbook* and that was a monumental point in my healing process, because it started giving me ideas of ways I could take care of myself and nurture myself. I'm a person who's not been nurtured very much. It didn't occur to me that it would be a part of my healing because if it's not part of your life, you just don't think about it that often. *The Courage to Heal Workbook* did so much for me. One thing though is that I did all the work. They asked the questions, but I answered them. I did it. That's important. I still have a hard time nurturing myself and taking care of myself, but just the act of writing it down made it important to me. This was an important step to say I'm a good person, I'm worth taking care of. Then I got into co-counseling which was based on something that I really needed to hear at the time. I'm a good person. I was born a good person. I've been brutally abused, so it was a radical thing to hear. I've still been working to weave this healing work I've been doing with the social change work that I do. Another step I've been taking is to try to heal my body, and to heal my spirituality. These are two big issues that I've been working on for the past bunch of years.

Basil: Mind, body and spirit.

Basil: How does your healing process tie into your activism?

Billie: My healing process ties in with my activism because I want to live a good life. I don't want to live a good life at the expense of anyone else.

So, in order for that to happen, there needs to be a revolution. That's the long and short of it.



Basil: What are some of your dreams that a revolution would bring upon?

Billie: Each individual is completely powerful. Each person is a living manifestation of what some people choose to call God, which to me is Love, the life force which makes everything move. I don't think that in the culture that I live in that's acknowledged. I don't think that each person's uniqueness, specialness, and worthiness as a human being is acknowledged. My worthiness has nothing to do with how well I can stock books, how well I can talk,

Basil: By what kind of car you drive...

Billie: It can't be measured by any of that stuff. I can't get up a lot of times, so I experience other people's negativity over thinking that I should be able to do things that I can't do or not being able to support myself in a society that's based on wage slavery. I think that any kind of oppression is basically denying the person who's oppressed their basic human rights (food, shelter, medical care, dignity, self determination...). That's unacceptable.

I'm not attached to anarchism, although I identify as an anarchist. How I see anarchism is people governing their own lives based on their accountability to each other and not any higher authority. That's anarchy but also the way that people have lived for centuries on this earth. Maybe not all of my ancestors. Some of them have lived that way. I really believe it's something that's possible in human society. In fact, I think it's gonna be necessary. A very small group of people is trying to control the rest of the world. That's not sustainable. I see that it may end life on earth as we know it, and I don't want that to happen, although I'm open to that possibility. I live in a culture where the dominant view is that you can go up forever and never have to come down. It's like this constant high, new toys, new everything all the time. Going up and up and up and up and at some point it's not going to go up anymore, because it's building on the backs of living beings that are being crushed by this constant "progress". The power to control life is moving into fewer and fewer people's hands. What I'd like to see is for people not to have the power to control others & not allow their lives to be dictated by anyone else. That doesn't mean you should never tell anyone what you think about their behavior, it means you don't have the right to deny some-

one their humanity. No one has the right to do that. I want to live in a society based on that.

Basil: You have a really awesome vision, and you come from a place of severe abuse. My question is, how do people see what you see, people who haven't gone through what you've gone through?

Billie: Not very many people aren't experiencing this kind of stuff, and when I say "this kind of stuff", I'm talking about oppression. I'm not talking about any type of child abuse specifically. There are people who are not cognizant that they are oppressed and people who are not cognizant of their privilege. Those two exist simultaneously. There's a lack of people wanting to accept the world how it is. I was not shocked to see oppression because of the things that happened to me in my life, but the thing is I don't think you have to experience that kind of thing to believe that it happens to other people. People in the US are taught a lot of total lies about the nature of reality and the fact is that some people know they are lies because they are experiencing it directly. Even though some people haven't experienced the truth directly and brutally, they can still acknowledge that they're living in a society that is founded on a bunch of lies. People need to think for themselves, ask themselves if this is true. Ask how it makes them feel.

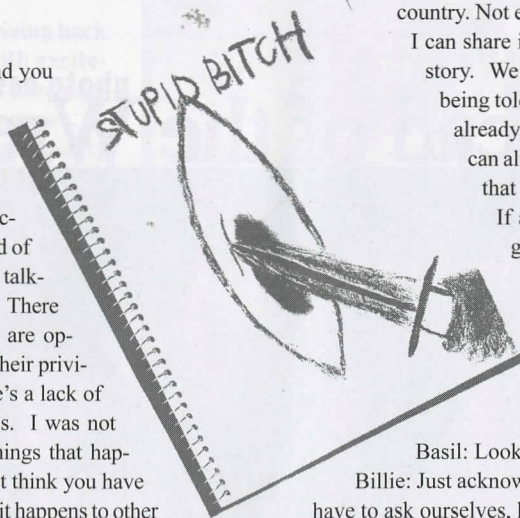
Each individual has their own story to tell, whatever their views are. I

went to college because I wanted to know the true history of this country. Not everyone is gonna do that, and I'm glad I learned it so I can share it. Whatever stories I learned are still not the whole story. We have to acknowledge that there's more than what's being told. Most people reading this magazine may know that already, but still it can always be taken to another level. It can always be taken to another level. What makes you think that the lies stop at what you feel comfortable believing? If anyone reading this interview doesn't think that the government tortures children, and uses children and unconsenting adults in experiments, why? What is so much harder to believe about that than anything else? Where someone's mind stops is usually where they feel like they can believe. What people need to do is accept the possibility.

Basil: Look into it.

Billie: Just acknowledge the possibility and see where it takes you. We have to ask ourselves, how can what this person is saying be true. I'm saying I was abused by the government. I'm saying that I was raped as a 5 or 6 year old child by people who knew what they were doing. They deliberately did it to me. What does this mean? Each person in human society has a connection to this. What is your connection to this? And what are you going to do about it?

Billie's zines are available through Planting Seeds Press (see ad below)



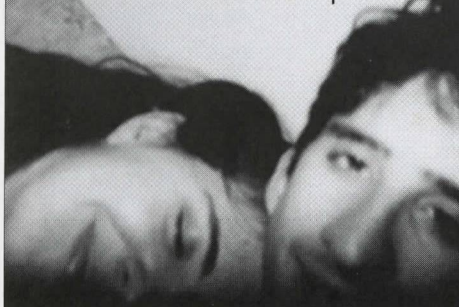
"in revolution
a teardrop is not surrender
it is confrontation

and love is not weakness
but a guarantee for victory."

*mateo roose

Planting Seeds
Community Awareness Project
po box 33368
austin, tx 78764
www.tao.ca/~plantingseeds

send a stamp for our catalog of
zines and workshops



rOmeG records.

rOmeG recOrds is an independent label
for acoustic, queer, experimental,
and other marginalized musics.

"acOuStic revOlution" CD
release date: Jan. 1, 2000
with various acoustic punk musicians,
including: sissies - goodnite moon -
sarah bishop - dennis driscoll -
gina young - delta dart - allison williams
and other rockin revolutionaries

Box 60358
Olympia, WA 98505
romerecords@hotmail.com
<http://homepages.go.com/~romerecords/acousticcore.html>

LIVE PUNK VIDEOS!

Pick 3 of any of the following bands and send in \$13(\$15overseas) and they will be put on a 2 hour video tape. These shows are awesome quality, many off the masters. See our complete list of live videos at

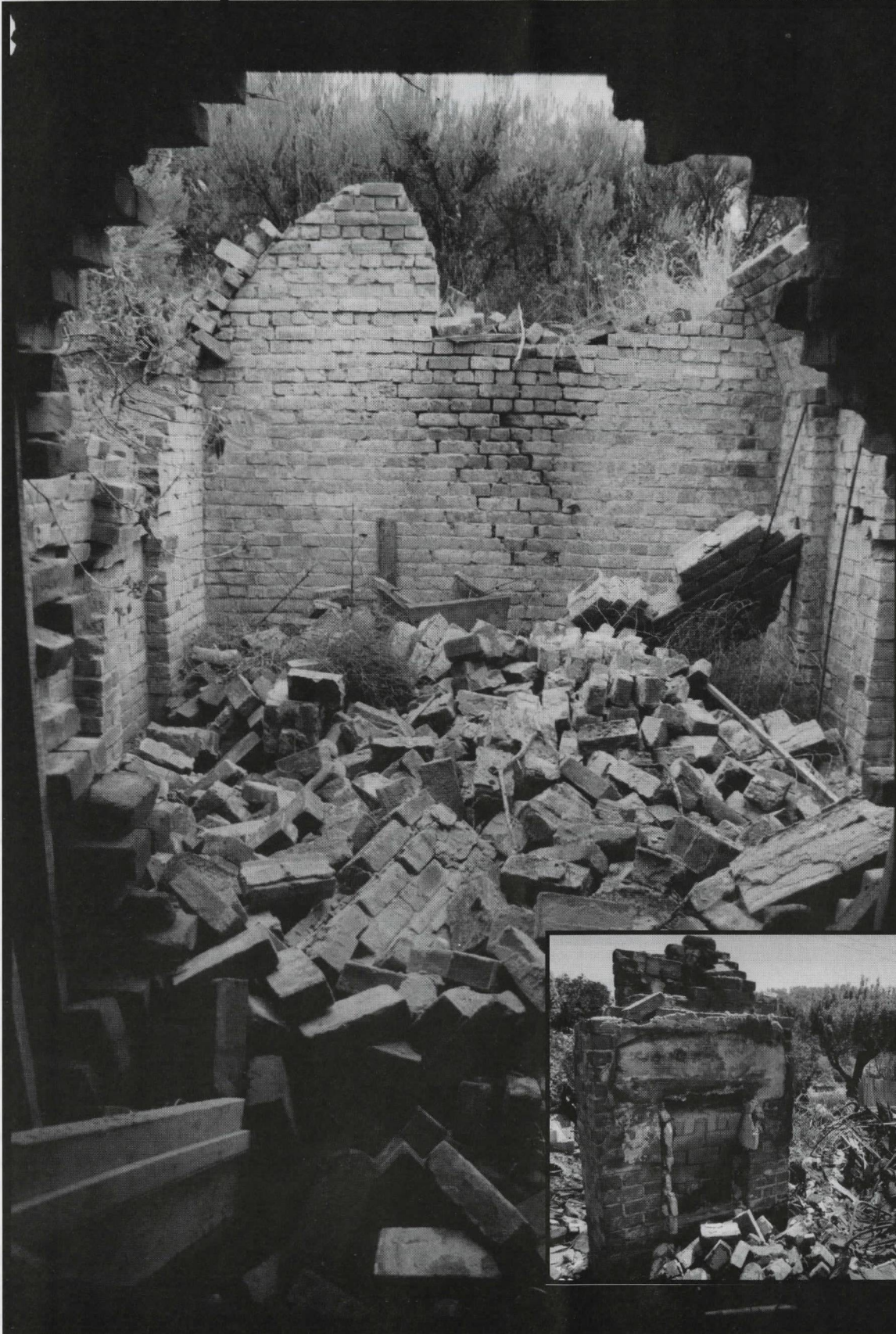
www.indyrock.com/proudhonfamily/

Or send stamps for list. Send lists for trades. Some of the bands we have are: AFI, Ag front, All, Antiflag, At Drive In, Avail, Bad Brains, Breligion, Blackflag, Bluetip, Bold, Born against, Boris, BouncSouls, Boysefire, Builtto Spill, Business, CapnJazz, c.of strength, Circle jerks, CIV, Cromags, Dagnasty, DK's, Elliott, Descendents, Donna's, Drop kick m's, Dwarfes, ECrisis, E.smith, Integrity Exploited, FacetoFace, Fifteen, Fugazi, GBH, Getupkids, GG, HuskerDu, Braid, GoodRiddance, GB's, GreenDay, H2O, Hatebreed, HotWaterM, Hum, Iggy, Ink&dagg, Jawbreaker, JesusLizard, Jim World, Gwar, Devo, Lagwagon, Less than Jake, Lifetime, Crudos, Madball, Makeup, Man or astromant, Mineral, Minor threat, Misfits, Vandals ModMouse, Mr T.EX., MXPX, Op Ivy, Neurosis NOFX, DriveLehu NoMeansNo, Embrace, Pennywise, Pixies, PromiseRing, YOT, Propagandhi, Queens, Quicksand, Ramones, Rancid, RFTC, Samhain, SWeasel, 7Seconds, Shellac, SOIA, Sleater Kinney, Smiths, Snapcase, SocialD, Subhumans, Sunny Day, Suicidal T's, Bane, SMachines, Tilt, TotalChaos, Unbroken, UsBombs, Huey, PO BOX 95516, Seattle, WA 98145
Email: choosethehuey@hotmail.com

photo essay by Chris Boarts Larson

One Step Ahead of the Wrecking Ball

1



- 1)
Washington Wheat
Farm
- 2)
The Hearth, VA
- 3)
Fetus Squat after the
fire, NYC
- 4)
Light in the Pantry,
VA
- 5)
6th Floor,
Fetus Squat, NYC
- 6)
5th Floor,
Fetus Squat, NYC

2



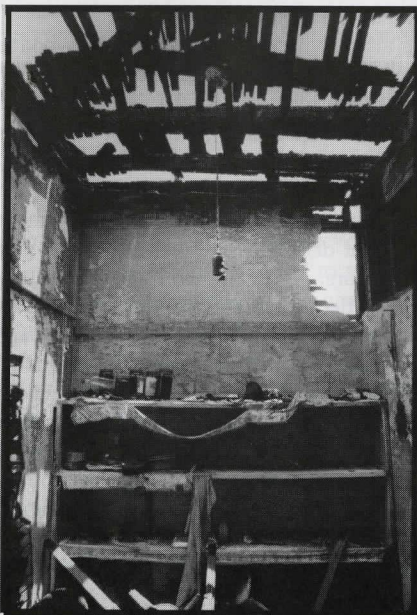
Walking down alleys or driving back roads in the country, I look with excitement for those remnants of a time past that most people see as an eyesore. In these old buildings I see a simple beauty of weathered wood, crumbling stone, cracked and peeling paint. As the building deteriorates, one can see the details that are usually hidden. These buildings hold a lot of history and tell a lot of stories. As they come apart some is displayed, while much remains a mystery to be unraveled by your imagination, seen from a new perspective.

I enjoy seeing the strength of nature reclaiming those neglected. Hearty weeds thrive in unlikely places. Sprouting through buildings, in and out of windows, out of roof tops and foundations. Vines entwine and overtake, weaving their grip and reclaiming the wood and stone. They are pulled back to the earth to start the cycle all over again.

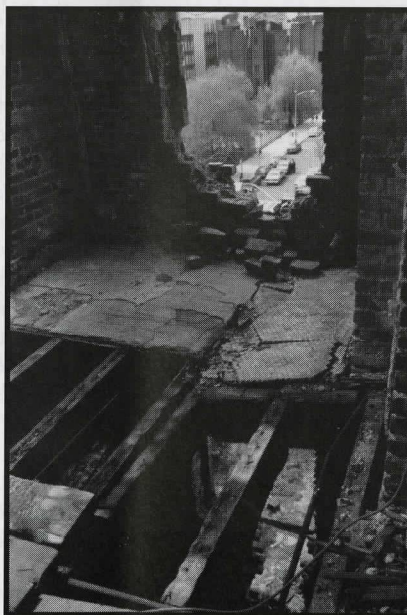
Whether it's urban or rural, it's the character of these buildings; the timelessness of the basic elements of wood, stone, glass, and paint, that I'm so attracted to. There is an esthetic of the moment in which a building is in it's most dilapidated form that I strive to capture. The endless cycle that puts nature and development in conflict is at it's cusp when the building is most revealed and nature is about to prevail. While some of these old places seem eternal, this moment is fleeting and remains quite fragile. While the modern world continues to expand its urban sprawl, the simplicity of sunlight illuminating wood and stone is something to hold onto.



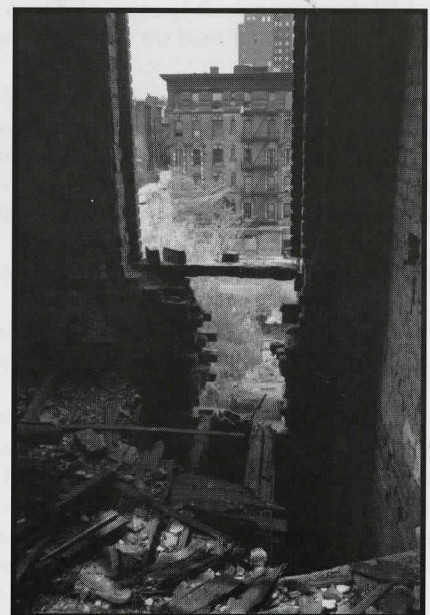
3



4



5



6

First rule of fight club: You don't talk about fight club

Second rule of fight club: You don't talk about fight club

Except fight club depends upon people breaking the rules. The rules were created with the presupposition that they would be broken. Fight club transforms this paradox into a new (il)logic. Transgression is built into the rules. Fight Club is a picture of aesthetic transgression.

We, the spectators meet our nameless Narrator. He is the embodiment of the rule: the rule of capitalist consumerism, of things - more and more things, of passivity, of level-headedness, of lifestyle. Our narrator meets Tyler Durden.

Tyler is no embodiment; he is beyond body. He rejects and mutilates the rule: the rule of Citibank Visa, of reified existence, of 9 to 5, of life as style. Tyler throws our narrator into the world of transgression, into an isolated and abandoned house in the midst of a metropolis, into a radical self-consciousness amidst a world of weak and terrified automatons, into a world that reveals the clarity of night and the tremors of the underground. Together these two men form fight club.

Fight club is not simply a boxing club; it is a nightly reinvention of the body. During brutal bare-fisted fights in the concrete basement of a local bar, pairs

of men extend beyond rule and imagination what the body can and will do. The pure physicality and spontaneity of the performance allow this violent dance to bring meaning and life to men for whom men's self-help groups and the routinized workweek have failed to provide stimulus. Fight clubs begin to surface in cities across the country. Basements are filled with the men who serve our food, guard our streets, make our cars, design our computers, and sell our life insurance. These basements provide a space for discontented male energy, reflecting the current crisis in masculinity, in which the fashionable, single, 30-something corporate moron replaces the patriarchal, middle-class suburbanites of yesteryear. A bloodied, bruised, dirty, bald-headed, and permanently scarred man is the new paradigm of masculinity. This paradigm is Tyler Durden.

Tyler earns his living DIY-style. He makes fragrant body soaps out of human fat stolen from the local liposuction factory. He then sells this soap for ridiculous amounts of money to upscale department stores, thus selling women back their body fat in the form of a lavender cleansing bar. Not all his acts of resistance are so subtle, but all are this clever.

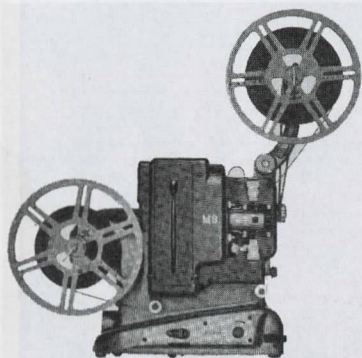
In Tyler's presence, death is no longer something that happens to someone else. Death is not the mortal grip of an almighty other. Death is ours. It is a direct confrontation. It is

a physical reality and a certain future. This is what makes life all the more significant, all the more real, all the more immediate, and all the more ours. In an aesthetic performance that transcends life and body Tyler emerges as conqueror.

This is not a particularly new image, but next to the Donald Trumps and the Bill Gates of our world, it is revolutionary one. Nevertheless, Tyler is another unrealizable ideal (coincidentally played by that Hollywood commodity called Brad Pitt), whom masses of men will hopelessly try to emulate. They will consume him as we consume more and more of our own products. Tyler fights the way we want to fight, talks the way we want to talk, acts the way we want to act, fucks the way we want to fuck. And if "we" are not men, therefore lacking the ability to imitate this charismatic figure, well we want to watch him fight, hear him talk, see him act, and feel him fuck.

His nihilism both comforts and frightens. We are drawn to him, while realizing that without some constraint this nihilism will lapse into hedonism. And we see what he is doing to the men around him. They have become precisely what Tyler was railing against. The narrator provides some constraint, some critical thinking, some ethical concern, and some moderation. Although drunk with exhilaration from the fights, the renewed sense of agency and reclaimed masculinity that Tyler brought into his life, our Narrator must sober up. That is not to say he must retreat back into the life of rules, but he must attempt to stop Tyler from becoming the new all-powerful rule. Again, Fight Club depends upon people breaking the rules. The rules were created with the presupposition that they would be broken. If we are left unable to break Tyler's rules, we have retreated back into a life of rules.

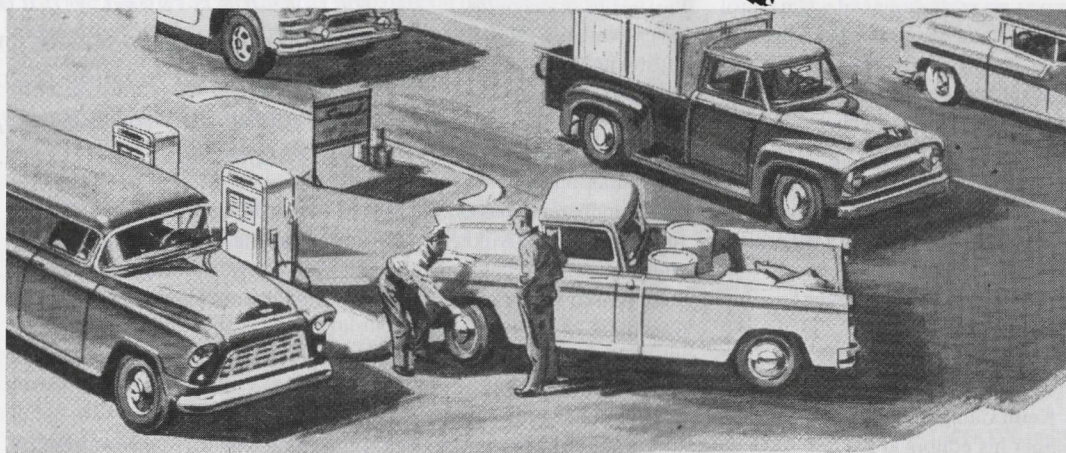
Nine times out of ten, Hollywood sells film viewers a nicely-packaged two-hour reinforcement of the rules: the rule of capitalism, the rule of patriarchy, the rule of white supremacy, the rule of lifestyle, the rule of the white male hero, his black sidekick, and his beautiful woman. Every once in a while, a movie leaks out of Hollywood that provides a glimpse of more. These are the films that make viewers reflect upon and question the lives we live. Fight Club is not a movie without paradox. It has deep internal contradictions. But spectators come to recognize paradox and contradiction precisely because the film has forced us to think. Hollywood does not often let us do that. But when it does, we should be both skeptical and appreciative, for it may not happen again for quite some time.



FIGHT CLUB

a critical review by Robyn Marasco

The Quickenings



MIKE WENDLING
DISCUSSES THE ROLE
OF THE INTERNET IN
CREATING GLOBAL
FOLKLORE OUT OF
URBAN LEGENDS

A man in Indonesia was at a gas station, filling up his car and talking on his cellular phone when the phone produced a spark, which ignited gas fumes and started a fire. The car was damaged, and the man was badly burned.

Or maybe not.

But because of this urban myth, decisions were made and debated in corporate boardrooms and city councils. Without any sort of committed lobbyists or group of concerned citizens, companies and cities came out with proclamations barring cell phones from gas stations.

To be sure, this is a trivial matter. The risk of blowing yourself up with a cell phone is, by all accounts, somewhere in the range of infinitesimal down to zero. And the mundane act of hanging more warning signs usually results in less risky behavior and fewer accidents. Better safe than sorry.

But cell phones and gas fumes aren't the real problem here, indeed, they aren't really a problem at all. What's at issue here is fact and superstition, and the way information moves in the digital age. This story is about who we should or shouldn't trust, how much of what we see we should believe, and how much faith we should put in technology.

And these issues are all in some way related to the question of whether an unnamed man in Indonesia blew himself up with a cell phone.

I was working for a news agency in Cleveland, Ohio, when behemoth British Petroleum America decided to modify its existing signs to include the cell phone warning. When I came into work one morning, I was assigned the story, and shown a similar article in a local newspaper. It was a routine assignment, but seeing as how BP is a very large company and cell phones near gas pumps might pose a new and as-of-yet little publicized risk (maybe even that journalistic coup, the "scare of the month"), there was a chance that the higher-ups in New York might be interested.

I began by calling a BP spokeswoman who had been quoted in the newspaper. She was, if not defensive, at least very eager to explain the situation to me.

"This is not a ban," she said. And indeed, the newspaper had used the word "ban," slightly overstating the case.

The spokeswoman then, in a strange leap of logic, went on to tell me about the man in Indonesia who had supposedly set himself on fire. But of course, she added, the incident wasn't "verifiable."

Here, as best as can be reconstructed, is the anatomy of a new urban myth. None of this, by the way, appeared in the account I wrote that afternoon. Not much of it was "verifiable," and very little of it had a direct impact on the story at hand.

It is interesting to note in that at a few basic "locations" in this account, that is, where someone put a policy or a newspaper article into actual hard type, some measure of "truth" can be determined, even if the truth is only that the person didn't know very much, or that there was no truth, but only a rumor. In between, reporters, webmasters, and public relations people simply repeated the fuzzy version of something they saw or something they read.

It is quite like a game of telephone in which every fifth person had a pad to jot down notes; only here, some of those notes are published and widely circulated, and others form the basis for decisions by companies and governments.

Just to be sure I wasn't chasing down an urban reality, I called a cell phone company. Why do some cellular phone manuals instruct the owner not to use the phone near a gas pump if an explosion risk is not an actual concern? The answer has more to do with creeping multinational business than actual safety risks, said Nokia spokeswoman Megan Matthews.

"In the United Kingdom there was an old law, passed when the first analog phones came out, that prohibited using them near gas pumps," she said. "The law was never enforced, but it's still on the books."

Matthews said the risk of a fire caused by a spark was never an issue.

"A cell phone cannot spark on its own," she said.

Evidently, the UK law was passed not because there was an explosion risk, but because the bulky early phones might have interfered with the operation of older gas pumps. Using a phone posed an outside risk of the pump shutting down or the counters giving inaccurate readings. Even those dictionary-sized early phones couldn't start a fire, Matthews said.

"Besides," she asked, "why would anyone need to use their cell

phone while they are pumping gas?"

The first hard-copy accounts of the story of the Indonesian man appear in the *South China Morning Post*, an English-language newspaper based in Hong Kong.

The article quotes David Tung from the Chinese Petroleum Corporation as saying, "There have been several explosions in southeast Asia and Europe, and we hope similar tragedies can be avoided..."

The article goes on to state:

According to a report released by Shell Chemicals, a driver in Indonesia suffered burns and his car was severely damaged when petrol vapor exploded after being ignited by static electricity from the mobile phone he was using. Apparently, the driver had been talking on a mobile phone as a gas station attendant filled his car with [gasoline]. When the driver bent down close to the petrol tank to check whether it was full, the vapor exploded.

Of course, I must warn that I have never actually seen a paper copy of the *South China Post*; the article was faxed to me by a BP Amoco employee who had taken it off the World Wide Web.

A Shell Chemical spokeswoman said that she had never heard of any report even resembling the one cited in the article.

And thus, a literal legend was born.

The *South China Morning Post* article was written by a man named Keith Cameron. I managed to track Keith Cameron to his next job, at a website called "Newslinks." But neither his editors at the *South China Morning Post* nor at Newslinks had any sort of forwarding address for him, virtual or otherwise.

All of the leads I had on Cameron have run cold, which is too bad. He could have cleared up a great deal of confusion. I suppose the first question I would have asked him is: Why did you quote sources that don't appear to really exist?

As far as can be discerned, the rumor about the man blowing up via his cell phone next surfaced in *The Chicago Sun-Times*, then *The Bangkok Post* (in May 1999). Then, five months later, I heard about it. In *The Bangkok Post*, at least, the account remained pretty much the same. That author, however, did include another story, attributed in all seriousness to an electronic bulletin board on *The New Scientist* homepage. That account describes a fire at a gas station in Australia that was supposedly caused by a mobile phone.

As I began researching this article, the mystery man from Indonesia showed up yet again, this time in the venerable pages of *The New York Times*, in the October 14th "Circuits" section: *Safety Fears Will Discourage Cell Phone Use at Gas Pumps*

By early next year, decals and signs declaring the potential fire hazard caused by using a cell phone while pumping gas will be affixed to gasoline pumps across the United States. BP Amoco was the first to issue the warnings.

What sparked the concern? [BP Spokesman Howard] Miller said, "It all started when a story was widely circulated last May or June of some poor fellow in Indonesia who was chatting on a cell phone and went up in flames." Mr. Miller has not seen confirmation of that incident.

When contacted by phone, Miller stuck by his contention that he would be risking blowing himself up if he used a cell phone while filling up his car. He said he had gathered this from reading the warning in his manual, even after I told him that Nokia had confirmed there was no way to validate the rumor that cell phones had caused spontaneous combustion at the gas pumps.

"We're just reacting to a report we heard that was never confirmed, that some poor man in Indonesia blew himself up using his cell phone in a gas station," he said. Again, the probably-fictional man appears.

Thus the question is raised: What other myths are oil company

spokesmen willing to believe? That burning gasoline is good for asthmatics? That oil spills are easily cleaned up? Perhaps that's a bit of a leap, but it's dangerous to skip rope over the line between reality and fiction.

Barbara Mikkelsen and her husband are the San Fernando Valley Folklore Society. For decades they've been tracking urban legends and, for the past few years, they've been posting their findings on the Internet.

Nearly every tall tale you've ever heard is on the site, from that old story about gum staying in your stomach for seven years to a myriad of stories about new technology.

"Urban legends have been around for a long time, our parents and grandparents passed along urban legends, and they go back even further than that," Mikkelsen said. "The Internet has allowed urban legends to be spread very quickly and very widely. Before, urban legends were passed face-to-face, a friend would tell another person or a group of people.

"As communication improved, spreading urban legends became easier. The latest legend can be passed along immediately and all you have to do is hit the 'forward to all' key."

Mikkelsen has traced back some urban legends to the last century. There's no denying the power of a good story. Yet many of the legends today deal with people's fear of the unknown, and thus, focus on technology.

"This is sometimes a backlash against a new thing. It's also indicative of society moving forward," she said.

When asked about the cell phone myth in particular, Mikkelsen said, "It seems the fear of cell phones exploding at gas stations has grown up out of nowhere," she said. "There's nothing that has turned up to indicate that such an accident has really happened. In fact, I can't find anything that links a cell phone to an explosion, even outside of a gas station.

"Now, I don't want to bash *The South China Morning Post*, but that paper has, at times, reported other urban myths as if they were true. It seems like that paper's focus is more on the entertainment aspect than in providing its readers with solid factual knowledge."

She also listed a number of cell phone myths. Just for the record, phones won't cause plane crashes, but may interfere with the operation of electric wheelchairs. As for causing brain cancer, the jury's still out on that one.

Urban myths are helped along in the mass media because of the peculiar workings of reporters and of the human mind. Mikkelsen said "newspaper parroting," in other words, the process of taking what another newspaper has reported and reporting it as one's own version of the truth, spreads urban legends to some extent.

"However, we've found that even when newspapers report on one of these myths to debunk it or prove it false, the story will later be remembered by people as true. So, for example, if the *Toronto Sun* proves an urban legend is false, people will say to others, 'guess what the *Toronto Sun* said is true the other day.' They will turn the story around and insist that what is false is really a factual account."

When scientists first set out upon the road that led to the information age, the computer was a relatively simple thing, and not much use to anyone without a Ph.D. Math problems became easier to solve. That's about it.

A bit later, the personal computer let a few more down-to-earth types simplify some daily chores. The first Apple computers didn't really become smash hits until the introduction of basic word processing

Thus the question is raised: What other myths are oil company spokesmen willing to believe? That burning gasoline is good for asthmatics? That oil spills are easily cleaned up?

and spreadsheet software. Keeping track of finances or typing a letter suddenly became much easier.

In these incarnations, computers weren't much more than labor-saving devices. They existed more or less separately, a bunch of separate users doing the same things they would have done with typewriters or paper and pencil, only usually doing it in a shorter period of time.

Then came the Internet, and most of those separate users became, in a very short period of time, connected. Of course, some routine "tasks" were made easier and even cheaper, like sending a (virtual) letter, for instance. But the real change came in the way the Internet moved information and misinformation around the world.

The automobile represents a fundamental difference from the train in the way we relate to travel, because individuals can personally own an automobile. The Internet represents a fundamental difference from the television, print and radio because individuals can, and must, personally choose what to profess and believe.

The Internet's greatest advantage is that anybody can say whatever they want. Of course, the Internet's greatest drawback is that anybody can say whatever they want. This quality may very well be the key trait of the computer revolution, one that heartens lefty communications scholars and scares status-quo columnists.

And forget all you've heard about a technology gap. The price of technology will inevitably fall, and the clamoring to make computers available to all will inevitably rise. Walk into schools in some of the poorest school districts in the nation, and you will still find some computers wired to the Internet; in those that don't have them, administrators and teachers will likely say they are sorely needed. Was there such a push to put new television sets or radios into each classroom when those inventions were new? Somehow, I doubt it. With such broad support and funding, what group of neo-Luddites could stop computers from seeping into schools?

The iMac and its PC copies are the new Model T; affordable to a certain class with diligent savings habits, the first of a long line of similar products that will completely change our culture. Whether we like it or not, the information revolution is here, and it will not go away.

There are two pitfalls in our automatic embrace of technology. First, the computer screen resembles a television screen. A cosmetic resemblance, perhaps, but people tend to believe their television sets.

And critiques of television news aside, there's a lot of blatant lies out on the Internet.

We also tend to call the Internet's 1s and 0s by the generic term "information." But in cyberspace, like on television, the line between information and entertainment has been blurred beyond distinction. Is Yahoo an entertainment service or an information service? Or both? Or neither?

The Internet belies no hint at the truth of a particular glowing item. When high production standards and the luster of displaying your message on something that looks quite like a television are within the reach of everyone, it's hard to differentiate fact from opinion from fiction.

In the electronic world, the South China Morning Post actually looks quite distinguished, whereas the San Fernando Valley Folklore Society, run by two dedicated hobbyists who are experts in their field, looks, if not amateurish, at least unpolished. Synthesized music and some clip art graphics greet you at the home page. It gives you accurate information, but if you didn't know better, which homepage would you believe?

Some say technology, and especially the Internet, will usher in a new age of democracy. They envision online voting as a way to spur lazy Americans into participating in their own nation. They see online shopping as the ultimate free-market situation: all prices are known, all sellers are accessible, externals to the product and the buyer wither away.

Where some see democracy, others see dystopian anarchy. At the moment, established information brokers (i.e., major news outlets) are plunging into the realm with abandon. No one seems to be raising the

concern that by going online with gusto, their own built-up currency, the admirable but flawed Western idea of journalism may be devalued.

The example I've used, cell phones in gas stations, is trivial. But here is a list of some of the more insidious myths dug up by the Folklore Society:

- Waterproof sunscreen causes blindness.

- The U.S. government is planning to impose martial law on Jan. 1, 2000.

- The word "picnic" is derived from the lynching of African-Americans.

- Congress (or the Canadian government, in one version of the tale) is planning to impose a \$.05 surcharge on every e-mail.

All of these are in common usage, swimming around databanks near your own home. In common circulation, they have the potential to cause quite a bit of damage. At the very least, lies don't exactly help humanity. And unfortunately, just by putting these myths in this article, I may have inadvertently helped to spread them.

Both on the Internet and in other media, it's getting harder to figure out what to actually believe. The old signposts are gone; the new ones are still being sorted out.

On television, CNN looks different from the Serbian Ministry of Information. In cyberspace, however, both look surprisingly similar. CNN only has whatever credibility it has gathered from its outside enterprises. In the Internet universe, CNN.com is merely one in a billion, not really any more or less verifiable than anything else.

The above example was not chosen at random. Americans are just waking up from a supposedly bloodless war, the first one in which propaganda flying over telephone wires played a role. Of course, as in previous conflicts, the military put at least a little faith in the power of print. B-52 bombers carried leaflets to the unwired (and seemingly backwards, if you believe CNN) Serbian soldiers and their Albanian prisoners. But Belgrade intellectuals could actively keep up with the West's own propaganda via the Internet, all the while being immersed in their own. Serbian hackers allegedly tried to storm the U.S. government. And one of the main independent news agencies in Yugoslavia, B-92 radio, first found itself off the air, then off the Internet, its site taken over by authorities and replaced with — you guessed it — Serb propaganda.

The Internet scares dictators in Serbia and China because, unlike radio and television, anyone can talk, and anyone can talk back. Leaders in this country are scared for the same reason — although Americans tend to be more afraid of child molesters than rabble-rousers.

So far, governments have not significantly clamped down on Internet communications. Thus, the stage is set for a grand experiment, the ultimate marketplace of ideas. Everything known to humankind will be "out there," easily accessible and commented on in countless liberal, conservative, democratic and fascist ways.

If it works, the result could be a new era of freedom. If it fails, the result will be mass confusion. While the outcome, at least for the near future, will be somewhere in between, the extremes are enough to make even a staunch free-speech supporter take pause.

some of the web sites mentioned in this article:

San Fernando Valley Folklore Society www.snopes.com

BP-Amoco America www.bpamoco.com

Serbian ministry of information www.serbia-info.com

Cable News Network www.cnn.com

Bangkok Post www.bangkokpost.com

Newslinks www.newslinks.com

South China Morning Post www.scmp.com

B-92 www.freeB92.com

by Nathan Berg

In constant pursuit of blah

Who Needs Sleeping Pills When You Have Mass Media Like This?

On the way to a friend's house, I was reading an article in The St. Paul Pioneer Press about a large earthquake that hit Taiwan, killing thousands. I usually decide to pass up stories about natural disasters. While truly devastating, I don't feel a particular urge to know gory details or the exact death tolls, which, especially in the case of earthquakes, are grossly inaccurate until weeks later anyhow. I'm not saying that coverage of natural disasters is unimportant; it's just not very useful. This article was a bit different though. It began with the typical earthquake coverage, with the death tolls and epicenter guesses. Then, halfway through the article, it switched to begin discussing the effect the earthquake might have on American computer firms in the general vicinity. It even went so far as to explain that an Intel plant in the area had lost power "for about five minutes" and then went right back to discussing the current death tolls of surrounding towns, where bodies were still being removed from the rubble. I've witnessed the US media long enough to know that death and money are two of the only subjects that actually receive an extreme amount of focus, but it was quite unusual (not to mention highly offensive) to see them tied together in such a manner.

Later that evening, a group of my friends and I were enjoying a friendly conversation when someone loudly interjected, "Hey! Howard Stern's on!" While everyone else seemed to get excited and began directing their attention to the nearest idiot box, I began a frantic search for my shoes in an attempt to avoid the coming terror. Unfortunately, I wasn't quick enough and I caught a glimpse of what I had been striving so hard to miss. This evening's program featured a panel of male judges who were exhaustively studying female contestants' bodies, all the while discussing which type of plastic surgery would help them the most. The winner would be the female who scored the lowest and, for the grand prize, she would receive complementary surgery to 'correct' her 'problems.' Eventually I finished tying my shoes, though it took much longer than usual (a symptom due, I suspect, to the rapid loss of brain cells my body was experiencing), and I headed straight for home.

I instantly flipped the dial in my truck to National Public Radio so I could hear something intelligent for a change. NPR has plenty of programs that actually encourage listeners to use their minds and I'm a big fan of that. However, I happened to tune in during a weekly call-in show about pets. I listened patiently as a frantic caller put out a plea for help from the show's esteemed pet experts. Apparently, the caller and his wife had decided that their "very affectionate kitty" had the severe feline disorder of "licking too much." They were deeply and genuinely concerned that this "wasn't appropriate behavior" for their kitty and desperately needed some advice to rectify the situation. I couldn't take it anymore. I began screaming at the radio with language that would've landed me a steep fine if I'd had my window rolled down. Realizing that this wasn't making it stop, I bypassed the on/off switch by simply hitting the thing, harder and harder, until it was quiet. While this was happening, I heard one of the shows' guests ask what the kitten's name was and, just before my fatal right jab temporarily ended the radio's ugly and pitiful life, I heard the answer—"Fluffy". The irony actually forced me to pull over and double over in laughter for about three minutes straight until it was safe for me to drive again.

Honestly, is there anything in the major media these days that's



worth hearing about? There doesn't appear to be. From sitcoms to talk shows to Disney movies to the sports page, the media is loaded to the gills with utter crap. Yeah, the media companies like to refer to this arena as 'soft news' or 'news-lite' or (if they're being brutally self-critical) 'fluff,' but by any definition, it's still utter crap. It's now getting to the point where it's difficult to find anything of relevance no matter what medium you're using. Even the 'real' news is getting watered-down so much that one can't even form a real opinion on current events anymore, simply because it's too damn boring to do so. If the media's job is to inform and foster discussion, which (if I re-

member correctly) it is, then why, in the midst of what might be considered the largest advancement in communication technology since the beginning of human existence, are we so uninformed and anti-social?

ONE WORLD, ONE MOUTH?

Just like every other sector of our new global economy, the media is largely being run by fewer and fewer gigantic (and continually growing) conglomerates. A mere *nine* immense corporations control more than half of everything you see and read. While this fact is scary enough in and of itself, it wouldn't be as alarming if these media companies actually made an attempt to provide information that stoked the flames of a meaningful democracy. However, the reason for a decline in pertinent information and an increase in concentrated media are one and the same: profit motive. Each of these media giants cares about, above all else, fattening the pockets of its shareholders. While they have found some mighty creative ways of going about this task, they have virtually destroyed the concept of an informed citizenry.

Since it is no longer deemed profitable to dominate one measly facet of the media spectrum, each of the members of the big nine are now involved in the production of newspapers, radio shows, books, movies, magazines AND television programming (there's another ironic name for ya'). As Viacom CEO Sumner Redstone said before his company bought out CBS, "When you can make a movie for an average cost of \$10 million and then cross-promote and sell it off of magazines, books, products, [and] television shows out of your own company, the profit potential is enormous." And the result is overkill.

Another alarming aspect of the massive media firms is the fact that many are merged with, or simply owned, by companies that have nothing to do with the media (or at least shouldn't). NBC, for instance, is owned by General Electric, which produces everything from kitchen appliances to nuclear energy. ABC, as well as a plethora of TV and radio stations, film production studios, record labels, and book publishers, are all owned by Disney, which also controls huge amusement parks and a couple of professional sports teams. CBS and Westinghouse (a major arms producer) merged together a few years back and, as mentioned above, are now in the process of merging with Viacom. Other members of the big nine, such as Seagram, Sony and AT&T/Liberty Media, have names that folks would recognize as major corporations in other fields, but not as major media producers. All of this has a drastic effect on information, which can now be construed (or downright ignored) to help the parent company retain its 'competitive edge' (read: make more money).

It has also become more common to see news catering to the interest of other big businesses. Nearly all of the Fortune 500 companies have huge advertising accounts with members of the big nine, so it's not rare to see the media firms give a positive spin in reports of other multinationals. It's an unwritten rule that it would be unprofitable to run negative coverage of some of the shady dealings of the major economic players, especially since these massive media firms ARE major economic players. As Ben Bagdikian said in his 1983 book, *The Media Monopoly*, "Brute force triumphs only by creating an accepting attitude toward the brutes."

Even the government is getting a good deal out of all this. Coverage of politics and justice is still one of the major focuses of journalism, as well it should be. But more than ever, reporting on government has been reduced to repeating the official press statements from the various branches of government, with investigative journalism taking a seat in the trash can. As the media has concentrated on profit margins, it has come to realize that you can produce more programming with less staff, so long as you're willing to simply report on whatever the government decides is important for the day with a couple of quick sound-bites and without bothering to gather all of the details. Of course, it is also worth mentioning that all of these huge mergers that the major media corporations are involved in have to be approved by Uncle Sam.

COMMON THREADS OF BOREDOM

Unfortunately, the above factors merely represent a decline in the world of relevant information due to the massive conglomeration of our media. That which is truly sickening is the amount of uselessness now conveyed through our media channels. This is indicative of a new brand of media that is more concerned with entertainment than with 'hard news.' This becomes readily apparent when you look at the common themes which overlap into our various forms of media.

One of these themes is the constant barrage of 'soft news.' As the earthquake story I mentioned at the outset showcased, a large chunk of the media landscape is now littered with stories of disasters; whether they be hurricanes, train wrecks, or shootings. And like I said before, these issues are not completely irrelevant, but they aren't particularly useful in the scope of political and social discourse. The most common example of this phenomenon is coverage of the weather. I know plenty of people that are fascinated with the weather and I can't say I fully understand it. I had an old roommate that obsessively watched The Weather Channel. He really enjoyed knowing everything he could about the weather. I remember once telling him that I had to drive my mother to the airport and, after I mentioned that she was on her way to San Francisco, he replied, "Tell her it's going to be a bit windy." Now, I can understand that weather coverage can be very useful to travelers and those preparing for large outdoor events, but that could be taken care of with a quick 5-day forecast. Why do meteorologists insist on telling us what the current weather is like. I don't know about you, but if I want to know what the weather is like, I go outside. And I don't think that barometric pressure readings and super-doppler radar imaging are quite important enough to take up time that could be better spent discussing issues of actual importance.

Another of the biggest themes in the media is sports. The amount of media time and space devoted to sporting events is mind-boggling. The most disturbing aspect of sporting coverage is that it showcases what a healthy media could look like if it actually spent the time and energy to focus on issues a bit more important than what certain men can do with a ball. There's an immense amount of live coverage of sporting events to choose from and a swarm of statistics provided to help better inform sports fans so that they can form accurate opinions on the state of their teams. There's also a seemingly endless amount of theory and speculation on what teams should be doing to fix their 'problems.' Just tune in to any call-in sports show and listen to how much information the average caller is aware of. For god's sake, if they could make coverage of relevant issues this interesting and informative, we could very well have every problem on this planet solved and kick back in the hammock for the rest of our lives.

The biggest common theme in the media field is the celebrity. Celebrities are probably the most important assets that the major media firms have. Ever stop and think of how many people you know the names of, but whom you've never met? What's more, these are folks that are mostly involved in fields which have little or no affect on anything that could even remotely be considered meaningful to the average persons' life. Here's a test: quickly jot down the names of five actors or actresses and one of their major 'accomplishments.' OK, now quickly write down the names of five of the justices of the Supreme Court and one of their major accomplishments. Can't do it? How about 5 CEO's? 5 members of Congress? 5 people that live on your block? You see, celebrities are pounded into our heads on a regular basis because they are very good at making dough for the major media companies and other multi-nationals through ratings and advertising contracts. Those people that are active in running the world as we know it, or even those we live next door to, remain unknown.

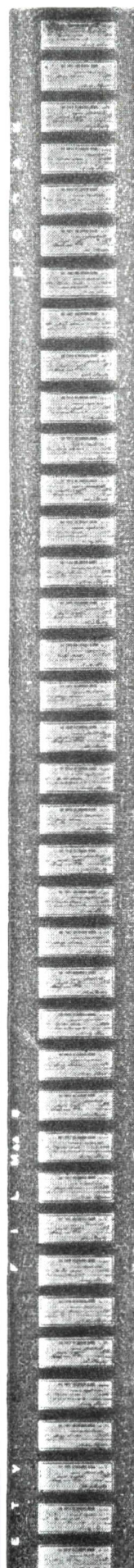
I think it would be important at this point to take a closer look at each field of media and see how these common themes run through them and see what forms of uselessness are specific to them.

FINE PRINT

The amount of gibberish in modern newspapers is significant because newspapers are largely considered to be the best medium for reporting on pressing issues (bad pun there). Since their inception, newspapers have provided the daily news to nearly everyone on the planet. Just like all other forms of media, newspapers rely heavily on advertising, while sales and subscriptions account for a rather small percentage of their total profit.

As stated before, there's been an ever-increasing amount of useless coverage in newspapers. You will rarely see an issue of any major newspaper that doesn't have stories about the following subjects: transportation disasters (airplane crashes, train wrecks, etc.), natural disasters (floods, fires, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc.), violent crime (murderers, rapes, shootings, etc.) and petty theft (robberies, burglaries, etc.). Political and social issues are still given plenty of space in all major papers, but they're reported on in such a manner that they seem very detached from real life. Newspapers and their editors frequently hold a middle ground, giving grace to the appearance of objectivity. Stories are constructed from quick press conferences where official government spokespersons update reporters in the proper PR fashion or from press releases of major corporations and institutions that are so watered down that it's difficult to take any serious meaning from them, much less a story.

Of course, there's always a huge sports section, which now covers nearly every possible aspect of virtually every sport in existence, including a growing amount of coverage for college sports. [I've noticed that it's very difficult to find stories pertaining to any other aspect of student life with the following exceptions: tuition costs, departmental research and scientific findings, or campus disasters, such as the recent logging accident at Texas A&M. If you're interested in the opinions or con-



cerns of college students at Notre Dame, you're out of luck. If you're interested in their quarterback's third-down completion rate, you're likely to find it in any of the major dailies around the country.] There's also an unbelievable amount of business news in the papers which, overall, is useful only to the wealthy and their business ventures (and the fools who're willing to invest their money in them). There's also always an entertainment section (I mean, other than the front page) where all the new movies, TV shows, books, and music (and the celebrities associated with them) are spotlighted, a large percentage of which are created by the very same companies who made whatever paper you happen to be reading. Also specific to newspapers is the classified section, which is simply a buyer's guide. It is a popular section of every paper, but one has to question whether or not it should take priority over topics of serious matters. I guess it doesn't matter whether you question it or not; it makes lots of money for newspapers, so it will remain.

Here's how I like to judge the usefulness of newspapers. Take any random newspaper owned by the major 9 media firms (which means just about any paper from a city with over 100,000 people) and grab a scissors. Proceed to cut out everything that is mostly irrelevant to the common person. [I'd suggest buying two copies of whatever paper you choose since there's print on both sides of the page.] First, cut out all of the ads, which should leave you with a significantly lighter paper right off the bat, and follow that up by removing all stories that appear to cater to certain advertisers (they're subtle, but they're there). Then, remove all of the stories regarding sports, natural disasters, weather, business, celebrities and any other fluff you might find. Then cut away the comics (sorry), horoscopes, irrelevant advice columns, stories about artists that work for the same company that made the paper you're mutilating, classified ads, and personal ads (you may want to take the time to cut these into super tiny pieces...I know I would). Finally, remove all stories that derive from official government sources or PR firms and all articles that are told from a point of view so detached and unimaginative that they're rendered meaningless. In the end, you probably won't even have enough paper left in your hand to start a fire.

Major magazines are much more difficult to judge, considering that a large percentage of them are geared specifically towards entertainment, sports, or other social and cultural niches and aren't meant to cover issues of serious importance. That fact alone tells us a lot about where major magazines' focus truly lies. From *Sports Illustrated* to *Entertainment Weekly* to *Good Housekeeping*, magazines are more often targeted toward specific audiences to assist advertisers in reaching the correct spenders. Many of them don't even pretend to cover important topics and, if they do, you can laugh it off.

Of the small number of major magazines that do choose to cover current events, there's still a concerted effort to attract major advertisers, again, creating partnerships that will leave certain stories whitewashed (or simply untold) if it's thought that they might offend the wrong people. These mags are usually weeklies and thus, have a bit more time to collect and compile all of the necessary facts; they can discuss issues in a more reflective manner, as opposed to covering news as it unfolds. These magazine stories usually take up more space, which further differentiates magazines from major newspapers in that they cover fewer stories, but in greater detail. That sounds like it could be a good thing. However, like newspaper articles, major news magazine articles often rely merely upon official government and business sources and their stories end up with the proper spin. There's also no lack of fluff in these magazines, as they too focus heavily on entertainment and sports, both subjects in which their parent firms are heavily invested. For instance, Time Warner, the maker of *Time*, also owns a handful of major film studios, cable channels, and music labels, as well as two professional sports teams in Atlanta and World Championship Wrestling. With that in mind, it shouldn't be much of a surprise to see many of their articles dealing with such topics.

Books seem a bit more difficult to judge. Advertising, which plagues all other forms of media, is not present in the world of

books, making them the best possible candidate for true objectivity. Books can also be heavily researched before they're published, giving them a chance to review all of the necessary information to form valid opinions. But when you take a close look at the major book publishing firms, you'll find that the large percentage of what they push out has little or nothing to do with relevant topics. To begin with, an overwhelming amount of books today are fiction. While I fully understand that relevant political, social, spiritual and cultural ideas can be conveyed through works of fiction (Orwell's 1984 comes to mind), that is not what is contained in the bulk of fiction books out there today. The biggest sellers in the world of fiction these days are murder mysteries, science fiction/fantasy/horror stories, romance novels and thrillers (oooooh...I'm thrilled). No, when it comes to discussion of topics affecting world issues, there's no fiction like non-fiction. But even non-fiction is littered with garbage these days. There's thousands upon thousands of pretentious autobiographies (or misleading biographies) of self-righteous celebrities, any book you could ever imagine 'fer dummies', cookbooks for every possible category that food can be divided into, and a myriad of self-help and how-to books. Again, these books aren't entirely useless, and in many cases quite the opposite, but the sheer number of them is enough to drive a person crazy.

Serious books have taken a dive in content, largely because some topics are still way too taboo for major publishing companies to accept. These are the same topics that go unpublished and unheard in other sectors of media, though much less so with books because advertisers' pull isn't as great. It is, however, not uncommon to hear horror stories of scripts being rejected or lawsuits being filed over some pretty audacious concerns of publishers. Authors have scripts rejected for numerous reasons all the time, but it's well known that works critically detailing abuses of certain institutions of power, whether they be financial or governmental, will have a much greater chance of being rejected—the true reason behind this is often hidden. Fortunately, books (and print media in general) are one of the areas where independent publishing still thrives, probably due to the fact that the books which are published in this arena are, in general, of much greater quality than their corporatized siblings. It is actually much easier to find relevance in books than any other media, but you still have to do some serious searching to find them.

DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?

Where I live, all but one major radio station is run by a multi-national company headquartered in a far-away land (like New York or something). This single radio station is boldly fighting against the trend of radio conglomeration by promoting itself as "Locally owned and locally operated." While I support their efforts to change this tide, I've come to notice that, aside from their uplifting slogan, there is nothing that makes them stand out from their corporate competitors.

Radio stations are sickeningly predictable these days. They mostly play music from a certain genre, whether it be Top 40, country, alternative, rock, or oldies and repeat an almost identical play-list from day to day. Of course, the artists are mostly only those on major labels who can be advertised by their parent firms and used to sell products. Corporate radio seems to be headed in the direction of all other media and it may even be ahead in some cases. Its ads are among the most annoying and its news coverage is minimal at best.

Thankfully, there are some notable exceptions in this field. Talk radio has become a common feature on many a station and actually gives voice to members of its local community. Many college stations also focus on discussion of issues and play a wide variety of music from all over the world.

VISUAL EFFECTS

The movie industry has often been railed against by conservatives as being way too liberal. I scoff at that notion for a variety of reasons, but mostly because I consider myself to be on the liberal side of issues and Hollywood still sickens me. Just like everyone in our modern culture, I have a large mental list of movies which I find fantastically inspiring, but the bulk of films out there do nothing in the way of creating

relevant social insight.

It's often said that sex and violence is running rampant in movies. I'd say that's an accurate assessment, though I'd also like to add nihilism, sexism, escapism, and stupidity to that list. Most movies have, because of the industry's constant 'advancements' in visual technology, become nothing short of a series of extreme images designed to cause extreme emotional effects. However, when repeated over and over in nearly every movie that the studios push out, it does nothing but make one long for movies with well-written, meaningful plots.

One of the more fascinating aspects of the movie industry is that it is almost entirely comprised of fiction. Movies that are based on true stories are glamorized and 'beefed-up' to the point that they often misconstrue the events.

Another interesting aspect of Hollywood is how unbelievably marketable it is. Popular movies and their characters can be used to create and sell anything under the sun; including posters, t-shirts, books, watches, Halloween costumes, toys, soundtracks and Happy Meals. Popular movies with the most idiotic characters and asinine plots can make millions from marketing ventures alone (Austin Powers anyone?).

Again, most movies don't claim to have any inherent value other than that of pure entertainment, but why can't entertainment be connected with enlightenment and intelligence? I would suspect that it has something to do with the fact that enlightenment isn't very marketable and intelligence in movies is all too often indirectly proportional to amount of profit to be made from them.

This leaves us with television. If there were ever an award given for the largest cesspool of trivial, meaningless, irrelevant, uninteresting shit, television would receive it and get a standing ovation on its way to the podium. Whatever problems exist in the other forms of media, television embodies all of them (and then creates a few more of its own). It is controlled by advertising and has been the main instrument in creating our consumer culture. It is plagued with sitcoms, sports, dramas, soap operas, and specialty channels that cater only to tiny cross-sections of our society (can you believe that there's an entire channel dedicated to golf!?) Even with cable and Direct TV, which 'help' provide hundreds of programming selections, the TV is absolutely jam-packed with nothing.

Sure, there are attempts at actual news coverage, but it's limited to a minimal amount of airtime on but a few channels. Even that coverage is littered with sports, weather, and 'official' (read: generic) news. Television pundits claim that they're giving us the best news and entertainment imaginable for absolutely free or, in the case of cable networking, extremely cheap. What we actually get is a half-hour of local news and endless hours of Jerry Springer, South Park and 90210.

A unique aspect of television is children's programming, with cartoons and sitcoms drowning in flashy advertisements that start kids down the well-worn path of a materialistic existence. Although many groups from every possible walk of life have long-criticized the major media networks for their sheep-herding tactics of creating a captive consumer audience of unsuspecting tots, the trend continues to this day and.

But the most dangerous feature of television is how inaccessible its airwaves are for use by the general public. In a country where the public is rarely allowed to utilize the channels of communication that it helped develop, TV is about as undemocratic a form of media as humanly imaginable. A small speck of its airtime is set aside for public use (which is so drastically under-funded that it's almost completely uneventful) and its rates for 15 seconds worth of prime-time airwaves are equivalent to the price of most people's homes. Even groups that do try to buy airtime to spotlight important political and social issues have found that they are not allowed (unless they're a presidential candidate from one of our 'wide variety' of major political parties—uh, excuse me...I meant two) because of conflicts that their ads might have with other 'serious' advertisers. If you want to participate in television, you must have a combination of extreme wealth and power. Otherwise, it has been determined that you must remain a spectator. Given the current state of television, I'm not so sure anyone should want to participate anyway.

TAKE IT BACK

Howard Stern, as much as I may dislike his programs, is a very enterprising man. He has his own radio show, which is also now filmed and broadcast as a television show. He also has a book about himself and a major motion picture based on that book. He has even created and starred in a few cable events in the not-so-distant past. He now refers to himself as "The King of All Media." Given that his works are egotistically self-promoting, vulgarly humorous, blatantly sexist, and (most of all) so devoid of serious content that they're offensive to anyone with an intelligence level beyond the 3rd grade, I'd say that his title is incredibly accurate.

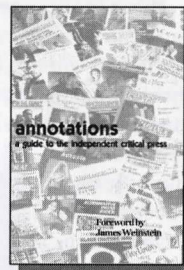
On the bright side, there are now legions of groups and individuals involved with creating new forms of media, founded on the importance of free and all-encompassing information and opinions. There are groups tackling Congress in an effort to increase funding for a viable non-profit media, free from the constraints of advertisers and aimed towards creating an informed public—the backbone of any country claiming to be a democracy. There are numerous small, independent publishers that are discussing issues rarely brought to light under our current state of media. There's public and pirate radio; both focused on giving the airwaves a break from the severe repetition to which they are accustomed. And most of all, there's a new desire within the hearts of the masses to consume accurate information and focus their attention on the issues that affect their lives. With organization, it can happen. We can turn our backs from our current state of 'blah' media and start getting back to what's real.

KNOW YOUR RESOURCES!

Annotations: A Guide to the Independent Critical Press

Eye-opening coverage of 328 magazines and newspapers that are changing the world.

With summary reviews from the experts at the Independent Press Association and the Alternative Press Center.



Because when you pick up a magazine or zine, you should know what you're getting into.

"Proof that there is much more beyond the soft ice cream ladled out by the mainstream corporate press."

— Ralph Nader

"An excellent, in-depth tool."

— Library Journal

0-9653894-2-1

V/MC

US\$28⁰⁰ (includes shipping)
To order call (877) INDYMAG
or visit www.indypress.org

Oh Baby!

— a tale of the first six months of pregnancy —

BY: JESSICA MILLS — ILLUSTRATED BY: CAROLINE

I know having a baby will change my life. And although the fact that having a baby changes your life seems like an obvious one, for the past six months, people have told me this bit of information countless times as if it's a reality I haven't thought about.

Well, surprise! I have thought about it! A lot. Actually, I've been thinking about it for years. I used to be indifferent to the whole idea of having a kid,

but some biological clock type thing sounded its alarm and roped me in. My emotions took over and any intellectual reasoning took the back seat.

I'm 29. The baby is due February 29, Leap Day 2000, exactly one month before my 30th birthday. Ernesto, soon to be named "Daddy," will turn 30 one month after that. I am a part time teacher and like to play music and go on tour and take chances and share rad

things with rad people. Ernesto is currently a student and likes to squat the airwaves and ride trains and study radical history and share rad things with rad people.

For the past year, we have not actively tried to prevent pregnancy. That's right, we meant to do it. And we have every hope and committed intention of raising a child who will know love, justice and freedom.

1

month one: my life

I probably got pregnant because Ernesto and I had both just quit our jobs and hit the road for a two month whirlwind of a journey. I think subconsciously, somehow I knew I'd be getting pregnant now. Take away daily routines of Food Not Bombs food pickups, Free Radio Gainesville logistics, work, band practice and shows and your body just might relax enough to become fertilized.

One of the reasons Ernesto & I took off together was because we knew it would be our last chance to do so for a while since he decided to go back to school in the fall. We also had to get out of town because routine was killing both of us. We needed to shed all responsibility and just go...

The beginning of the trip was pretty intense. Although it was only the middle of my cycle, I was more moody than when I have PMS. Actually, I was downright fierce. Here we were at the beginning of the two months we'd been so looking forward to, yet we were coming apart at the seams with each other due to the realization that we had individual agendas for what our travel would be, but together, our plans didn't mesh. He wanted to be in the mountains away from cities and bands and people. I wanted cities and bands and people.

We eventually came up with a compromised plan, but I still practically didn't speak for a couple days. When it came time to catch that first freight train, I agreed that we needed to be friends again.

For the rest of the month, we were back in love like usual and were happily riding trains and hitchhiking through the Northwest and all over British Columbia. Sometimes we were hiking through a city and other times, a forest. We met up with friends, took rides from strangers and were alone quite a bit, too. I even got to see my friend's band play in Missoula.

1

month one: the baby

Egg, meet sperm. Sperm, meet egg. That's right; out of the 140 - 350 million sperm released in the one payload called *ejaculation*, only one is allowed the victory called *fertilization*. Now is when the sex of the baby is determined and cell division begins. When the cells reach about 100 in number they form a ball about the size of a head of a pin and are called the *blastocyst*. (For all you punks without a name for your band, try Blast - O - Cyst.) This cell ball has two layers. The outer layer will become the *placenta* and the inner, the *embryo*.

When the cells reach about 150 in number, they are divided into three layers of tissue, called *germ layers*, that will develop separately. The inside layer will become the liver, pancreas, urinary bladder, tonsils, thyroid, breathing and digestive organs; the middle layer is going to develop into bones, cartilage, muscles, the circulatory system, spleen, kidneys, and sex organs; the outside layer will become the baby's hair, skin, nails, tooth enamel, pituitary gland, mammary glands, sweat glands and nervous system, including the brain. The total size of the embryo at this stage is

about one quarter to one half the size of a letter "o" on this page.

Halfway through the first month, the embryo will attach itself to the wall of the uterus, its home for the nine months (40 weeks) of gestation. Some preliminary tissues are also transformed from a ball of cells into a tubular, folded structure called the neural tube, one end of which will become the baby's brain, and other end the spinal cord.

By the end of the month, the two to four millimeter embryo looks like a tadpole, including rudimentary beginnings of arms and legs. The optic vesicles and lenses in the eyes are also forming. Although the heart is located on the outside of the body, not yet inside the chest cavity, it is beginning to beat. This is the beginning of the *embryonic period*, an extremely important time of development when the embryo is most susceptible to factors that can interfere with its development. Most malformations originate during this critical period.

2

month two: the baby

At the beginning of this month, the baby's backbone is forming, with five to eight vertebrae laid down. By the end of the month, all the backbone will be laid down and the spinal canal closed over, although the lower part of the back will still be undeveloped. There is quite a long rudimentary tail, which is an extension of the spinal column. The baby is growing in a curved seahorse shape because the blocks of tissue in the back of the embryo grow more quickly than those in front.

All of the major organs - heart, brain, lungs, kidneys, liver, and intestine - are in place, although not yet fully developed. The heart is now inside the body, beating with enough strength to circulate blood cells through the blood vessels. The head is starting to form and eyelid folds are forming on its face. Internal and external ears are forming. The baby's mouth can open, with lips and a tongue visible. The appendix is now present, as is the pancreas, the tip of the nose, elbows and toes. The arms are as long as a printed exclamation point (!). The baby looks like an extremely small human being, but it still may be impossible to distinguish a male from a female, as external organs of the male and female appear very similar at this stage and will not be distinguishable for another few weeks.

Nerve and muscle work together for the first time now and the baby has reflexes, moving its body and limbs. The first true bone cells begin to replace cartilage. This is the end of the *embryonic period*

2

month two: my life

I found out I was pregnant at the very beginning of the month. At first, I attributed my late period to the tribulations of travel. I thought for sure it was the sleeping under highway overpasses and eating gruel-like couscous with instant black bean flakes that was making my cycle irregular. I was choosing to ignore the fact that my boobs were extremely sore and that even when my period's a little late, it's never this late. It's probably closer to the truth to say that I wasn't choosing to ignore those facts; I just didn't want my hopes built up. I was secretly praying that a little one was taking hold inside me.

We went to a Planned Parenthood clinic and I peed in a cup and the test came back positive. Ernesto said he already knew I was pregnant just by looking at me. Funny how he can tell those things. He could probably tell I was ovulating when his sperm fertilized my egg, too, but he just forgot to remind me. He's always been more in touch with my cycle than I have been - probably because he's the one who witnesses my cyclical shifts in hormones as I naturally remain oblivious.

At this point, I'd like to point out two important factors: First, I think it's totally ironic that I became pregnant at the exact time I was totally freaking out. That first week of our trip is when I conceived and we were literally "on" one day in love and "off" the next. Obviously, I got pregnant on one of the "on" days that week.

Second, for eleven years prior to this two month trip I was what you might consider a stoner, a pot head, a beer swillin', cigarette smokin' goin'-out-every-nighter. I won't lie and say that I was 100% sober the first month of my pregnancy, before I knew I was pregnant, but being out of my routine, comfortable environment definitely had me drinking and smoking a lot less; I might have gotten a buzz on four times compared to my usual daily consumption back home. I just don't like being out of my mind when hitching and hopping. The day I found out I was pregnant, though, all unhealthy substance use ceased and I haven't had a craving for any of it since.

I called the toll free Healthy Pregnancy hotline to ask if the four times I had imbibed alcohol while unknowingly pregnant would be of any consequence. They assured me things would be OK and explained that during the first two weeks following fertilization, the developing baby is just a floating ball of cells, not yet hooked up to my uterus, and therefore not in the direct line of fire. Knowing that helped my fear subside.

Part of our travels this second month included an appearance at my family's reunion in the Appalachian Mountains. When I told my mom our news, she squealed with excitement. The rest of the family was, of course, congratulatory and full of questions. After the reunion, Ernesto and I hit the Appalachian Trail with my parents for four days. The temperatures were reaching 100+, water and food were not available in ideal quantities and the actual hiking was sometimes excruciating. I later read that this was probably not the best situation I could have been placing myself in, but everything turned out just fine.

Ernesto and I spent the rest of the month gallivanting leisurely all over New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. I was determined, wisely or not, to see this trip through to the end. Nutrition was my only concern, so I cut out dumpstering food and we made it a point to go out of our way to seek out a decent health food store every other day. I got myself a bottle of prenatal vitamins and all was well, although a bit more expensive now that I was having to take care of myself for the sake of someone else.



month three: my life

There was never a doubt in my mind that I would seek out a midwife instead of a hospital-based obstetrician. Therefore, the first place I visited the day we returned home from traveling was the Birth Center. The Birth Center is situated in an old house less than a mile from where we live and is run by three midwives who offer the option of giving birth there or in your own home. A midwife gave me a free orientation, an appointment to begin prenatal care and information on how to apply for Medicaid and the federal WIC (Women with Infants and Children assistance program).

After that, I began telling friends my news and was surprised when they weren't surprised in the least. While I was gone traveling, evidently one of my bandmates had even suggested to my other bandmates, "I know Jessica is gonna come back pregnant." When I told my good friend next door my news, she jokingly responded with, "Well, I guess it's time for me to get pregnant then, too."

I had to wait a week and a half for my first prenatal appointment. When it finally came, the midwife thought, based on the size of my expanding uterus, that I was a month farther along than I thought I was. Therefore, she scheduled me to have an ultrasound. I had to wait another week for this appointment and was happy to find out that I was only 12 weeks along instead of 16. Ernesto was happiest to find out that I wasn't carrying twins.

I explained to the midwife that had I been 16 weeks along, that would have meant the first month wasn't anywhere near substance-free because I had been in California recording an album, smoking lots of pot. She said, "The way I look at it is this: you live in a college town where lots of people are partying all the time, probably half of the pregnancies happen under the influence of alcohol, women don't usually discover they're pregnant until they're 6-8 weeks along, and you don't see all the kids running around retarded, do you?" Since she put it that way, I felt a bit better.

I also began looking for a job without telling any of the potential employers I was pregnant. They quickly bored me with their barely-above-minimum-wage offerings while asking for a two year commitment, so I just went back to the place I had been teaching and tutoring part time. Ernesto started school and a less than part time work-study library job. So far, so good. Poor and happier than ever.

Just as I started back at my old job, I got a call from a friend who was set to roadie for the English band, Citizen Fish, who needed a horn player for their US tour. He thought to call me to see if I was interested and if I'd be able to swing a month-long tour that would be happening during my fourth month of pregnancy. My midwife gave me the "Go for it!" thumbs up. Ernesto's biggest concern was that since this may be the only time I'm ever going to be pregnant, he didn't want to miss any of it, especially if I started to "show" while away on tour.

I'm addicted to travel, touring especially, and there was no way I was going to pass on this opportunity. With the help of my friend Karl, I learned the songs in ten days, got my tickets to travel and was set! I told my job, "I'm going to be working out of town next month; I'll call you when I get home."

For the rest of the month until I left for tour, I tried to take it easy and finish the new issue of my zine. This wasn't so hard to do

and now, the fetal period begins. This means rapid growth and maturation of the tissues; a critical part of the baby's development is ending.

And talk about an incredible growth spurt! During the first week of this month, the baby grows from 4 to 5 mm to 11 to 13 mm. This is about the size of a green pea. The second week of the month, it will be the size of a pinto bean. By the end of the month, the baby is a little more than one inch long and weighs as much as a small plum.

3

month three: the baby

At the beginning of the month, the fastest growth is in the limbs, hands and feet. Nail beds on the fingers and toes are forming for eventual nails.

Due to rapid brain growth, the head is almost half the entire length of the baby. (At birth, the baby's head is only one-fourth the size of its body.) The eyes, which were at the sides of the head, are moving to the front. The ears also come to lie in their normal position on the side of the head. Taste buds appear now and the vocal cords are developing. Tooth buds are present. The baby can swallow, suck and chew. The baby swallows amniotic fluid and urinates it back into the amniotic fluid in which it floats.

The heart is beating 120-160 beats per minute. It can be heard with a special listening device that looks like a microphone called a *doppler*. The umbilical cord has fully formed and blood is circulating through it. The liver is producing bile.

Few, if any, structures in the fetus are formed after the 12th week of pregnancy, the end of the third month. By the end of the month, the baby can curl its toes, bend its elbows, rotate its wrists



and form tight fists. The neck continues to get longer and the chin no longer rests on the chest. She can make facial expressions like pressing her lips together and frowning. She weighs between .5 and .9 ounce and measures about 4.5 inches, the size of my fist.

4

month four: the baby

A WORD ABOUT THE PLACENTA. The placenta is an organ created by the mother's body to nourish the baby and excrete its waste products. By now it is both fully formed and operational. It looks like a large, roundish liver and is attached on one side to the uterus and on the other side to the baby's umbilical cord. It is the baby's lifeline to the mother: blood, oxygen and nutrients all reach the baby through a fine membrane into the placenta. The placenta functions like a sieve, passing oxygen, food, and protective antibodies from mother to baby (although harmful elements can also filter through.) The baby gets rid of its waste products by filtering them through the placenta into the mother's bloodstream, allowing the mother to excrete them. The blood from which the baby has already taken oxygen comes back through an artery in the umbilical cord into the placenta.

This month marks the beginning of the second trimester, the time when the baby does most of its growing and when its organs mature. In these weeks, the baby is moving actively and can even turn somersaults, although the mother probably won't feel these movements yet. Fat begins to form and is important in heat production and metabolism. The baby's heartbeat is almost twice as fast as the mother's, its head now moves freely on its body and hair has begun to grow, including fluff on the head, eyelashes and eyebrows.

Lanugo has also grown. This is a fine, downy hair that appears all over the baby's face and body, and keeps its temperature constant. Most of this hair will disappear before it is born and whatever is left will fall out soon after birth.

Because the three tiny bones of the middle ear are the first bones to harden, the baby can probably hear by now. From now on, the mother is what the baby will be listening to! Through the amniotic fluid, the baby can hear the mother's heart beating, stomach rumbling and the sound of her voice. However, the auditory centers in the brain have not yet fully formed and are unable to process the information.

Certain sounds from outside the womb can also reach the baby. If a loud sound is made next to the uterus, the baby will raise its hands and cover its ears. Very loud sounds have been known to startle a baby enough to make it jump inside the mother.

During the fourth month, the baby grows so much, it quadruples in weight and doubles in height. The baby now weighs about seven ounces and is six inches long.

now that I had backed off of my almost daily involvement with Food Not Bombs and Free Radio Gainesville. I toned my involvements down to one day a week as a way to purposely create open time and space for this new life growing inside me.

The only time it could be said that I wasn't taking it easy is when I wrecked on my bike. Although the handlebars lodged themselves firmly into my gut and knocked the wind and tears out of me, the baby was fine.

Also during the rest of this month, I found myself going to fewer shows than usual. This wasn't because I was consciously making that decision, but because of some hormonal shift that was summoning my mama-like nesting urges, the same hormonal shift that now had me crying at movies when a kid would be shown hurt. The shows I did go see, however, had me coming home all wound up, amped and talking a mile a minute instead of my usual flopping down on the bed while still wearing my boots. Let's hear it for hormones; more addictive than speed and more fun than weed!

4

month four: my life

Before I left for tour at the beginning of the month, I found out that one of my oldest friends' partner, Kylie, was pregnant! Yahoo! Perfect timing! A big priority for Ernesto and me is to network with others in our "community" who have, or will be having, kids. There's already baby Gwendolyn and baby Blake and now there will be mine and Kylie's babies, too!

I escaped the entire first trimester with only one incidence of morning sickness and continued to feel absolutely great throughout the tour. It was definitely a big kick for me to be pregnant and still touring. It was also definitely different than any tour I had done before; out of 15 tours, this was my first sober one! This was also the first tour I've ever been on that was fast food free. (If you tour and want to eat well, get yourself a copy of the book, *Tofu Toll-booth*, available from AK Press. It will let you know where there's decent groceries, delis and restaurants.)

On tour, I found myself hanging out less and sleeping more. This was just fine as I'd hang out all day while we were driving to the show and at the show itself. I just didn't spend too much time with the people who would put us up at night, unless of course there was food involved. If it was just drinkin' and smokin' on the porch style hangin' out, then I was usually the first one to crash. Urges to partake are not what was hindering my desire to stay awake, it was more the fact that making a baby is physically draining. The books I've read say that it's comparable to the energy exerted by a mountain climber.

The tour itself was absolutely a dream. Richard and Karoline, roadie extraordinaires, are two people with whom I've always wanted time out on the road with. Another road crew person, Paige, was an incredible bonus. And the band themselves, well, let's just say that most of them were in the very first punk band I ever heard and I totally love them. Their individual personalities are so entertaining, genuine and respectful. Collectively, they made me feel so welcome, as if I were a regular band member and on the few occasions when a kid or two would ask us to sign something, they'd chuckle at my "Jessica +1" signature.

One conversation I had with Richard particularly stands out in my mind. He's had a vasectomy and isn't too down with the idea of having kids. During our conversation, though, he told me that being around me during my pregnancy showed him something positive and made him feel differently about people in our "community" deciding to have kids. He said that hearing me talk about what I've learned so far about natural child birth and some of Ernesto's and my goals, dreams and plans in terms of conscientious parenting made him happy. I was beaming.

Karoline, too, really made me feel great about being pregnant. She was not only supportive, but extremely helpful, playing mommy to me, the mommy-to-be. I was always alerted to where I could find good things to eat and she got me drinking "pregnancy" tea every day, something I would never have done on my own, even though it's really helpful stuff. She was the only other non-smoker and drinker on the tour, so it was nice to have the sober camaraderie, too.

There was one incident, after the show in Philadelphia, when we were loading out, where some young boys who had just seen the show were standing around our van attempting small talk mixed with post-show admiration. I was stacking the book and CD crates in the back but I forgot the cue they gave me to which I responded with, "Not bad for a pregnant woman, huh?" They asked, "Pregnant? Shouldn't you be at home then? Shouldn't you not be out on tour and lifting crates?" I'll spare you the lengthy tongue lashing I delivered to the clueless boys, but I will say that the stereotype of a pregnant woman belonging at home with her feet up and a heating pad on her aching bones is bullshit. It is for my fourth month of pregnancy,

month five: the baby

The baby's skin is now arranged in four layers and is transparent, appearing red because the blood vessels are visible through it. Two layers are the *epidermis*, which is on the surface, and the *dermis*, which is the deeper layer. The epidermis contains epidermal ridges. They are responsible for patterns of surfaces on fingertips, palms and soles of the feet and are genetically determined. The dermis forms dermal papillae, which push upward into the epidermis. These projections contain a small blood vessel (capillary) or a nerve. This deeper layer also contains large amounts of fat.

The skin has begun to develop *vernix*, a white coating like cream cheese that protects the baby's skin from the increasing concentration of its urine in the amniotic fluid. By the time the baby is ready to be born, most of the vernix will have dissolved. However, some vernix will still be there to lubricate the baby's journey down the birth canal during labor and delivery.

At this stage, the fetal digestive system has developed enough to allow the baby to swallow quite a lot of amniotic fluid; its stomach begins to secrete gastric juices, enabling its body to absorb the salts and nutrients found in the amniotic fluid. After the fluid is absorbed, the baby's kidneys filter the fluid and excrete it back into the amniotic sac. The amniotic fluid swallowed by the fetus contributes only a small amount to the caloric needs of the fetus, but researchers believe it may contribute essential nutrients to the developing baby.

Both sexes develop nipples and underlying mammary glands. The external genital organs have now developed sufficiently for the baby's sex to be detected by ultrasound.

The baby's muscles are now almost fully developed, including the chest muscles, which are beginning to make movements similar to those that it will use for respiration later on. Tiny air sacs, known as *alveoli*, which the baby will need later in order to breathe, are forming inside the tiny developing lungs.

Buds for permanent teeth begin forming behind those that have already developed for its baby teeth.

This month, the baby grew about an inch a week, putting it at about ten inches and 12 ounces.

month six: the baby

Whereas last month the baby's skin was transparent, now it becomes opaque. The skin is extremely wrinkled, almost as though the baby hasn't grown into it, because there aren't any fat deposits beneath the skin yet.

anyway.

On the night of our first anniversary, I called Ernesto from a pay phone in the middle of an Arizona desert. I let him know that the baby wasn't "showing" yet and that I'd be home in a week and a half.

Two days after I got home is when the baby finally poked out. Ernesto was quite pleased and joked, "That's a baby - already listening to your papa - not showing yourself until I was there to see you."

month five: my life

After I got home from tour is when my appetite swung into full voracious force. I really hate it when I fit perfectly into a stereotype - but it's true this time - I'm a pregnant woman with amazing food cravings. It's safe to say I'm obsessed with constant thoughts of food. I'll be eating something filling while thinking about what my next meal will be.

I started feeling the baby moving at the very beginning of this month. Ernesto got in the habit of rolling over and putting his hand on my stomach as soon as he woke in the morning. By the end of the month, not only could I feel movements, but I could also see the baby moving. It's quite weird the first time you witness your own stomach having what looks like a seismic tremor.

I also started feeling my uterus having growth spurts! There are two ligaments that span either side of the uterus and ouch, they hurt when they're stretching! It's been a cycle that I would sleep a marathon one night, have sore and tight ligaments the entire next day and then bounce back full of energy the day after that.

Other than a couple sore days, I felt phenomenal. Given my personality and lifestyle, I never would have guessed I would actually really like being pregnant, but I do. People on several occasions have told me, "You're glowing!" And it's kind of funny, too, that I have found myself feeling like people don't suck as bad as I used to think.

I started going to a weekly gentle/prenatal yoga class so I could learn how to relax and breathe, two absolutely important factors when labor strikes. I'm all about being in the best possible shape to have this baby naturally, but I could do without the meditative chanting stuff we do at the beginning and end of each class. Kundalini, schmundalini. Hearing a bunch of out of tune women chanting words that I don't even know the meanings of does the exact opposite of relax me. They make me want to curse at them until they shut up, so I try to just tune them out and think about what food I'm going to eat after class.

Complete strangers are starting to ask me questions like when I'm due and if I'm having a boy or girl. Very few people have been able to fathom the idea that I will not be finding out the baby's gender before it's born. One woman I teach with asked me, in all seriousness, "If you don't know if it's a boy or girl, how are you going to know how to decorate?" I was too stunned to even be able to laugh at her. I have discovered that most people have zero comprehension when I tell them we don't want to know the gender prior to its birth because we're hoping to dissuade the gender color-coding crap that we know we're going to have to rally against anyway after the baby is born.

The most fun I had this month was getting to play guitar with three of my girlfriends as the band Bikini Kill for Halloween, one of whom just told me that she's pregnant, too! Yeah!

month six: my life

My hormonal, nesting urges are still in full effect as I have chosen to not go to even more shows. One day I even broke out the sewing machine and made a shoulder bag and two little pillows out of fake fur and Subhumans and Hot Water Music patches. Every now and then I'll stop and ask, "What's wrong with me?" My friend Samantha reminds me, "You're pregnant!" Oh, yeah; the baby will need little pillows.

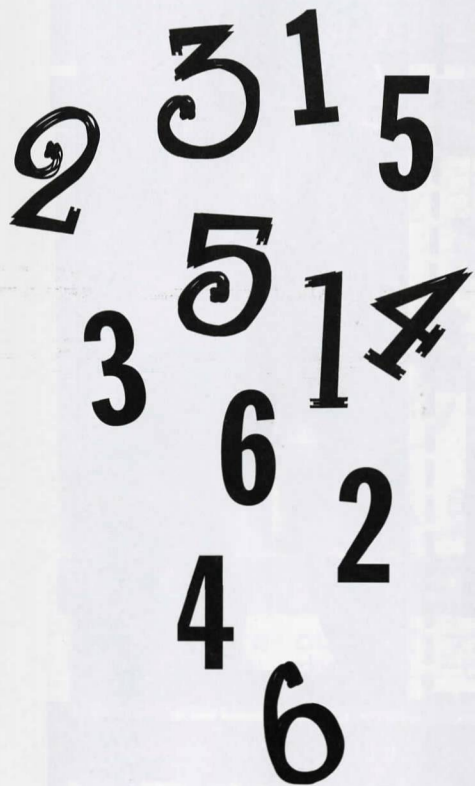
The times I have gone to some shows, I'm amazed to feel the baby start kicking as the band starts playing. I'm talking very first note and there is a wild thump in my gut. I wisped up



The baby's body has started to produce white blood cells. These are essential in order for the baby to be able to combat disease and infection.

This month, the face and body of the baby assume more of the appearance of an infant at birth. The tongue is also fully developed now.

Measuring a little over a foot long and weighing almost two pounds, the baby would have a chance of surviving if it were delivered at this time. No one wants a baby to be born this early, as survival would be very difficult for an infant this premature, but new technology could keep it alive. The baby would probably have to spend several months in the hospital, with risks of infection and other possible complications.



at the Born Dead Icons show and stood behind the amps. Fewer amniotic waves that way, I'm sure. I'm also amazed that while riding my bike to the show, dumbass guys will still holler at an obviously very pregnant woman, "Hey Baby! Yow, What's Up?" I mean really; give me a fucking break!

Speaking of bikes, remember the part a few months ago when I flipped over my handlebars? Well, I had another wising up and traded my hafta-bend-over-to-ride-it mountain bike for Samantha's get-to-sit-up-straight, cushy seat beach cruiser bike. I sure am smart sometimes...

I've been wising up book style, too. More than wising up, I've felt such inspiration and empowerment by reading some really incredible first hand accounts written both by midwives and mothers who have delivered naturally. Small percentages of births do have their complications which then dictate that it would be wise to seek hospital services, however, this is definitely the minority. A woman's body knows how to give birth and if allowed to do so at its own pace, without the obstetrical interventions of monitors, drugs and incisions that usually cause more harm than help, it will yield an alert, healthy baby and an intact, empowered mother.

As soon as I became pregnant, it seems as though corporations that sell baby things could smell my mailbox. It began filling up with coupon packs, free offers and complimentary issues of mainstream pregnancy magazines. I have been totally, completely, utterly repulsed by their attempts to hawk their bullshit goods to expectant women, preying on women during these emotional and sensitive months. This consumer culture is SICK! A few examples: "We've Got Everything You NEED for Your New CONSUMER," and "Your Dream Nursery for an Affordable Couple Grand!"

What really got me were some comments I read in one of these mainstream magazines: "Doctors generally like moms to take an active role in planning their births - so long as your hopes don't ossify into control-oriented demands, which may not be realistic." Oh, so it's OK to have hopes, but if you've come to trust your body and are empowered to have a natural birth and it takes more time than the doctor has, then it's not realistic? Clearly, that is sending a message that a woman taking control of her own birth is not accepted in the doctor controlled hospital setting. No thanks, I'm not buying any of it, so quit sending me these hideous rags that serve little purpose other than to perpetuate women's fears.

I discussed this exact issue with my midwife, along with my fear of having a ten pound baby, and she reassured me that my body knows exactly what it's doing by telling me, "Your body isn't making a baby it can't handle."

It's definitely been an incredible experience so far, especially learning to trust my body. Even the funny things are important parts of my overall enjoyment of being pregnant. My emotions can be crazy, both laughing and crying in the same hour. People have started to reach out and rub my belly, as if it's public domain. Even the stretching ligaments, lower back pain, leaky boobs and pear shaped body are OK by me. I thought my boobs looked huge in just my second month, and compared to my stomach that still hadn't begun to protrude, they were, but now that my stomach looks like it's grown a watermelon, my boobs have wound up looking dwarfed in comparison.

My poor dad. He's so funny. While I was home visiting for Thanksgiving, he must have made five attempts at the same fat joke in two hours. I asked him, "Can't you think of anything else to say?" He put his head on my shoulder and said almost pitifully, "It's just that you're my baby and I don't know to act." My mom, grandmother and aunts are being incredibly sweet, too. This baby will be the first of the next generation of my family, just as I was 29 years ago.

I remain in awe, constantly reminding myself that every new day brings me closer to having this baby. Twelve weeks to go. By the time you read this, Ernesto and I will probably be changing diapers in the middle of sleepless nights. I'll let you know how fun things are then!

Sources and Resources:

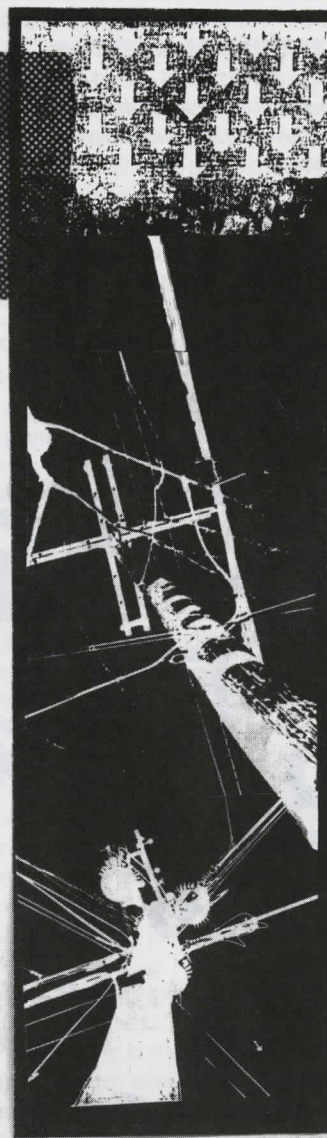
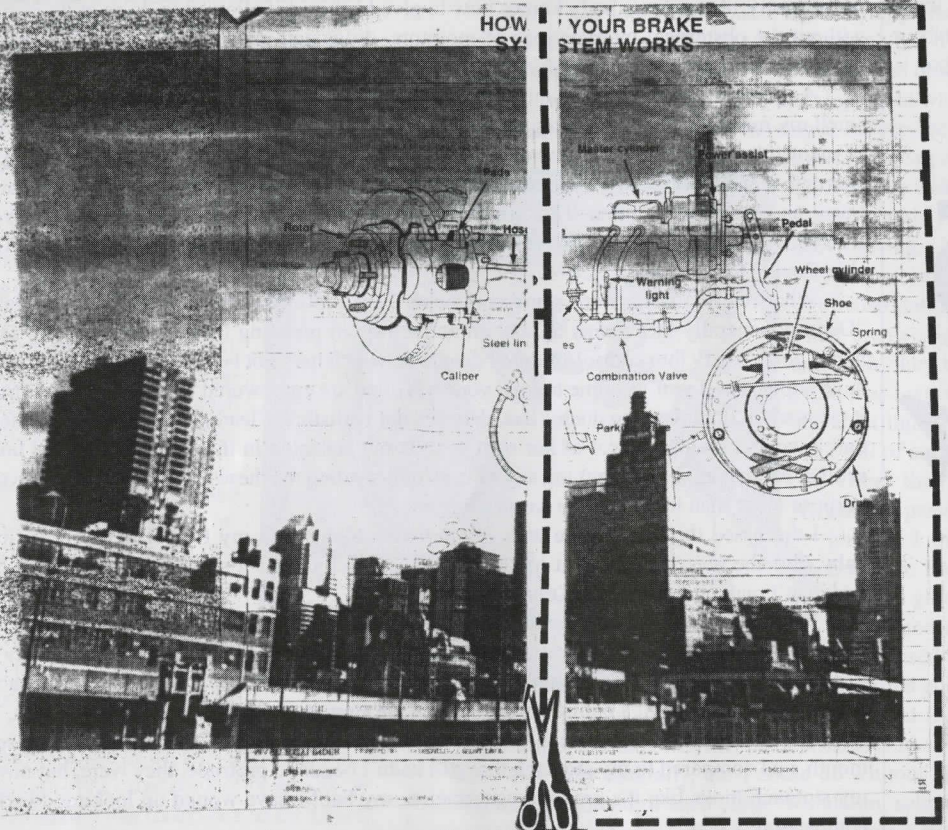
- Armstrong, Penny, and Sheryl Feldman. *A Midwife's Story*. New York: Arbor House, 1986.
Baker, Jeannine Parvati. *Prenatal Yoga & Natural Birth*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1974.
Chester, Penfield. *Sisters on a Journey: Portraits of American Midwives*. Rutgers University Press, 1997.
Curtis, Glade B. *Your Pregnancy Week - by - Week*. Tucson: Fisher Books, 1989.
Davis, Elizabeth. *Heart & Hands: A Midwife's Guide to Pregnancy & Birth*. Berkeley: Celestial Arts, 1987.
Eisenberg, Arlene, Heidi E. Murkoff and Sandee E. Hathaway. *What to Expect When You're Expecting*. New York: Workman Publishing, 1984.
England, Pam and Rob Horowitz. *Birthing From Within*. Albuquerque: Partera Press, 1998.
Goer, Henci. *The Thinking Woman's Guide to a Better Birth*. New York: Perigee, 1999.
Hotchner, Tracie. *The Pregnancy Diary*. New York: Avon Books, 1992.
Klaper, Michael. *Pregnancy, Children, and the Vegan Diet*. Maui: Gentle World, Inc., 1987.
Simkin, Penny. *The Birth Partner: Everything You Need to Know to Help a Woman Through Childbirth*. Boston: Harvard Common Press, 1989.
Susie, Dedra Anne. *In the Way of Our Grandmothers: A Cultural View of Twentieth-Century Midwifery in Florida*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988.
Weed, Susan S. *Wise Woman Herbal for the Childbearing Year*. Woodstock: Ash Tre Publishing, 1986.

Contact:

Jessica Mills / Yard Wide Yarns / P.O. Box 12839 / Gainesville, FL 32604 yardwideyarns@hotmail.com
Caroline / Brazen Hussy / P.O. Box 13105 / Gainesville, FL 32604 brazenhussyusa@netscape.net

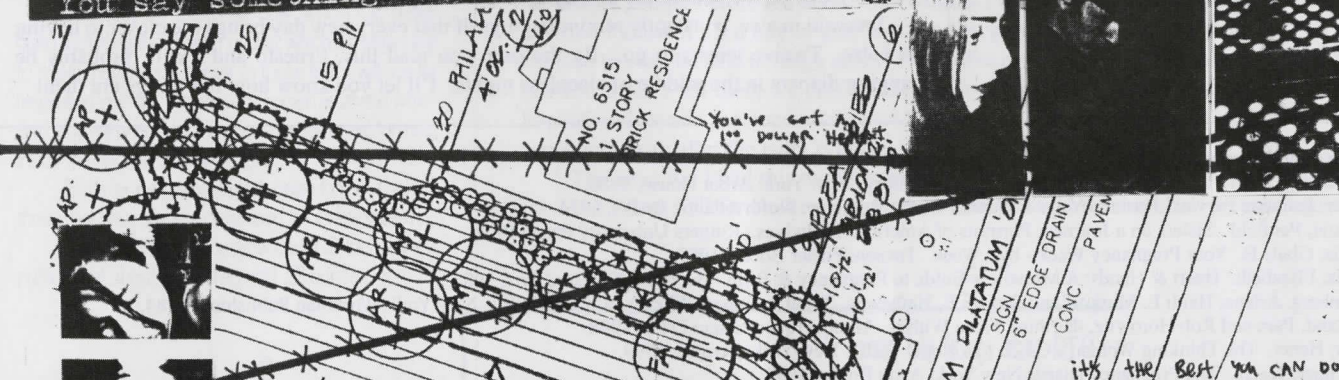
I DON'T WANT
TO DANCE
(like they dance
on film)

WITH COUPON - CLIPS - WITH COUPON - CLIPS - WITH COUPON - CLIPS -



The city breaks in half along the faultline that divides our room.

You say something about an old sitcom:



"We'll put a strip of tape down the middle of the floor. It'll be like that episode of..."

I sit in your chair on my side, listening to the music you're playing over there.

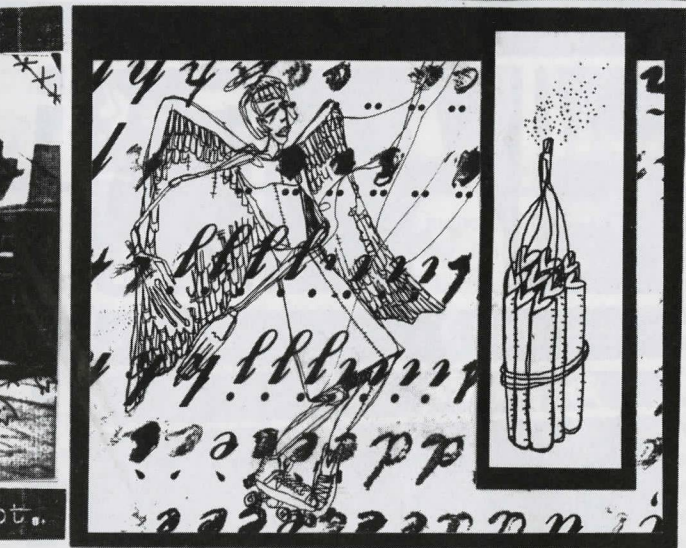


I look out the window and I could swear I'm staring at a screen, waiting for action.

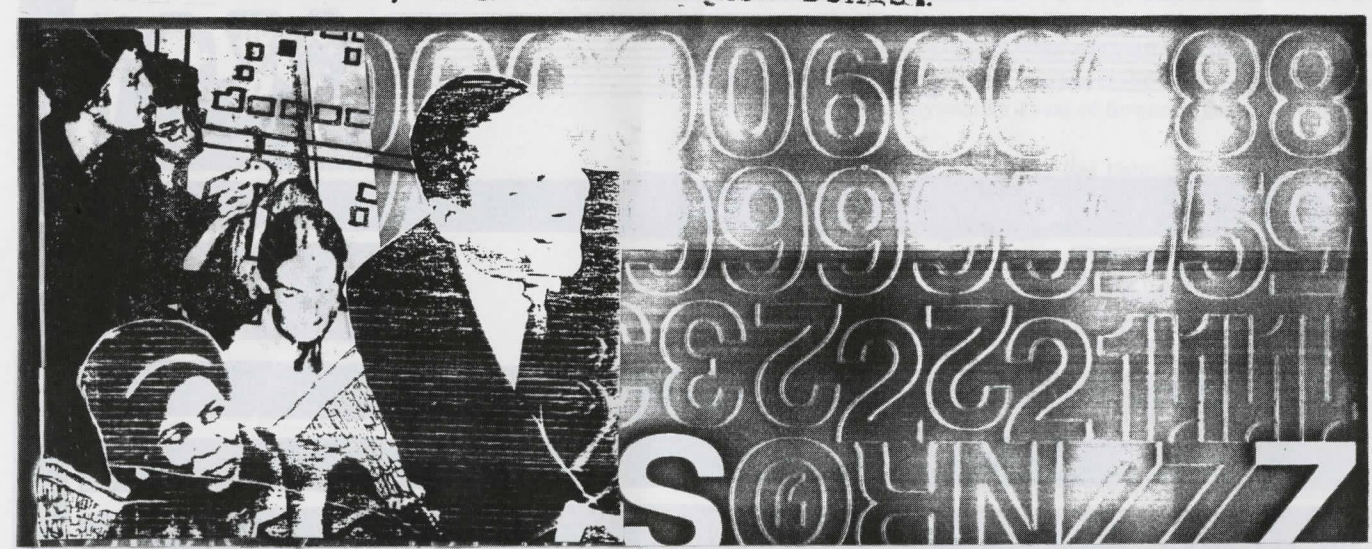
I never know what to say...



You always ask if I'd like a script.



Somewhere out of view, I can hear crackling fireworks, rusted bicycle chains, the start of new songs.



You turn your head to address the everpresent invisible audience.

A nostalgic grim in rewind...



Like you can pause a true story..

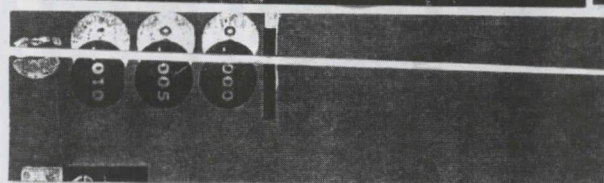


Like they come in 30/60/90 minute increments...



True stories don't end until

their stars do..



Otherwise, there's no way they can conclude...



they can't even really continue..



They can only start

and start

and start..

Fred Thomas, December 1999.
(heartbeat.922 lutz.ann arbor.MI.48103)



THE ART OF PORNOGRAPHY

JANE GRAHAM

I'm lying on my back on a mattress in the middle of a room. My legs are as wide apart as they can go, which is not exactly that wide compared to the feats of a gymnast, but it's wide enough. One hand is resting on my upper thigh, the other flailed above my head. As pornography goes, it's pretty tame. Except that this is not, God forbid, pornography. This is an art student's life class.

We have recreated Rodin's erotic drawings to give the session an "art historical perspective." As if we needed art history's back-up to prevent me from feeling exploited. Rodin's drawings, no doubt, are acceptable on an artistic level mainly because they are drawings and not photographs. The thing is, I have no moral qualms about this type of modeling work, the problems I have with feeling at ease seem to stem from much more practical worries.

The student is hoping that these photographs, once developed, will show sensuality, a landscape of body parts and genitalia beautifully composed, but I can't help feeling that the whole affair is doomed to failure. No matter how hard I try to look and feel erotic here in this room where the female form is analyzed like a vase of flowers, I find myself against a mental blockage.

Let me describe to you further this room. Everything in the life room becomes smeared with charcoal. I don't wear slippers, I have never worn slippers, and my feet blacken; the white sheets, freshly washed at the beginning of the week, new and clean and virginal, become footprinted and soiled. The more I writhe the blacker it becomes, and I always leave feeling dirty, dirty and in need of a bath. Not dirty as in violated or used or debauched, just literally dirty. This room is not one for getting down to it, for sexual fantasies. It's academic and solid and angular, paint-stained and full of easels and dust which throws me into violent sneezing. It is cold, emotionally cold even when the heaters have finally worked themselves up to an acceptable level.

It's not just the environment though. Neither is it just the fact that I don't find much validity in the idea behind the piece, that of the natural, earth-like simplicity of my gaping vagina, though I don't think my disinterest in the artist's work, and what these negatives will develop into, exactly helps. But I'm not the artist here, I'm just the model—what do I care? Perhaps it's just because I'm in no way attracted to him, that his generic student personality irritates me to the point where I demand a half-hour coffee break. The fact he is paying nothing for this session probably annoys me more than I have admitted; I know the fact that I am getting paid, by the institution, no more than I would for any other

session certainly does. He is three, maybe four years my junior, and he seems to me a precocious voyeur. His apparent lack of nervousness, his façade of nonchalance and his confidence as a would-be pornographer surprise me. I feel a frigidity in myself which I know I half desire, because I keep thinking, he doesn't deserve it. He doesn't deserve to get dripping wet, fiery, hot sexual images, not when all he's done is point the camera. Why, I keep thinking, should I give my all for somebody else's work? And I don't know if I would feel the same way if I were posing for porn, real porn, with porn surroundings and pornographic honesty, but above all, with pornographic, untaxed, filthy cash in filthy hand.

I've never told this student, or any of the other students, about my other life. Not all of it, anyway. They know that I am a fine art graduate and that I still make art and that I write and often they appreciate that. But they don't know about my other job. About dancing around naked, about striptease and the occasional session of glamour modeling. Because I'm afraid that should it be known I do these things, the art institutions might view my capability as a model in a less favorable light.

So I have this secret from him. That I know. Know about men like the one he is now, pointing lenses into dark corners, that I've seen far worse and really couldn't care. But I let him keep on just as he is. It's easier that way.

I have always fantasized about a one-to-one relationship with an artist, the struggle, together, to produce a piece of work and finish it; the fight to capture some intangible something; the tension across the room from easel to plinth, the eye contact, the piercing analysis, the intimacy built up. But the more I model the more I suspect that it will never be more than a fantasy. One-to-one sessions usually make me nervous, irritable and tired.

I like my job to be as simple and as unchallenging as possible, where I go home with dirty feet perhaps, but nothing more. Where my mind is free for my artwork, not theirs. I do not often feel a sense of mutual achievement when something is completed, because I'm not all that interested in the piece. Art students come and go and the more pictures of myself I see the fewer I would like to take home. I was told when first approached about doing photographic work of this nature, "Don't give me an answer just yet. Go home and think about it." What was there to think about? As far as I was concerned, I didn't care. As long as no-one was making any money out of it, what did I need to worry about – I didn't want to spend my creative time weighing up the parts of my soul that were supposedly getting stripped away with every click of the camera shutter.

I'm not exactly sure how much is wanted of me here, which doesn't improve matters. I really don't know how far he wants to take this. Because I'm sure I could go much, much, further than this young student really has contemplated, than the bounds of propriety would allow. But I'm not going to tell him any of that.

Art teachers in the life class talk a lot about this thing called "negative space." Don't draw the figure, they might say, draw the space around it. The figure then emerges from out of the room, from looking at the inverse shape. I think there's a lot going on in that grey area, more than just light and shade and tone.

Just like the negative space around the human form, our limited communication inside this room is more definable by what we don't talk about than what we do. Were we to compose the problem in a fine art way, I think that's where the crux of the matter lies. Put bluntly, I am not about to ask if he really wants my fingers up there or all out masturbation, because in the life room you pretend not to notice genital piercings, you do not call a tit a tit – you talk about the alignment of ribs, breasts, clavicles. And so I leave it as awkward, like a visit to the doctor for a cervical smear. I don't feel like fingering myself for six pounds an hour. At that rate, I don't even feel like bringing up the subject.

And I'm thinking about how I'd have preferred to have shaved the stubble from around my pubic area or washed my hair or put a spot of

make-up over my blotchy face, but I didn't, because it's only life modeling at the art school, after all, all a bit too early in the day for that sort of thing. But that is the ritual I perform for "sex work," not just because it is expected of me but because it is part of the whole masquerade, intrinsic now to how confidently I can pull off my performance. And part of the distinction made between artistic life modeling and sex work/glamour modeling, all arbitrary, of course, is in the lack of artifice attached to the body in the case of the former. I have had to consent to a police check on my criminal records because I work sometimes with minors; it's easy to feel that were I to present myself in too risqué a way with these youngsters, it would be considered inappropriate. But where do you draw the line at what is appropriate? Is it at a shaved pussy? Or is it in how I act?

The next day I have more photographic work for another student who has a completely different agenda. I feel exhausted, more exhausted perhaps than maybe I would if I was doing straightforward porn, with its simplistic rituals and stereotypes, with formulas to follow; whereas here I am constantly being questioned about the need to demolish those stereotypes, to notice irony, to avoid the kitsch, exhausted from carrying the weight of all academia and art history on my shoulders. But this isn't my work, this is someone else's agenda and it is their set of problems to solve. There are teachers here to discuss the theory with; that's why they get paid three times what I do. I'm actually more concerned right now with being able to get home in time to get my laundry done.

About a year after doing these sessions I began a collaboration with another of the students on a piece of my own. It was to be a performance about life modeling and the history behind it, about the women who posed for the famous paintings and their forgotten stories. I initially asked him simply if he could draw me while I was making a performance, as part of the piece; I thought that an illustrated documentation would be more subjective than the normal photographic or video evidence. But then during our first few discussions I began to realize that I could make this a much more powerful piece by exploring the tensions between us, by allowing them to develop naturally in front of an audience as a piece of theatre. And in order to do that I needed to start communicating with him more than I had in other one-to-one sessions. We had to start being more honest with one another.

I'd been modeling at that college for three years; I'd gotten to know the students well. I chose this particular artist not only because of his drawing skills, but because of the rapport we'd always had together. I'd always been able to feel relaxed modeling for him and we had a way of cracking jokes in the life room that might have seemed weird to an outside observer. He would always arrive late, huge rolls of paper under his arm, knocking easels flying and causing a whole lot of chaos in the room. It was entertaining. It threw all that negative space into commotion, destroyed the academic tense concentration with a slapstick crash. I owned up to the dancing because it was intrinsic to his understanding of the work, and to my relief it wasn't such a big deal after all. As I discussed my wish that he take a more active role in this theatrical piece, that he become a performer too, so that people could view the relationship between us, he astutely pointed out that he might feel objectified as "the man" in some kind of feminist piece. In a way, he was right. I'd wanted a guy to highlight the historical cliché between female model and male artist. I admitted he was being kind of exploited. That I wasn't making some simple piece about capturing movement, that as an artist I am interested in sexual politics and I try to explore dangerous ground and if he wasn't comfortable with that then to say now and it wouldn't happen. But he rose to the challenge and instead of each having our own separate agendas we started to work on the thing together, I hope with no real exploitation.

The piece is still ongoing. It's called *Tableaux Vivants* – "living pictures." This is a direct reference to the first striptease acts, which took still poses of famous paintings. I don't think you can separate pornography from art. I don't even think you should try to.



DIY Coffee:

Scott from
Milwaukee's Fuel Café
talks about the
ethics and
politics of
owning
your own
business.

This is an interview with Scott. Scott is one of the owners of Fuel Café. Fuel Café has become something of a punk rock mecca in the Midwest. Fuel came about as a result of the DIY (Do It Yourself) ethic, yet as it emerged from idea to reality, Scott was faced with some tough decisions. DIY is embraced as the alternative to mainstream consumer culture, yet those who take risks in order to attempt alternative ventures are often singled out for criticism. It often seems like you're expected to lose money in any "truly" alternative business. Somehow, to actually succeed and make money is viewed as morally reprehensible. To make a profit implies working for money as opposed to a higher, loftier goal. But is success anathema to idealism? I wanted to talk to Scott about the life as a boss, his experi-

ences in attempting to start his own business, and his response to criticism from those who feel he has "sold out." Interview by Dan Gatewood. Photos by Karoline Collins.

CLAMOR: Why did you decide to open a coffeehouse?

Scott: That's easy. I first decided to do Fuel after doing a lot of traveling. Traveling and always coming back to Milwaukee and kind of using it as a home base. But every time I came back I'd have to find a job and find a place to live and get set up so I'd be able to save money so I could go out on the road again. Finding a job was always a big pain in the butt. So the last time I was traveling, Leslie and I were traveling around in our van for four or five months and we crossed the whole country. While we were on the road, we decided that we'd be interested in trying to open a cafe in Milwaukee. We weren't the first ones to think of it, there were hundreds of others who had entertained the idea. And I had thought about it for years and years, but that was the time we really got serious about it. We drove home and said, "okay, this is what we're going to do, we're going to stay in Milwaukee for a while, and we're going to try and do this." And the whole thing was basically, that we didn't really ever think that it was going to work as a *business* business, we just wanted to get a place where we could work and maybe hire a couple of our friends. We really thought that, and this just shows how naive we were, we could maybe get some reading done and work behind the counter and read some books. And somehow it just turned into this big thing. We hadn't really anticipated it working. What we really thought was going to happen was, if it didn't work, that would be a good enough reason to leave Milwaukee and try our luck somewhere else. So that's how it started, just as a place for us and our friends to work. We didn't really have any expectations beyond that.

CLAMOR: So once you got it in your head to do this, what was the first thing that you did?

Scott: Start making lists of all the stuff that we needed, and all of the stuff that we wanted to do. Ultimately, it all comes down to money. You could make all the lists in the world, but every time you turn around, you realize that you need money for this, you need money for that. You need money for equipment, you need money to rent a space. You can't really take a first step without money. So the first thing we needed was a space, and you can't get a space unless you've got cash. And it's stupid to get a space unless you've got the rest of the money to follow through. So it was really frustrating. Then we found this guy in Chicago, and he was the one who said, "Yeah, this is a really great idea." He was a broker and he was making a lot of money, so he said, "Make me a partner and I'll give you the money," and that's how we got the money to get started. So we were lucky. Usually you'd have to go to a bank and deal with getting a loan and all of that.

CLAMOR: What was the first thing that made you realize, wow, this isn't really going to be what I thought it was going to be, and I'm going to have to start making decisions that might run counter to some of my beliefs?

Scott: The seriousness of it started to settle in once we started to build it, and the inspectors started coming in and we were dealing with all of the city officials and all of the licensing people. Then after that, it wasn't until we started having people come into work and we started having to have problems with people calling in sick, or people not doing what they're supposed to be doing at work, people fucking off. I mean, things like, what's the policy going to be with employees, do they pay, do they not pay, how much should they pay, should they pay cost. It used to be that everyone who worked there could eat and drink for free, all the time, whenever they wanted to come in. And then we realized right away that that really wasn't going to work. It just basically came down to money again, at the end of the month you're going through receipts and you're going, wait a

second...when you have to deal with shit like that you just kind of forget, that you still have to stay in business. The thing is, with us, someone gave us the money to get started, so we had to start dealing with money for the first time in those first six months, and we were going nowhere. I don't know if that answers your question.

CLAMOR: Okay, so now the store is open, and you're an employer.

Scott: Yeah.

CLAMOR: But you've done it yourself. How do you handle your relationship with your employees, who also happen to be your friends? I'll give you a hypothetical situation, one of your friends is slacking off and not doing their job, coming in late, what do you do?

Scott: That's not hypothetical at all, because it happens all the time. Because basically we are in the enviable position of being able to hire people that we know, or if we don't know the person first-hand, we know someone who can recommend them. So usually, we get to hire pretty good people, but there are instances where things just don't work out. It's really hard, because it's your friend, you would think that might make it easier, and in some ways it does make it easier because if things are going well, you can just pull them aside and say, "Come on, you know what needs to be done here and you're not doing it. I shouldn't have to be telling you this." I try and tell them that this has nothing to do with our relationship outside of work, but sometimes if it remains a problem, then I'm going to have to do something about it. We don't really have a certain way of dealing with it, it's different every time. The funny thing about it is that after Fuel first opened, I went to this anarchist gathering in Madison, and we were talking about organizing in the workplace. And I'm sitting there thinking about all of this, and this guy had come from the I.W.W. and was giving a talk. And here he was talking about their Declaration of Purpose, and how to organize and such, and here I am thinking, "I can't do this." I'm here at an anarchist gathering and I want to be supportive and figure out the best way to deal with things like my workers and stuff. They tell me that I can't help create a union or organize because I'm an owner, and therefore a part of the problem. It's a weird position to be in. One of the purposes we've had ever since we've opened is to try and make the workplace a good one, and one which people would be comfortable in. It's sometimes just a strange position to be the owner and employing our friends. I mean, in our lifetimes I'm sure we've all worked with and for jerks. I'm not saying we're the best employers in the world, but at least we can make our own rules about what we think is right.

CLAMOR: Let's talk about gentrification for a minute. It's been said, and I would agree, that Fuel Cafe is a major gentrifier in the Riverwest area (where Fuel is located).

Scott: Oh, totally. Unfortunately I don't think there's any doubt of that.

CLAMOR: So what would be your response to those who condemn Fuel for that?

Scott: Well, I'm not working for a real estate agency. We opened the store in a community that didn't have much commercial property at all. Almost all of the stores in the area were closed or shut down. We put in a coffee shop because there were people in that area that we wanted to serve. Money always follows creative development. It's the same paradigm anywhere you look. In any neighborhood, in any city, where the artists, students and young people go, the money follows. If it wasn't us, it would have been someone else, and if it wasn't a cafe, it would have been a bookstore or something. People who have money or control the real estate in these areas latch on to that, and are aware of these new developments, and that's what makes property values rise. It's not us, we weren't the ones who raised the rent for the folks in the area, we were just a couple people who



opened up a cafe. It could have been anyone, doing anything. We didn't get any kind of benefit from that process at all. We still don't have the money to buy property in that area. It's our hard work, and our presence that is driving the value of the property in the area up, but we don't make any money off of that. We're still paying rent for our space. Our landlord is the one who is benefiting, and it's the other landlords in the area who are driving up rent in the surrounding area.

CLAMOR: But how would you respond to the people who do live there and are trying to raise their families on a minimal income who can no longer afford to pay rent on their homes because of places like yours or Foundations (a bar) or whatever, have moved in and opened businesses. And now you have real estate speculators who see young white kids moving into the area, white kids with money and they're telling minority families, some of whom might have been there for years, that their rent is no longer \$400 it's now \$700, because the landowners know that they'll be able to rent that space out to some college kid for \$700. Can you see a way around this gentrification process?

Scott: If there's an answer to those kinds of problems I don't know it. It's almost inevitable it seems. It's not something I ever wanted to happen, and I hate seeing it happen. I feel like young white kids are a little bit more immune to those problems, I mean like us. I mean, I've always lived in what you'd call marginal neighborhoods my whole life, that's all I've had the money to do. And whenever an area I'm living in gets gentrified, I just pick up and move, because I'm able to do that. But for a family, it's different, there are a lot more problems than just picking up and moving. You might have kids who have friends in the area, or go to school. And moving involves taking them away from their school and their friends. And that's just one problem, I'm sure there are many more. I sympathize with that, but we went there because the rent was cheap, and it was really only in a low rent area that we were able to open at all. We got a grant from the city for the front of the building, but even that got messed up because our landlord stole the sign that we had paid for. But that's a whole other story. The reason we went there was because we liked the neighborhood, and we could afford the rent. It was kind of separate from what was going on over on the east side, and we had a really good feeling about the neighborhood. And we still do, we still really like the neighborhood. I really don't have an answer to the gentrification process. And I really don't think I have to address it or be held responsible for it. I just went into that neighborhood to do what I want to do with my life, and that's to run this cafe. I didn't have any thoughts beyond getting the cafe up and running. I didn't go there to make a whole lot of money, I just went there to contribute to the

buy him out. money to get ways we were 60 and 80 be comparable a real drain get things stable to live So we went Comet. We're



Punk rockers Citizen Fish give Fuel Cafe some free publicity

Scott: Yeah, it's just a really difficult business. I really had no idea when we started how hard it would be. In the beginning, in the first couple of months, we didn't have all that many bills to pay. We were thinking, "Wow, this is great," you know? Then we started realizing all of the additional things we were going to need like a linen service, and we realized we were going to need smoke eaters and all of these other things. And we need to get this fixed, and that fixed, and we need more insurance, and we need a permit for this and that and on and on. It's like, every time you turn around there are more costs involved. Basically, if you take in ten bucks, you pay out \$9.50. That's just how the business works. I didn't know that. If you want to make lots of money, you need to open a huge place like this (we're sitting in The Coffee Trader, a more upscale coffee house), or operate an expensive place, with higher priced food.

CLAMOR: What are some other surprises you've run into in the process of opening and running the business?

Scott: Let's see...I don't really know about other surprises, but there are things like dealing with the long hours. I didn't expect that, and also dealing with the weird situations that come up. We've been robbed, and that was kind of scary. Dealing with all kinds of people wanting you to give them money for all kinds of different things. It seems like every non-profit organization and school wants money or something donated for this or

neighborhood and hopefully make a livelihood for myself. That's all.

CLAMOR: Are you surprised by the success you've had?

Scott: By Fuel's success? Yeah, absolutely, 100 percent. I freak out every single day. Seriously, every day I wake up and I just can't believe it. And now we've got another place (Comet Cafe) that's open. Doing what we're doing, I just never thought we'd be doing the things we're doing today.

CLAMOR: So why did you open Comet?

Scott: Just pretty much after looking at the books we decided to open up another place. The thing about restaurants in general, and coffee-houses in particular, that I'm learning, is that it's really hard to make money on them. We had a third partner, and we had to take out a loan to This is the guy who originally fronted us most of the started. And we found out that splitting the money three barely living. I'm working all the time. I work between hours a week, and I'm not even bringing in what would be to a normal 40-hour-a-week paycheck. And it got to emotionally and financially. Now we've just started to bilized. We just realized that if we were ever going to be semi-normal lives, we'd have to open up another cafe. out and borrowed a bunch of money again, and opened already working sixty to eighty hours a week, so we figured we might as well divide our time among two different places.

CLAMOR: It was interesting to realize that you're not making a lot of money doing this. Coming into Fuel, it would seem as though you'd be doing really well financially, because there always seem to be people there.

that. And that's cool, that's something about owning a business that's really cool, the fact that you are in a position to help out these kinds of groups. It's a kind of entrepreneurial responsibility, if the government isn't going to help these people, and it's certainly shown that it isn't willing to help, then we're always willing to help out however we can. That's just a social responsibility, but I didn't realize that we'd be approached as much as we are for these types of things. Oh yeah, did you know I've got a cellular phone now? Yeah, that's really fucking weird. But you know why I had to get it? For example, we have some sewer problems at Fuel, and there's really nothing that can be done to remedy it until the whole building is leveled and someone goes underneath it and fixes the mess. I carry the phone around because sometimes the sewer backs up, and if we don't get it fixed right away we have to clear the place out and we're forced to close down for the rest of the day. Late last Saturday night my girlfriend came up from Chicago and we slept in on Sunday morning and I managed to get the day off Sunday afternoon, so we had breakfast and went around thrift store shopping to look for plates for Comet. I went to go drop them off at 2:00 p.m. and I drive up to the place and it's totally shut down. The doors are locked. I go inside and find out that at 11:00 the sewer had backed up. Right on our busiest day at our busiest time. So, not knowing what to do, the guys that were working there kicked everybody out and locked up. None of the bathrooms would work, and nothing would drain. They called up the Roto-rooter service because they couldn't find me. That short time that we were closed wound up costing us a lot of money, not only in receipts, but also in having to pay \$200 for the plumber guy to come in because they couldn't get in touch with me. I have all the tools, I could have done it and we wouldn't have had to close at all. And that kind of stuff is what makes or breaks you as a business sometimes.

CLAMOR: Are you happy with what you've accomplished and what you're doing, or do you sometimes wake up and say, "God, this stuff just consumes me."

Scott: I like that though. It does consume me, and I do get freaked out. I guess what I should say I do hate is that sometimes I get really tense and I might start snapping at my friends. Because when things aren't going the way I think they should be going at work I get frustrated. They're all my friends, but I get so familiar with working with them everyday, and sometimes I end up snapping at them. And that really sucks because they're my friends, and it's deeper than that, you know? I'm trying to get a handle on that, because when that happens it really upsets me. But, all in all, it's worked out really well. I like it, I like how manic it makes me. I just like that.

CLAMOR: Last words? If you were talking to someone who wanted to get something started, a coffee shop, or a book or record store, what would you tell them? How would you have them respond to people accusing them of being capitalists or just dealing with lots of money, what would you tell them?

Scott: I say, try not to feel guilty about things like that. I mean, guilt is for yourself to decide. You know, in your conscience if you're hurting someone. If you're making money by hurting other people, or taking advantage of other people, that's not the way to make money. But if you're making money doing the thing that you love, then go for it. You can hire your friends and you can sell records or sandwiches or sell books or whatever you decide to do. And then you're already three steps ahead of the game. You don't have to work for someone else, you're doing what you love, and working at what you'd be doing anyway. You can surround yourself with friends who can help you make your project work. And you have full creative control over what you do and how you do it. You get to make all the decisions and all the rules. And if you can draw a paycheck from it, it's the greatest thing in the world. I'd say to anyone, that if you've even thought about it, then go for it because just the fact that you're more in control of what you're doing and you don't have to collect a paycheck from somebody else. It really is a good thing.



How I Learned to Stop Worrying, and Love Coffee

by Travis Frisbie

"2 years ago I had never touched a drop in my life. Now I know. 5 cups will make me smart, 7 will make me the most brilliant man on Earth. Right now I am an ignorant, dull human being. 7 cups from now, I will easily beat Boris Spassky, 5 moves tops, timed grandmaster chess. Then I will bench press this house."

- Sam McPheeters, ERROR #101

Sam refers, of course, to coffee, the black gold that transforms hominids into superheroes. The liquid stimulant that improves mood, heightens social skills, increases self-confidence, reduces irritability and lessens the risk of suicide. All of which I need like, well, a cup of coffee. Days without coffee pass as drab anomalies. But the more I read about the black stuff, the more worried I become. As a strict vegetarian, it's hard not to think about the process surrounding food consumption. And why shouldn't we think about how our consumer choices are played out around the world and in our own neighborhoods?

A history of coffee reads like a crash course in modern economics¹: colonialism, multinational corporations, unsustainable agricultural policies, and the increasing disparity between producing and consuming nations. Plus the postmodern favorite, *clever* advertising. All leading to that cheap cup of coffee we enjoy today. The journey from crop to cup, however, is seldom a tasteful one. As the bean grew from local secret to worldwide necessity, so did the unsavory manner in which it arrives to us.

"We have no relation with the coffee growers."

- Andrea Cook, Nestle Corp.

"Deniability" is a word crucial to capitalism. Deniability meaning the disassociation from accountability and legal or moral reproach. The same type of cognitive dissonance that puts meat in the grocery store with barely a trace of blood or the animal that supplied the meat puts coffee on the shelves. Coffee appears to us always friendly: the hostess refilling your cup; the caffeine excitement of a quiet date; you alone and huddled over the typewriter with only a steaming cup for hope. If there's a thought of where this magic liquid comes from, it's only exotic references in the bean's nomenclature: *Barcelona Blend*, *Mexican Altura Pluma*, *French Roast*... And that's just how consumerism works best- uncritical, sentimental and with the promise of breaking you out of your overworked existence.

South American coffee "spokesperson" and symbol, Juan Valdez, represents the disparity between what we're given and what's going on behind the scenes. Juan Valdez is coffee's Marlboro Man. A rugged, trustworthy personification you can safely tap into with every drink. Ironically, the small farmers that Valdez is based upon have about as much relevance to modern coffee production as Aunt Jemima does to maple syrup. Or the Chiquita fruit-hat woman does to the banana business.

"Picking coffee is like caring for a wounded person... It's part of a long process which starts the moment the agents contract the workers in their villages and load them into the lorries like animals. It's one long process of robbing them of their joy."

- Rigoberta Menchu, I, Rigoberta Menchu²

At the risk of sounding both hopelessly naïve and overly concerned, I'll reiterate that coffee, like any cash crop, remains inherently political. The riots in Haiti in 1791, in El Salvador in 1932, and the Zapatista uprisings today reveal a centuries-old struggle between foreign interests who exploit



both the land and the people. Formerly self-contained villages of native populations have given way to modern plantations. The increase in crop output benefitted a wealthy few in Central and South America, but destroyed the way of life for Indians there. It is not a coincidence that the Chiapas region in Mexico is coffee-rich, populated with indigenous, impoverished workers. The Sandinistas started their struggle by seizing control of Somoza's coffee plantations.

Land reform issues in Central American link directly to global agribusiness (sugar, coffee, bananas). A punishment and reward system of financial aid between the United States and Central/South America ensures that conditions stay favorable to business and not the laborers. Colombian Senator Enrique Escovar openly asked the U.S. to "pay us good prices for our coffee or—*God help us all*—the masses will become one great Marxist revolutionary army that will sweep us into the sea." Little has changed since his 1963 speech. And despite continual lip service to democracy and free trade, the United States repeatedly gives military and fiscal aid to regimes who are friendly to corporate agribusiness and indifferent, if not openly hostile, to indigenous workers.

Similarly, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) also plays an inextricable part in global coffee history. Through loans and encouragement, Central American, African and certain Asian countries like Indonesia massively expanded their coffee production in the later part of this century. These nations switched from smaller, more environmentally-sound farms to larger, non-shade grown plantations. Modern techniques such as mechanical harvesters and high-volume fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides, nematocides, and herbicides returned a higher-yield with less labor and thereby changed the entire dynamic of coffee production. But both the land and the people have borne the brunt of the modernization that the coffee industry requires.

Grown naturally, coffee is a sustainable crop, both environmentally benign and ecologically stable. Grown with bananas as a shade tree, coffee traditionally exists as part of a healthy ecosystem. The migratory birds that fly south for the winter find shade in the coffee plantations. The Green Revolution in global agriculture changed all that. The current crop's homogeneity renders it more susceptible to disease. Coffee harvested mechanically quickly erodes the soil, making it fit only for short-term cattle grazing. "Per acre, coffee is the third most pesticide-doused crop in the world, after cotton and tobacco—and the leading pesticide-intensive crop of any that we eat or drink."³ Hardly a basis for the national revitalization that the coffee-producing countries so desperately need.

As the land erodes, so does the autonomy of the local populace. Where once farmers could grow coffee along with other edible crops and timber trees for a self-sustaining existence, their traditional way of life has increasingly given way to an indentured serfdom on modern plantations. Coffee production remains notoriously labor intensive, and plantation workers are exposed to known carcinogens throughout the process. Can I say that three dollars a day is unfair when whole families line up day after day to do such work? I'm positive that not enough of the money we pay for coffee is making its way back to the people who deserve it most. Coffee has become just another commodity feverishly traded on the floor at Wall Street; the fate of lives and communities just another statistic in the equation of profit.

Which brings us home to Starbucks. Starbucks (like 'Gen-X' novelist Douglas Coupland) represents an endless source of fascination, anger and horror for me. Starbucks (like Barnes & Noble) sells bits of my so-called culture back to me. I can't sit down, pick up a book and enjoy a cup of coffee without feeling like I'm a marketing statistic. If there's romance and revolution in every sitting, it's mostly a revolution in youth marketing and global capitalism. I'm recalling rainy afternoons in both Chicago and Atlanta where we sought refuge in the comfy chairs and unaccusing eyes of Starbucks. I was explaining to Joe how Starbucks was considering adding an organic coffee to their menu, and how they give thousands to a literacy program in El Salvador, and how they don't treat their employees *that bad*, when he interrupts with a smile and says, "I'm okay with being here." Am I? Should we be?

Starbucks is growing fastest in suburban, residential neighborhoods. The subtext being that the chain is expanding most aggressively where the need for community is greatest. You cannot underestimate the need for a non-work, non-home, comforting space in modern America. For want of true community, we are given soothing businesses. My hangouts are all

places where I can drink coffee (either bought or brought). The devious part is how Starbucks appropriates the traditional role of the café—intellectual, bohemian, countercultural...and sanitizes it into a safe, profitable franchise. I want to go to a locally-owned, independent café in every town and see what's going on there. Increasingly and depressingly, it's Starbucks on every corner instead. How soon before these are our only options? How can we redeem the ritual? The question remains, are we talking about coffee or community?

"Food is like the information we seek out; we must learn to distinguish between fact and fiction, truth and hype."

—Bobby Sullivan, 'Who Feels It Knows It'

The answer may lie in fair trade and organic coffees. Both are good things, but distinct even though some beans may be both. Fair trade means the farmers were paid a living wage regardless of market price, hopefully allowing them basic needs such as food, shelter, education and health care. Not such a radical concept, but the world marketplace is not so kind. Fair trade needn't cost consumers more, especially if the middlemen (cartels and corporations) get cut out of the equation.

Organic coffee means just that—grown without pesticides such as DDT, malathion and benzene hexachloride. Try organic fruit and coffee and you'll notice the difference immediately. Organic farming can be labor intensive (using compost fertilizer, natural predators, a secondary shade crop, weeding with a machete), but I know I'm willing to pay more for coffee that's assuredly safe and non-exploitative. Also, a majority of both organic and fair-trade farms are worker-owned and democratically-run. Shade-grown or songbird friendly coffee has also entered the marketplace. Such beans were grown using a secondary or top crop alongside the coffee, thereby ensuring the sanctity of the bird nests and the longevity of the soil.

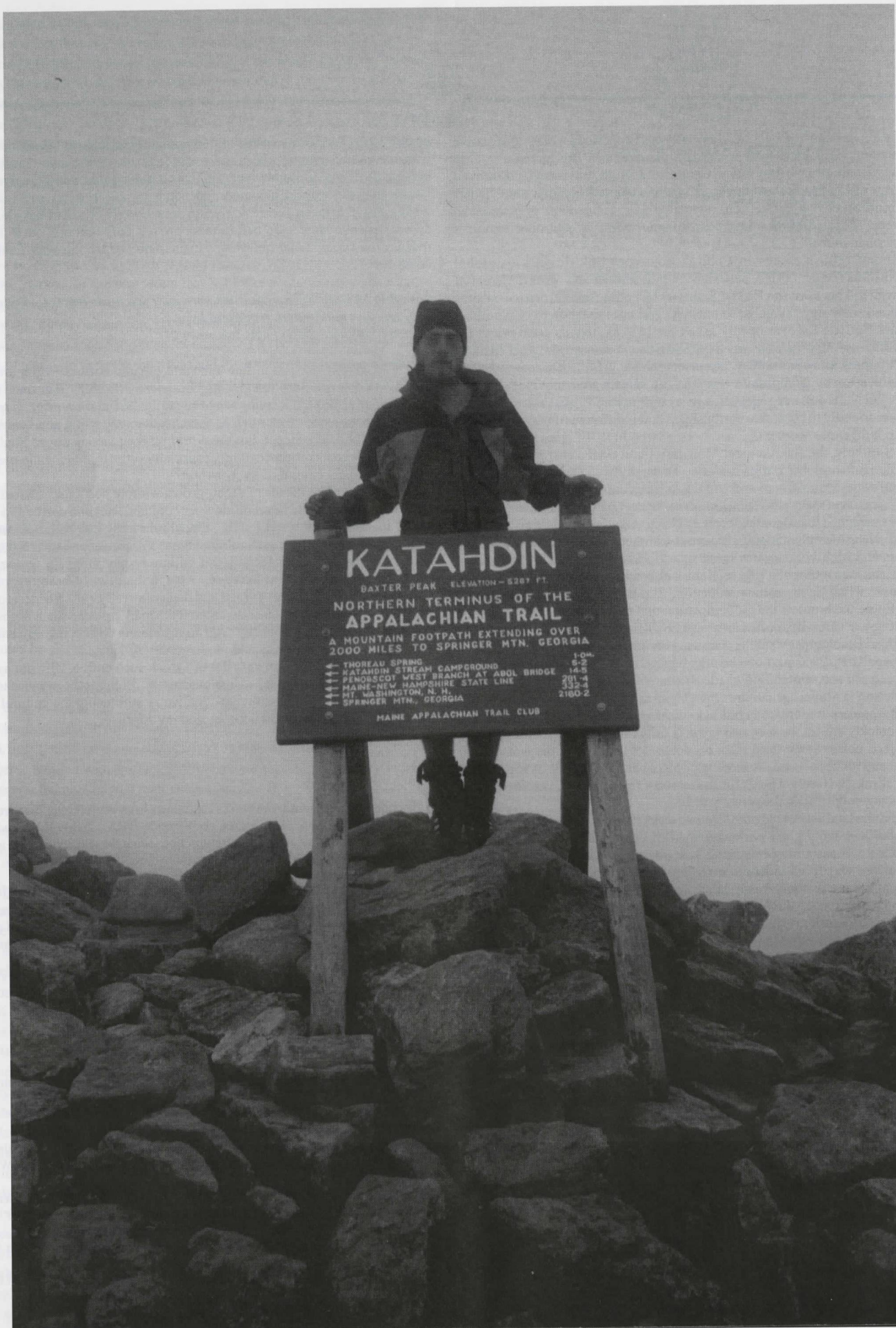
If your local grocer or café doesn't stock such coffee, why not ask that they do? Support local independent businesses. Support the organic and fair trade movements. Sounds obvious, but we're still losing the cultural wars. Let's make sure coffee works for *us*, and not for *them*.

Notes:

1. I am not an economist. My head still hurts from deciphering the acronyms of the organizations involved in the coffee trade (NCO, NCA, ICO) and their political dealings. The undeniable bottom line is that these countries are getting screwed in the name of free-trade and consumerism. It is not a new story, nor is it exclusive to coffee.
2. Recent scholarship questions the authenticity of Rigoberta Menchu's first person narrative in this book. Whether the experiences she writes about are autobiographical or assimilated do not concern me. As testament to the forced degradation of life of Central America's Indian population, the book remains essential and revelatory.
3. Dicum, G. & Luttinger, N. *The Coffee Book: Anatomy of an Industry From Crop to the Last Drop*. New York: New Press, 1999. p.54. The pesticides reportedly turn inert upon roasting. Let's hope so.

Bibliography:

- Dicum, G. & Luttinger, N. *The Coffee Book: anatomy of an industry from crop to the last drop*. New York: New Press, 1999.
Equal Exchange website: www.equalexchange.com.
McPheeters, Sam. *ERROR (fanzine) #101*. Richmond, Va. 1994.
Menchu, Rigoberta. I, Rigoberta Menchu: an indian woman in Guatemala / edited and introduced by Elisabeth Burgos-Debray; translated by Ann Wright. London: Verso, 1984.
Mitchell, Chip. 'Bittersweet: as competition brews among coffee fair traders, the movement comes of age.' *Resource Center of the Americas*. October 1998. www.americas.org/News/Features/9810_fair-trade_coffee_industry.html.
Pendergrast, Mark. *Uncommon grounds: the history of coffee and how it transformed the world*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.
Sullivan, Bobby. *Who feels it knows it (fanzine)*. Washington, D.C. 1993.
Utne Reader. November/December 1994.



Picking Locks at Saint Peter's Gate

the hiking adventures of mr. alex coughlin

Campfires have a way of advancing your perspective, of changing your worldview. Something about the warmth on a chilly evening, the way it crackles, the smoky smell against the backdrop of fresh wilderness air. There's something almost magical about the way it draws you in, the way it prevents you from looking at anything else or in any other direction. It could also be the setting. One never seems to have the opportunity to let troubles go and space out in front of a campfire while, say, punching a time-clock at some dull, dead-end job or while stuck in traffic along some infinite beltline of some godforsaken city. The setting must have something to do with it. Any other place, other than where a campfire is useful, is likely to be the source of the troubles I'm trying to get in the woods in front of a campfire to escape from. Grand, life-altering decisions are often made around a campfire. Indeed, many revolutions could likely be traced back to one campfire or another.

Sitting around our personal inferno several years back my then lover, Mya, and I were involved in some very serious talk. We were by no means expert campers, but we certainly knew enough to know that such a fire was the only appropriate place for such serious discussion. We had recently made a move from Annapolis, MD to Durham, NC so that Mya could continue her studies at the university. In a mere handful of days she would begin her post-graduate studies and we both knew our available time together would be minimal. So, we snuck away for a few days to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park for a weekend to ourselves, something we hadn't had in months.

She already had the next couple years mapped out while I felt more uncertain so our conversation followed accordingly. We assessed my "situation": a floundering publication, a low-wage, dead-end job that made me unhappy for the most obvious of reasons, a life in a new town with only one friend who doubles as my lover. We both agreed, my circumstance seemed rather dull and uninspired, at best.

After a long, self-pitiful and deliberate silence, Mya changed the subject, as she often did, by declaring this irrelevant fact: there is a network of trails, hundreds upon hundreds of miles of trail, that traversed this park in every direction imaginable. She asked me if I had known this and I answered, in an even more self-pitiful way, that I didn't quite care, wondering why anyone would want to walk, anyway. It seemed a useless endeavor...

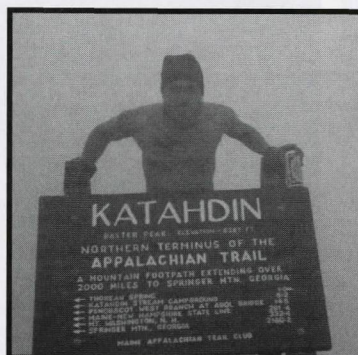
Nevertheless, she continued. Where we were, in fact, was just a single campsite way off on the perimeter of a vast wilderness encompassing thousands of acres of old growth forest, mountain springs, streams, bears, and even many of the highest peaks east of the Mississippi. She spoke of brave individuals who set out from campgrounds, parking lots, and trailheads into such remote areas for days and sometimes weeks. She praised these 20th century pioneers like she would a hero. Their rugged determination, their backcountry efficiency, their environmental commitment, their sense of passion and adventure.

**"As the bright planet return'd to thyne stars. An eve
Spent in toil return'd the same. We longed to continue not as
Mine Almighty King, with sword equip'd
Resplendant image of mine own self shrieked
'Murha o Morrir!' Aye, so we did."**

-Vladyonovich Perciavellian

**"My life is spent in one long effort to escape from the common-
place of existence."**

-A. Conan Doyle via Ray Jardine



Despite my initial disinterest, I couldn't help but admitting that she was indeed holding my interest, soon to the point of salivating for a slice of that life. I began to question her about the specifics of such an undertaking and she began to answer with confidence, assuredness and true knowledge. After three years together, I hadn't the faintest idea she was such a master-hiker. She claimed she was nothing of the sort, that she'd just read a book. But to me, at that time, she was just one hair shy of genius.

It could have been her speech — I'll admit that that's possible, it was quite beautiful. More likely it was something more intangible: my mood, the weather, my post-meal dreaminess, the smells and, of course, that delightful campfire, still blazing and taking me to where I wanted to go. Whatever the reason, I was certainly geared up and ready to go.

A handful of months later those tentative plans we had made at the campfire began to materialize and we were on our way to Elkmont campground in the Northern Smokies where we would be travelling southeast to attempt a 69 mile traverse of the Park. We realized that for a pair who hadn't even set foot on trail (can you believe all that information from a book!?) we had bit off a rather sizable piece of property. No matter, despite my own nausea (nothing unusual) we both felt great and were ready for the challenge. We had planned meticulously for a solid week prior and felt we had covered every base imaginable — every base save for the 69 miles that still needed to be hiked.

Our anticipation and excitement transformed that not-so-beautiful campground we arrived at very late in the day into a treat for our every sense. The vacationing campers and their grills billowing smells of hamburgers and brats, snotty children darting around on their BMX bikes and teenagers' proud declarations of their beer-score forced the realization of "vacation," something we'd forgotten entirely in our frantic planning and plotting that previous week. Beaming huge smiles, we set up camp, ate, relaxed, and soaked up a bit of that 'outdoorsy' atmosphere that seems to have become vogue. We spoke of the next days hike and acknowledged

the multitude of butterflies joining us in our respective stomachs for this particular adventure. Everything seemed right, like this trip *needed* to happen. After a few hours we sleepily retired to our two-person tent, nestled closely and fell fast asleep with unusual ease.

When we woke, much later than planned, cooked, cleaned, drank steaming hot coffee, and went through our gear we realized that, despite our 60+ pound packs, with everything we needed and many things we didn't, there were still several items we were missing. Not good, as we didn't have a car having been shuttled from our destination. We had, however, noticed a small shop that looked like a suitable place to purchase our missing items. It was at least a four mile hike, round trip, but what else could be done? It had to be done if we were to make our Great Leap Forward.

After three hours of walking, I returned with the necessities. We quickly broke camp and split;

me, rather exhausted from those Bonus Miles*, my compatriot, restless and anxious.

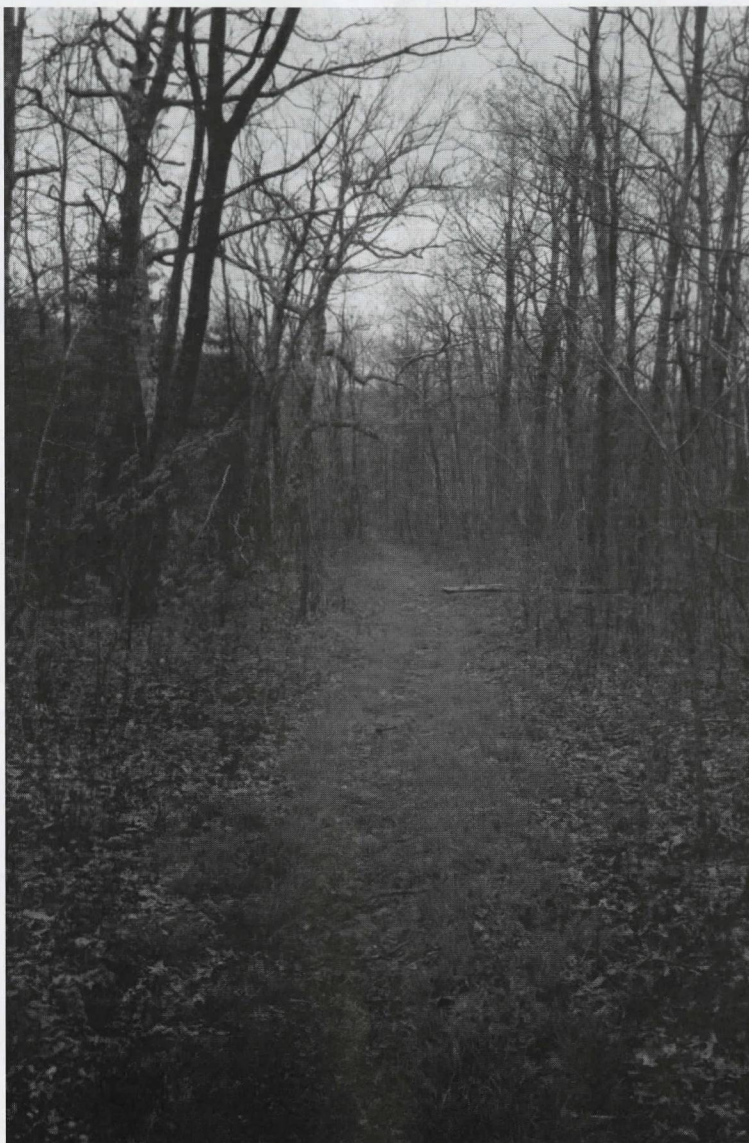
Not having gone more than 100 yards into our journey our unyielding incompetence and lack of backcountry skill became hopelessly apparent in the most painful of ways. Our most flagrant folly was the trail we'd chose to take us up to the ridge. While planning, The Snake Dens Ridge Trail seemed like the only logical choice: at 4.6 miles it easily cut 4 miles off the more roundabout Low Gap Trail. Our instincts, no doubt nurtured by public education, told us that 'the quickest way from point A to point B is a straight line.' Five minutes on the actual trail it was obvious that there was nothing 'quick' about the bee-line we'd chosen. Each step forward (up!) required every ounce of rugged determination we could muster. No shit! Even now, using my present gauge, given more experience, The Snake Dens Ridge Trail is as much of a tough little bastard as anything I've hiked since**. We realized, with immediacy, that our logic and wisdom in the cultivated world simply did not apply out here. It was utterly useless. I suppose if we had known how to read the topographic map at that time we would have had some idea of what we were in for. But, alas, printed matter would only take us so far.

A trail must actually be hiked to

be known. A piece of paper, no matter the quantity or type of information within, cannot ever tell you what a trail feels like — the dimensional translation is far too significant.

Another preparatory mistake was our pack weights. Truly a burden even the Greek gods would have balked at. We should have realized that something was drastically wrong when Mya and myself both nearly fell backward under the crushing burden of merely hoisting our packs on. I could barely lift mine up much less tote that grand piano around for nine days.

Several hours of walking got us about half the distance we'd planned to go in that time. Even the Earth's slow rotation, now teasing us with a bit of twilight, was beginning to catch up to our lethargic half-crawl. We did not want to get stuck on this trail at night. We stopped suddenly. Our packs hit the ground and our asses hit our packs. We fumbled with our maps searching for an alternative place to camp for the night; at that point we couldn't possibly make it to our planned campsite before 10 p.m. As we had hoped, we found a spot to camp about a mile away. That mile would be downhill and we would lose some hard-won elevation, but a downhill mile was an infinitely more acceptable option than another mile up and a couple more of ridge walking in the dark.



The decision to bail out of our original plan would characterize our entire trip. By the following evening we realized that making up the miles our snail's pace forced us to lose was an impossibility. In fact, the shortening of the trip suited me just fine. My body was breaking down and utterly failing at what I'd like it to do. This hiking shit was painful and I was tired and dizzy, had a headache, a backache and my knees were buckling over. After a mere couple of days it was again time to consult our map; this time to find that beeline to the Parks perimeter where catching a ride to our car would be a cinch.

From that point, the three day hike to our car (our nine day trip thus being shortened to five), while unpleasant, was by no means a wash. Of course, the atmosphere vacillated between torrential down-pour and oppressive heat, the mosquitos were in full force and our bodies went from failing to much, much worse. But the views, when available, were stunning, unlike anything we'd ever seen. The terrain was great: climbing up and over rocks and streambeds, through bushy and damp rhododendron tunnels and, best of all, through and then above, the clouds.

Battered and war torn, wet and miserable, we emerged from the woods. Forgive the dramatics (I do realize it had been only a handful of days), but the re-entry was glorious. Our trail has let us out on the backside of a small paved road used to connect all the campsites of that campground. Screaming children, Winnebegos, well fed men and their overly made-up female counterparts bombarded our senses. It would be a long walk through this car-camping ghetto to reach the Ranger Station where we would register for a site for the night before heading home in the morning.

The looks on the faces of these out-of-doors types as we strolled through were priceless. Not a single person failed to eyeball the sorry sight. It could have been the dirt or the visible fatigue or being generally unkempt that inspired such shock, but I doubt it. What I believed (indeed, I still do believe) was that behind that thin veneer of disgust, that utterly dishonest layer of contempt, was nothing shy of admiration and envy. We had gone to where their tame comforts and wildest dreams wouldn't allow them to go. Instead of sitting comfortably in a lounge chair munching on greasy burgers, we'd opted for high adventure in the great wilderness. We weren't content with safety nor luxury, our lives and our time was too important! If only for that week and at that time, we commanded, stood up and grabbed, a life so exciting it had left us hurt, tired and spent. And walking through that "Winners Circle" was our small reward, still among the finest moments of my life.

*Bonus miles, by (my) definition, are the extra miles, those nasty little bastards, that don't actually count when assessing a given trip, but are often just as hard earned and, most significantly, as necessary as those that do count. Most often, these miles are hiked for re-provisioning purposes.

**I've since gone back, several years after that first attempt, with a much lighter pack and a better idea of what I was in for. While infinitely easier and less rugged than I'd remembered, I must report it's still a beast of a climb and should be avoided by those who lack infinite patience.

• • •

It had taken some time for all the ramifications of the trip to fully absorb. It, of course, took that first long, hot shower, watching all the filth, grime and sweat of a five-day outing swirl down the drain. I'd needed to go to work and discuss the logistics and mishaps and to actually get praised for my bravery. I'd need time to reflect and then to discuss the glory days, months earlier, when I was free: when our days belonged to us, when our thoughts were on food, sore feet and the weather, when we dared try, in earnest, to strive for something new.

Thinking back, we had met a fellow on our second night out whose name we never caught, but who was assuredly dubbed Mountain Man. At camp, after several hours of cooking, cleaning and loafing around, Mountain Man, commanding presence and all, uproariously blew into our camp with energy to spare. With the voice of a lion and the pace of a dope fiend, he relayed to us his day's journey: more than twice as many miles as we'd hiked that day, in a little less than half the time. He'd

gotten a late start, he explained. It would be several minutes before I invited him to take his pack off and relax. He claimed he hadn't noticed it was still on and by the conspicuous lack of sweat, pain or fatigue, I believed him.

Ultimately, this hurricane of a personality settled into a more sedate pace, one Mya and myself were more apt to keep up with, and we all shared our stories for the rest of the evening. He was out here on a seven day trip, hoping to catch up with a buddy of his who was "Thru-hiking the AT", or some similar nonsense. I'd asked him to elaborate on this bizarre phrase and he kindly obliged. Apparently, the "AT" was the abbreviation for the Appalachian Trail, a wilderness footpath spanning from Georgia to Maine. Each year, he explained, about a couple thousand people set out to hike the entire trail in one shot and as many as a hundred actually finish. He went on to say that we were actually on the AT at that moment; on one tiny speck of that vast 2,200 mile wilderness corridor. Of course, I had no idea I was on such an important piece of property. Mountain Man praised the heroics of his thru-hiking buddy and others of that ilk. I had to admit, he had my attention.

It was then that I noticed the campfire and, of course, that perfect combination of elements, making the impossible seem like a sure thing. At that time I hadn't any true intentions of hiking the AT or even setting foot on any other trail again. I was still too miserable from that day's toil and much preferred a bit of comfort to more torture. And, being more realistic, I hadn't even been up to the comparatively minor challenge of a mere nine-day trip, much less 15 consecutive nine-day trips.

• • •

Several months went by and I settled into a new, but hopelessly similar routine of punchclocks, morning rituals, and un-



inspiring associations in a new city. On all practical matters everything was as they always had been, save for a few noteworthy distinctions. My lunch breaks, for instance, which had for years been reserved for Jeremy Breecher, Dostoyevsky and Fred Woodworth, were now abruptly interrupted by such literary powerhouses as *Backpacker Magazine*, *The Trailway News* and *The Appalachian Trail Reader*. My days off, once used exclusively to fulfill my responsibilities as fanzine publisher, were now spent in the dusty corridors of the outdoors section of a Duke University library. And the most obvious change occurred in my pocketbook. What little I was able to save used to be stashed away for a future press run and was now spent on a variety of expensive, albeit "discounted," hiking gear. Indeed, Mountain Man had planted a seed in me that I couldn't seem to shake. While not yet admitted to myself, I had taken him up on his unintentional and subconscious recommendation and made a decision to try my luck at an Appalachian Trail thru-hike.

...

Sitting in the passenger seat of Mya's truck the following April, we made a right off US 19 in Northern Georgia and, slowly, uneasily, paused in front of a small sign assuring us of our entrance into Amicalola Falls State Park. We entered and followed the single lane road for quite some time. It was getting dark by then which, coupled with the surrounding canopy of trees that wouldn't bear leaves for another month and a half, made me feel quite cold. We came across a visitors center and I knew we were here — that this was it.

Although I had known that the visitor's center at Amicalola was exactly where I was to go, once I got there I didn't quite believe it. Everything I had known about what I was about to do was discovered via books and magazines. This was the very first landmark — I sure saw it, I just couldn't digest it, internalize it. It seemed inconceivable to just be dropped off here. We had been driving through nowhere for several hours — into a much deeper nowhere, the kind of place nobody in their right mind gets dropped off at. But this was it.

I bit the bullet, opened the car door and stepped out. I knew there was some sort of primitive shelter in the area, but I couldn't spot it. I looked around a bit hoping to find where it was, but no luck. It was frustrating not to know where I would sleep that night — especially it being nearly dark. But this was the nature of the trip I had gotten myself into, voluntarily. I knew this wouldn't

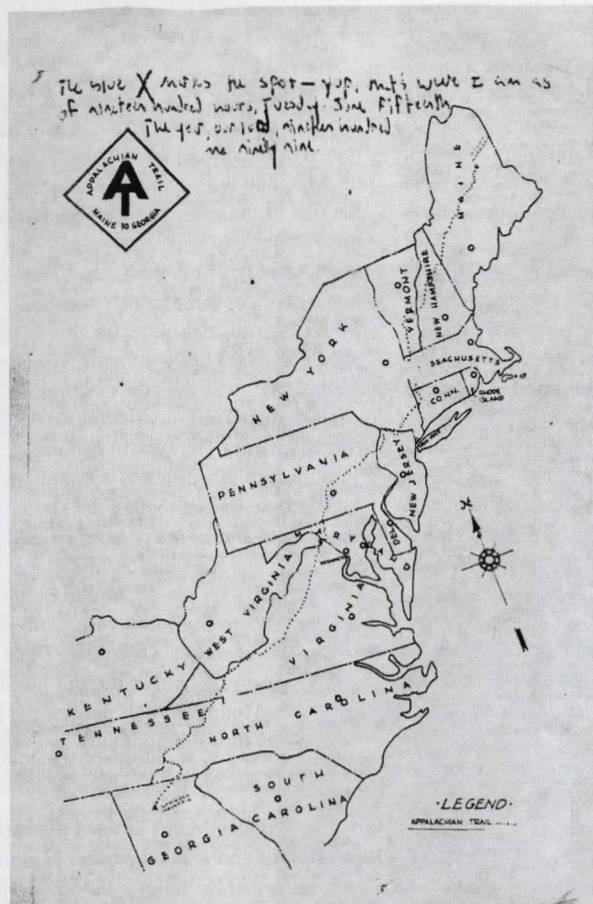
be the last time I'd be in a similar situation. So I chalked it up as being par for the course and turned my attention to Mya

I looked at her and she looked at me. We started crying and hugged one another. The moment of separation. She's going to drive away as I walk into the unknown. Her face, covered with tears, is something I'll never forget. So bitter-sweet. She's happy that I'm doing something I want, but sad to see me go. That was exactly what I wanted to see in her face. We kept hugging for several minutes, soaking one another's shoulders with tears all the while. There's some lame attempts at verbal consolation and encouragement exchanged, but, at this point, mere words hold no value. There are several more hugs, tears, and words when Mya tells me, sobbing, that she's going to go. One last hug and she's in the car. Our eyes never lose each other. I watch her back up and drive off. I stand in the parking space with my backpack on, leaning on my hiking poles. I'm exhausted after experiencing the most intense moment of my life. With tears still pouring down I beam a huge smile. I'm here, I'm really fucking here!

Go ahead and give a kid a bit of freedom, they won't know what the fuck to do with it. Standing in the parking lot I think I half expected some park ranger to jump out of the woods, grab me by the hand, and direct me to where I was to sleep. At the very least, I expected some sort of sign telling me where this shelter was. No such help, I was on my own. I was completely self-contained and could do as I pleased. There was no one to tell me what to do or show me where to go — for the first time in my life I was free.

I took another deep breath, composed myself, and started walking toward where I thought the shelter would be. It took some work to find, but I eventually got there, and found a couple other folks readying themselves for bed — it was about 10 o'clock. We exchanged pleasantries for a quick second when I realized how hungry I was. I hadn't eaten a bite all day, I had been too nervous. I clumsily took out my Wispelite Stove and a pack of Ramen. After an embarrassingly long time reading the stove's directions, I got dinner underway. I quickly ate, cleaned up, and set up my bed. Just before sleeping I penned the following:

"4/23 10:35 PM. Man, I pinned myself to be the guy flailing in his own feces by now. I'm trying not to be overconfident, but I really feel alright. A small bout with nausea, but feel good. Granted, I have yet to walk more than 50 yards. Man, it's hard to write — my hands are freezing. Excited about tomorrow's hike, but it should be very taxing...we'll see. A warm feeling thinking about me and Mya's



**The Appalachian Trail is
2160 miles long and passes
through 14 states.**

**It is a continuous marked
footpath that goes from
Katahdin in Maine to
Springer Mountain in
Georgia.**

**A thru-hike takes five to
seven months to complete,
and can begin either in
Maine or in Georgia.**

goodbye — that's what's keeping me warm despite the chilly 35 degrees here. Jeez, I actually took the plunge. Wow!"

Even at this point, I'm still not entirely sure why I involved myself in an endeavor of such magnitude. I had backpacked a couple times since that first outing, but only for three- or four-day trips. It was also obvious that hiking wasn't something I was altogether that good at — actually, hopelessly incompetent was more like it. I was terribly out of shape: smoked more than a pack a day, never exercised, didn't eat very much, had perpetual headaches, and felt generally run down. My repertoire of outdoor skills consisted of being able to set up my tent and light my stove and not much else. But I could put one foot in front of the other and was somewhat certain that I could get in shape and learn what I needed to know once I got "out there."

In any event, there's a certain romantic value to prancing around the woods for an extended period of time. I longed for the quiet and solitude. To be able to eat and sleep and move and relax — all at my own pace and when I pleased. More than heading out on the Trail, though, I think I was most interested in breaking out of the monotony of my life at the time. Things had got to the point where, well, it was just a pretty lame existence. Working shit hours at a job I hated was wearing me down, night life was slim, my motivation was dwindling. I could continue at the same pace or make some sort of dramatic change in my life. So I decided to do the craziest thing I could think of, stir things up a bit.

I worked, saved and planned for six months. I borrowed money from anyone who had some. I bought a whole slew of gear and close to six months worth of food and other necessities. I divided up all my provisions into 17 different boxes to be sent to post offices along the way, at about 10 day intervals (it's nearly impossible to carry much more than 10 days worth of food along with other gear on your back — at roughly two pounds per day, food gets really fucking heavy really fucking quickly). I pounded out an itinerary and informed all who cared to know roughly where I would be and when. Basically, I covered every base I could think of. Even though there was no guarantee I would make it all the way (I could get sick, break a leg, freak out on the first day of hiking and run home crying, etc.) I was determined not to let a lack of preparation stop me. I had done everything that could possibly be done — all that was left was to hike 2,200 miles.

. . .

Looking back now, I believe I half expected long-distance hiking to magically transform me from a lowly working-class jackass, much like many millions of others, into a more commanding persona,

The entire trail was first hiked by Earl Schaffer in 1948, who wrote a book about it called *Walking With Spring*.

The number of thru-hikers has increased each year. It is estimated that 374 people completed the entire 2,160 miles in 1996.

In 1990, a blind man thru-hiked the trail. Bill Irwin completed the trip with his dog Orient and his book is called *Blind Courage: Journey of Faith*.





equipped with enlightened and profound thoughts on any number of heavy handed topics. But I gotta report, the opposite has happened. Prior to any serious hiking, I guess I fancied myself to be a pretty bright fellow. I published thoughtful literature, diligently read any radical history text I could get my hands on, studied many of the (their?) classics, and engaged myself thoroughly in political discourse and action of all kinds. Those first few miles on the AT flew by, along with many thousands of trail-miles since then, with a mind more often occupied with thoughts on dinner and mileage than on thoughts most would consider profound.

Days on the AT quickly turned into weeks, and then months. It goes without saying that not all of them were good. Many were infinitely more difficult than those miserable days on my very first trip. Some days were a stroll and many were a strain. But as I mentioned before, as painful as those miles often could be, they were, at a minimum, days spent free from the involuntary toil most of us claim as our lives. And this is the one glaring truth that makes all the difference. And this alone made the endeavor worthwhile. It is also worth mentioning that the days were always different, sometimes only slightly, but always in meaningful ways that might only be realized in hindsight.

It's those hours spent toiling up several thousand feet, hand over foot, over roots, rocks and terrain not meant for human travel, only to reach the treeline and then the summit late enough in the day to watch the sun set over a valley filled with a multitude of freshwater lakes and distant peaks. It's those late summer days spent baking in the lowlands in 100 degree temperatures feeling the sweat ooze out from every pore of your being wondering what the hell you're doing there, then stumbling across a sandy beach attached to a small lake with no one in sight. In a frenzy, you ditch those hot, heavy boots and strip every piece of clothing from your body and submerge yourself, for the first time in weeks, in cool, fresh water, realizing every bit of filth being slowly released from your skin to the point where you can't even remember what you were complaining about minutes earlier. And of course it's those simple things that you never fail to appreciate: a hot meal, dry socks, a candy bar, running into a fellow traveler, a cup of hot coffee, a late afternoon nap, bug spray and, of course, the occasional hitch into town for a cold beer.

Months removed from my last multi-thousand mile undertaking and a mere four months away from my next, I find myself reverting further and further away from the "intellectual" into a much more commanding, "natural" state. My daily fuss about the city is but another precise calculation, a necessary evil, a means to support my, now addictive, desire for wilderness foot travel. If you've come this far, you should take warning in that last sentence. Hiking is addictive, as is freedom, self-determination and a fulfilling meal cooked and consumed out of a single pot. Those unprepared may find their lifestyle, responsibilities and very concept of their existence thrown out of the window for lust of the hills.

Drinking tea and winding down from a decidedly shitty day at work I'm overhearing people's conversations about their own lives. It's not that I'm particularly interested in their concerns, their futures,



their co-workers, or any other part of that necessary maintenance served to perpetuate their lives in this human zoo. I'm just overhearing, witnessing precise reflections of exactly what I'd rather not be. I certainly don't fault any city-slug for their choices in life, but thinking about people I truly admire and look up to I realize that *that* life speaks very little to me about my actual life. I admire people with aspirations so high, passions so strong, they simply transcend and supercede the industrialized notion of what it means to be human. Or maybe I'm just afraid of growing old with no interesting stories to tell.

the daily grind

the stress of getting from home to work and back again

chris jensen

I am at the *bad* intersection. There is no way around it — I am crossing over a major highway. To my right, cars hurl towards the on-ramp, which bottlenecks mercilessly into the speedway; to my left, cars make attempts at right turns *through me*. These particular rushing metal machines are threatening, but do not represent the extreme of my adversaries; the greatest risk is posed by those who sit opposite me. The movements of various vehicles on *my side* of the intersection are at least predictable, even *controllable*. I can face my oppressor, even intimidate it with the appropriate glance, and if I place my wheel on the front bumper of the first car in line, what choice do they have but to let me pass unscathed? The real threat comes from those who oppose me.

It is illegal to make a left turn in front of forward moving vehicles. It is a simple matter of *right of way*. At any intersection, those vehicles going through the intersection may do so before those vehicles who intend to make a left at that same intersection. Regardless of whether this “vehicle” is a car, van, truck, motorcycle or bicycle, the forward-moving vehicle has the right to pass first. Those who oppose me seem unaware of this road rule, of this common courtesy, of this law designed to save my life. Or, perhaps, they have deemed this regulation as superfluous and even *oppressive to them*, an affront to *their* right of way. Somehow, in their dim views, amongst the barely-digested thoughts and images which scatter about their brains, they have made a calculation: making it through this intersection several seconds prior to the allotted time is worth risking this bicyclist’s life. And so we engage in a varied-stakes game of chicken; I stand to lose much while they stand to lose little. All I want to do is to move forward.

I have considered other routes, but amongst all paths there lies at least one *bad intersection*. There really is no safe way of getting from home to work and back to home again. I fall victim to the ecology of the city — a liv-

ing, breathing system — for the natural balance of traffic is always maintained. If any roadway becomes too free, too fluid, too safe, it is instantly clogged by cars seeking escape from some other automotive snafu. And I, precariously balanced on two wheels, I — the bicycle commuter — must always fight to survive where cars seek to shave precious seconds off of their trips through a variety of aggressive driving techniques.

My dilemma at this, my daily *bad intersection*, is simple: if I am too aggressive I risk getting squashed, and if I am too passive, yielding too much to my automotive foes, I may well never pass through this unholy intersection. There really is not any room for compromise, and no escape route. Every day I have to play. I sit exposed to the whims and judgements of countless other “humans,” who seem considerably less human while encased in sheet metal and tinted glass. I am their nuisance, they are my doom.

On an almost daily basis I curse the drivers who surround me. Really, people do not know how to drive. Annoying habits which bother me when I am in a car become hazardous habits when I am behind the handlebars. Something as simple as a turn signal becomes essential, the dividing line between minor adjustment and major accident. When cars fail to signal turns, which most do, they run the risk of broadsiding me, cutting me off, or hitting me outright. I have little chance of even bruising an automobile with my puny two-wheeled chariot, but in seconds my bike could be reduced to a tangled mess, perhaps with my bones and flesh in the mix as well. Cars pass frighteningly close; sometimes I can feel the fender brush against my leg. Often I find myself sandwiched between a running car and a parked one, hoping that the running one will avoid running me down. Even once these callous drivers have parked their cars, ceased that motion with its ever-present potential to maim or kill, they present a careless hazard, as doors fly open into my ever-wary path. They enjoy perpetual apathy; I must be constantly vigilant. Such a relationship reflects the imbalance of power be-

tween bicyclist and driver, between those who may fall victim and those who may kill at will.

The grave nature of these obstacles, the large shadow they cast, renders other common street hazards in miniature. Nonetheless, these other *non-lethal* annoyances merit mention even as they fail to rise to the level of life and death. First, one thing is clear: *someone loves to break bottles*. I know, because small shards of these broken bottles turn up regularly in my tire. Sometimes I am fortunate, as the wound delivered fails to drain my tire completely of its life-giving air before my arrival at my destination. Often, however, I am left lifeless and cursing on the side of the road. In either case, I must add another patch to the inner tube of my tire, a tube which is, like some sort of metamorphosed zombie, increasingly more patch than tube.

Glass is the most prevalent street enemy, but potholes vie for a close second. Large craters are often strategically placed where the cyclist must ride — between parked cars and their counterparts in motion — and are impossible to avoid when traffic is heavy. As soon as the rain begins to fall these massive ditches become indistinguishable from the common puddle, and present an even more insidious threat. The rain comes down, and if I am capable of perceiving pothole from puddle, I need only worry about absorbing the sum total of accumulated road crud made solvent by the recent precipitation.

With so many hazards presented to the cyclist, the temptation of the automobile is great. All of these obstacles, from the most pernicious to the most pesky, are of little circumstance to the driver of an automobile. Inside the sheet-metal confines of the modern car driving in an urban environment, there is little to worry about. Sure, there are the grave apprehensions: of encountering burdensome traffic jams, of not finding *the right song* on the radio, and of experiencing annoying fender-benders which threaten to lower the cosmetic value of the vehicle or raise next month’s in-



surance payment. But all other things — the potholes, the glass on the road, the weather, the bicycle commuter, and a fear of instant death (for the most part) — lie outside the realm of concern. This isolation from fear is troubling, for it renders the drivers of all vehicles considerably less empathetic than they might be if it were not for the insulation of their automotive shell.

Cars operate in a virtual world, where the outside is somehow separate from the inside. Riding a bicycle it is impossible to escape connection to the actual world. For better or worse you smell every odor, from the sewage treatment plant to the newly-emerging spring flowers. You see the faces of people as you pass them on the streets, you notice the local characters, and you come to appreciate the subtle transition from one neighborhood to the next. You feel the earth on which you live with all of its fury, and learn to deal with the weather, the wind, and the world's ups and downs. You really are naked there on that bike, exposed, living as you were intended to — interacting with the natural environment.

There is an element of freedom in this interaction. We, the bicyclists, are not shielding ourselves from our natural surroundings, and in so doing gain a substantial sense of personal power. Most people experience this sense of power when they first learn to ride a bicycle and are liberated from the severe limitations of simple pedestrian transport. As children, we discovered bicycles as our first freedom, our first glimpse at our own potential for flight and travel. Sadly this first freedom is soon replaced by the second freedom of automotive travel; as teens we cast aside our bikes for the allure of the car, and in so doing lose a greater connection to the world around us. We are a world of coinciding isolates, slowly passing each other, obliviously.

• • •

About four years ago I found myself in a hospital bed, with IV antibiotics pumping into my bloodstream at a constant pace. I had contracted a severe infection in my knee which had spread systemically and placed me in a precarious health situation. What I had believed was a severely sprained and swollen knee turned out

to be a potentially fatal condition; had I let the infection fester untreated for several more days, I could have died. It felt like I was melting down.

At the time I was living some 35 miles from my place of employment. Expanding these many miles exponentially were the local urban traffic conditions which awaited me daily. I was lucky to share the trip with three colleagues, who deferred some of the stress associated with this journey, but I was still spending two to three hours a day a car. It was silent hell, even with the radio on and amidst the occasional idle conversation between disinterested co-workers. They had been making this trip for over 20 years; I was overwhelmed by it after only two.

I cannot say for sure that it was this daily commute which led to my acute and rather obscure health crisis; however, it seems certain that my health was done no good by so many hours spent sitting, inactive, in such a confined space. The commute not only left me passive and sedentary for hours, but robbed me of precious time which might have been spent exercising. The physical rigors of the automotive commute paled in comparison to the mental ordeal. Even when I was not behind the wheel, I could measure the stress of daily traffic jams as a dull aching in the pit of my stomach. This trip inside the flying metal box became so normal that I was unable to recognize just how toxic it was.

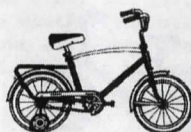
The year after being hospitalized I moved within ten miles of my place of employment and began riding my bicycle to work. Since making this change in lifestyle I have seen a phenomenal improvement in my health. Intuitively it just does not make sense: I expose myself daily to the elements, riding through rainstorms, weathering the harsh northeast winter, and breathing in the polluted city air. Yet, somehow, I am more healthy. Strangely, the body adjusts quite nicely to the varied conditions of the outside world. With the slow, steady approach of winter I can feel my resistance to the cold increasing, so that the first truly bitter day is not a shock but a sort of benchmark, a symbol of my own ability to adapt to ever-changing conditions.

My daily commute does not simply imbue me with increased physical health; it also helps moderate my mental health. In fact, the very act of riding my bike to and from work has caused me to question my own partitioning of mental and physical health. I truly do not

know if it is a by-product of my daily ride or riding itself which leaves me more sane, but the effect is undeniable. On those few days when I am forced to take the subway or to use a car to haul unwieldy packages, I feel that I am *not quite right*, even when I am spared the usual traumas (traffic and associated delays) of transportation forms so reliant on the cooperation of generally non-compliant others. There is, even after so many years, the crispness of that first discovery that bicycle equals freedom. The trains could shut down, catch on fire, implode. The traffic could stretch beyond its usual level of impedance, trapping thousands of drivers in their large yet insignificant cars. The roads could crumble, the tracks could bend, but I, on my bicycle, would still be able to get home. In an interdependent world where the faults of others usually seek to drain me of my own vitality, this is a rare glimpse at *life on my own terms*.

Still, I am not completely free. There exists, amongst all the other freedoms, that persistent threat. At any moment, I could be killed by a car. If I have a momentary lapse in judgement, I could die. If a driver has a momentary lapse of judgement, I could die. It is an unfair interdependence, a lose-lose situation for me. The exhilarating freedom of being a bicyclist is tempered by the risk. Although I want everyone to immediately abandon their cars and take up bikes, I understand why so few people choose to do so. It is dangerous out there. Ironically, for every person who does choose to ride instead of drive, the decision to abandon a car becomes easier for the next; every car that remains parked reduces the risk to all cyclists. But for now we remain a tiny minority, the pioneers, and we accept the possibility of death by automobile as one of the costs of our freedom. Too stubborn to relinquish that vital *living of life on our own terms*, we few cyclists do everything in our power to persist.

Over the past four years of bicycle commuting in a major metropolitan area, I have learned the essentials of survival. First and foremost, you have to ride big. You cannot let yourself become an insignificant afterthought tooling along in the gutter. As cars are large, powerful and imposing, you too need to be intimidating on bike. I ride aggressively, and do not hesitate to take my lane and stand up on the



bike to look more scary. This is significantly less effective when dealing with trucks and sport utility vehicles, but it is still better to be as large as possible, even when confronting a significantly larger opponent. Part of asserting yourself is making eye contact with the drivers of these cars. Although their metal skins are mighty and their tinted windows may be illegally dark, remember that the humans inside are puny, and out-of-shape to boot, so they are easily cowed by the correctly delivered fierce glance. It is a sad and crass means of behaving, but we must keep in mind that cars represent the most uncivilized mode of transportation.

In actuality, the more over-the-top crazy you look, the more easily you will be able to intimidate cars. This is why the traditional neon lycra super-tight shaved-skin road racer look just does not cut it for the bicycle commuter. Your outfit has to scream "more than slightly disturbed fanatic", which is why it is okay to be wearing grimy workwear pants with the right leg rolled up to prevent chain entanglement, a pair of bizarre sunglasses you bought for five dollars on the side of the road and a Tang-colored pullover that just screams "my parents bought this for me at an outlet store". Other accessories that work are flashing lights, which tend to grab the attention of drivers, and goofy orange reflective vests, which automaton car jockeys instinctually recognize as "official" and therefore a feasible source of traffic violation points, even if the vest says something hippy-dippy like "SHARE THE ROAD" on the back.

Being an expert at your route is also helpful in preventing unwanted automotive entanglements. You learn where all of the hazards are, and begin to notice certain locales where drivers always endanger you. You will come to realize where it pays to follow the rules of the road and where it does not. Often, it is necessary to ignore certain road rules — occasionally I hit the sidewalk, ride against traffic, take one-way streets in the opposite direction, and blitz through red lights. It turns out that doing what the law says is often more danger-

ous; since the roads are designed for motorized traffic and not for human-powered vehicles, following all legal directions of traffic can often place your delicate flesh in dangerous proximity to their hurling sheet-metal. Additionally, plenty of traffic rules which make sense for cars are an unnecessary nuisance to bicycles — like the roadways, the laws are in automotive logic, and really do not at all times makes sense for cyclists. I generally follow the traffic rules unless they place me in a dangerous position or pose no danger to others when broken.

If you follow car vs. bike debates, you soon realize that drivers really hate the fact that bicyclists can usually get away with breaking traffic laws; motorists see bicyclists as hypocrites for not following the letter of the law, for getting away with actions which are, technically speaking, traffic violations, even as 90 percent of dangerous driving goes similarly unpunished. The motorists fail to comprehend the basic difference between a car and a bicycle: cars have, even at slow speeds, the ever-present potential to kill, while bicycles are mostly dangerous only to their own riders. There is a hierarchy of on-road vulnerability: 1. large trucks enjoy relative invulnerability, and need only be concerned about being mangled by other large trucks; 2. vans, sport utility vehicles and large sedans have only to worry about the trucks; 3. smaller cars live in fear of the trucks, SFV's, vans and super-sedans; 4. motorcyclists have to steer clear of all four-wheeled traffic; 5. Bicyclists can fall prey to any and all motorized traffic; and 6. Pedestrians must dread everyone and everything every time they step off the curb. In recognition of this hierarchy and its inherent order, I am always most cautious in areas where there are high concentrations of pedestrians because I recognize that I am a threat to all such walkers. If drivers took similar stock in this obvious street-safety-strata-system, the common cyclist would enjoy unprecedented peace of mind.

There are of course advanced techniques which one learns to employ in lieu of garnering the support and respect of drivers. Some people carry loud whistles. I like to rap their fenders with my fist to get their attention. Often, at treacherous intersections, it is possible to beat them at their own game by paralleling a car that is traveling in the same direction as your bicycle, thus turning an automotive adversary into a vehicular shield. While most cars will

think nothing of hitting you, they generally dislike hitting one of their own. I am always on the lookout for new survival tips, and seek to emulate any cyclist who has managed to stay alive on-bike for extended periods of time. Try to learn from your allies.

Finally, even as you make every attempt to outmaneuver, outwit and intimidate the hundreds of cars you will be passing on your way to and from your destination, it is important to have a very spiritual (if not Zen) connection to the over-arching reality of your interaction with the automotive world: *they can kill you; you cannot kill them*. The sad fact is (in spite of all of your advantages) that *you* are vital and alive and one with the world and *they* are cold and mechanized and already dead. Our mighty vehicle, *the bicycle*, can do little damage to their automobiles, but *they*, one with the detached industrial production in which they ride, can end our lives with a moment's indiscretion. As much as we "win" in terms of style, compassion, consciousness and well-being, we lose in direct conflict. Eventually, after many brushes with death, you develop the ability to assess when to back down to certain cars. Putting the ego in check and letting the assholes drive on by even when you have the right of way and are way in the right may mean saving your own life and riding again. Remember, they are slowly rotting away in there.

If you are one of the rotting many, plagued by excuses as you climb daily into your surrogate coffin, please consider becoming one of the few, the bicycle commuters. Riding to and from instead of driving to and from will not simply change your health and improve your well-being, but change your outlook and improve your social consciousness. You cannot ride a bicycle daily and not come to realize that this is a world in dire need of social upheaval. Remember that feeling of freedom that a bike first gave to you, reacquaint yourself with the actual world, and always wear a helmet — bodies heal, brains rarely do. Remember it was your brain that got you on the bike in the first place.



the tour went the way any tour goes, i'd imagine - driving long nights and never sleeping enough, never finding ourselves as comfortable as we wished we could be. wearing the same clothes for days at a time and seeing the entire country in one small summer. i heard the same songs played at every single show and laughed at the same stupid jokes everyone had been telling for weeks at a time. i read a lot and wrote a lot of postcards and wondered what all of these strangers really thought about us, the kids from florida who were too loud and obnoxious for their own good. it was punk rock at it's finest, or worst - depending on your tastes and tolerance. funny how all of it was very stale and boring because of it's repetitiveness, but pretty goddamn fun and inspiring also.

THREE DAYS IN THE VAN

by mike (inabandon) A CROSS SECTION OF TOUR*

i admit - by the time we had reached the west coast that summer, i had been wearing the same clothes for almost a week. after leaving the midwest a few days earlier, the weather had become considerably cooler and much more bearable, and riding in the van wasn't so much of a struggle any longer. it was almost comfortable. the three of us had even slept in the van the night before, while in seattle, after finding ourselves without enough floor space to lay out on in the small apartment where everyone else was staying. sleeping in the van was nothing new, really - seattle was already the second or third night in a row than we had ended up there. it had been happening that way a lot, the three of us never worrying too much about sleep until it was too late and always returning to the same van we had driven for the entire day previous.

the van was comfortable enough, a bit cramped and a little humid, but at least we didn't have to make that mad scramble for space on a floor every night. we would stay awake until the sun was ready to come back up again anyways, and this way, we never disturbed anyone.

the night in seattle was good and the three of us slept well. there was a noticeable difference from the night before, however - our muscles slightly sore this time. not too bad, i guess. it was a small sacrifice that we would have to put up with. besides, at the time it seemed worth it and after waking up that morning, we decided that the van was more comfortable than we had thought and that maybe we should consider it an option more often.

VANCOUVER ¹ finally on the west coast again, after almost two years exactly to the day, and we were already late to the first of three shows in british columbia. vancouver was beautiful at night, all lit up in the distance and i was excited about it and it's possibilities. after the basement show that night, we drove the van around the city while the rest of our friends slept on the floors of the house where we were staying. wandered through downtown, getting lost among the buildings and the one way streets, and watching the people on the sidewalks - strange that so many of them were still awake at that time of night. we drove the van for miles, attempting to find the beach, but failing and ending up sitting along the sidewalk and talking with one of the punk kids whose house we were parked in front of. there was a full moon that night and we witnessed the lunar eclipse that accompanied it, sat around on that sidewalk for a little while longer and eventually got back into the van for another few hour's worth of sleep. then we'd wake up and the cycle would begin again.

our bodies ached the next morning, considerably more than before. partially because of the lack of sleep and our fucked up sleeping schedule, i guess, but mostly because of the van. realistically, it probably wasn't too good of an idea to rely on it every night like we had been. it was convenient and no one else ever slept in it, but now we understood why. the benchseat was hard and a foot too short for any of us to comfortably lay on, the loft was cramped and too close to the ceiling, making it difficult to roll over. it had been cold that night in vancouver, and that cold had leaked into the van - through the windows and down onto us, making our night even more miserable. we were stubborn, though and refused to admit that we just might be making a mistake this time. i mean, c'mon - the van couldn't possibly defeat us. it was our fucking home that summer, it was one of the very few constants that we would know, at least for the next few weeks anyways.

still, in spite of our troubles and blurry eyes, we managed to wake up before most of our friends to begin again and it was noticeably harder this time. our headaches stuck with us for the entire day, that slight sick feeling never dissolved away like it usually does after a night of little sleep. could it possibly be that the van was slowly killing us, instead of taking care of us like we had once believed? the thought disturbed me, but i refused to believe it just yet.

courtenay is a smaller city halfway up highway 19 on the coast of vancouver is- **2 COURTENAY** land. we took a ferry from the mainland over and drove the rest of the way up, along the beaches of the strait of georgia. the weather was beautiful - cool enough to enjoy it and a blue sky that spread out endlessly above us. the sun was out and i didn't seem to mind the fact that i wasn't feeling very well at all. the van had gotten me sick, there was no doubt about it any longer.

but there wasn't any time to be sick, of course.

there just wasn't any time to waste on the suffering. even the day after the next - the one day when there wasn't a show - had to be used in it's entirety to make the drive from victoria to san francisco. that's the thing about punk rock tours - the days off are only scheduled that way because of distance between shows, and illness doesn't quite fit into that schedule. you see, punk rock tours are up all night adventures and very rarely take human inconsistencies into consideration, and because of this, i shoved my concerns of personal well-being aside and dealt with it.

thick forests and small fishing communities string up along the route between the port of nanaimo and the city of courtenay. everyone was friendly, or at least halfway tolerant enough to put up with us and there were no disgusted glances thrown our direction like we were used to. the air was clean, that's one of the first things i noticed - how much cleaner the air is from what we had been experiencing that summer. courtenay was small and quiet, beautiful from an outsider's point of view, but undoubtedly dull and boring for locals. jon and i escaped the van as soon as it had parked, running alongside a river that cut it's way through town and past the meeting hall where the show would take place. over the iron bridge, staring into the water and considering a jump over the edge, just once - just to say we had done it. but it was cold and the sun was starting to set, and we were too tired and sick to put forth the effort, though looking back, now i wish we had.

later

courtenay was established on the edge of wilderness, as we discovered on a midnight drive into the middle of nowhere. we hiked down darkened trails and watched with amazement as davy stripped down naked and went running, knee high through the river. nothing else to do except laugh as we watched from the bridge above. even later that night - the floor space was already taken before we had even gotten through the door. there wasn't even enough room to walk about and no one would compromise moving. the only place to sleep, aside from the hard, cold tile in the kitchen, would be the van.

the goddamned van again! it was a hard decision to make - the choice between a hard floor or the vehicle i had slept in for the past four nights in a row. i had spent a few nights on kitchen floors before, sometimes underneath tables, sometimes next to refrigerators, and while those nights weren't exactly the best, i could probably have done it again. somehow though, i ended up back on the benchseat, with jon and dan up on the loft.

honestly, that night in courtenay was one of the worst that summer. the temperatures dropped quickly and we suffered through aching backs and sleeplessness, tossing and turning for hours. my head was pounding, my breathing was staggered, even the slightest noise outside would wake me up. by the time the sun was on the horizon, i was a complete wreck, unable to move without pain shooting through my body, coughing, gagging, wincing at every sound. the air outside was cold and the beautiful weather from yesterday was gone, replaced by thick cloud cover and a little rain - a certain quality of bleakness that perfectly matched my outlook on life at that moment. my ever growing bad attitude was even worse now.

3 VICTORIA

we drove back south on highway 19, towards victoria and i wrote postcards to pass the time, trying to remain somewhat optimistic about being so sick and cold and miserable. i felt like complete shit for the entire drive, and the gas station coffee and cheap painkillers helped a little bit, waking me up and numbing the pain enough to start looking forward to the very last show in canada and the day long drive to san francisco that followed. dan and jon were both asleep in the loft, apparently in worse shape than i was. the van had defeated us after all, and i wanted nothing more than to get into victoria as fast as possible.

victoria was a beautiful city - intricate and exciting, we walked through the wet streets for hours and temporarily forgot about our dwindling health and the recent string of bad luck we had been encountering.

we were excited now, and nothing mattered any longer. the sickness, the frustration - none of that meant anything. walking through the alleyways and brick streets of victoria with absolutely nothing to do except enjoy ourselves for once, it felt good. jon and i walked all

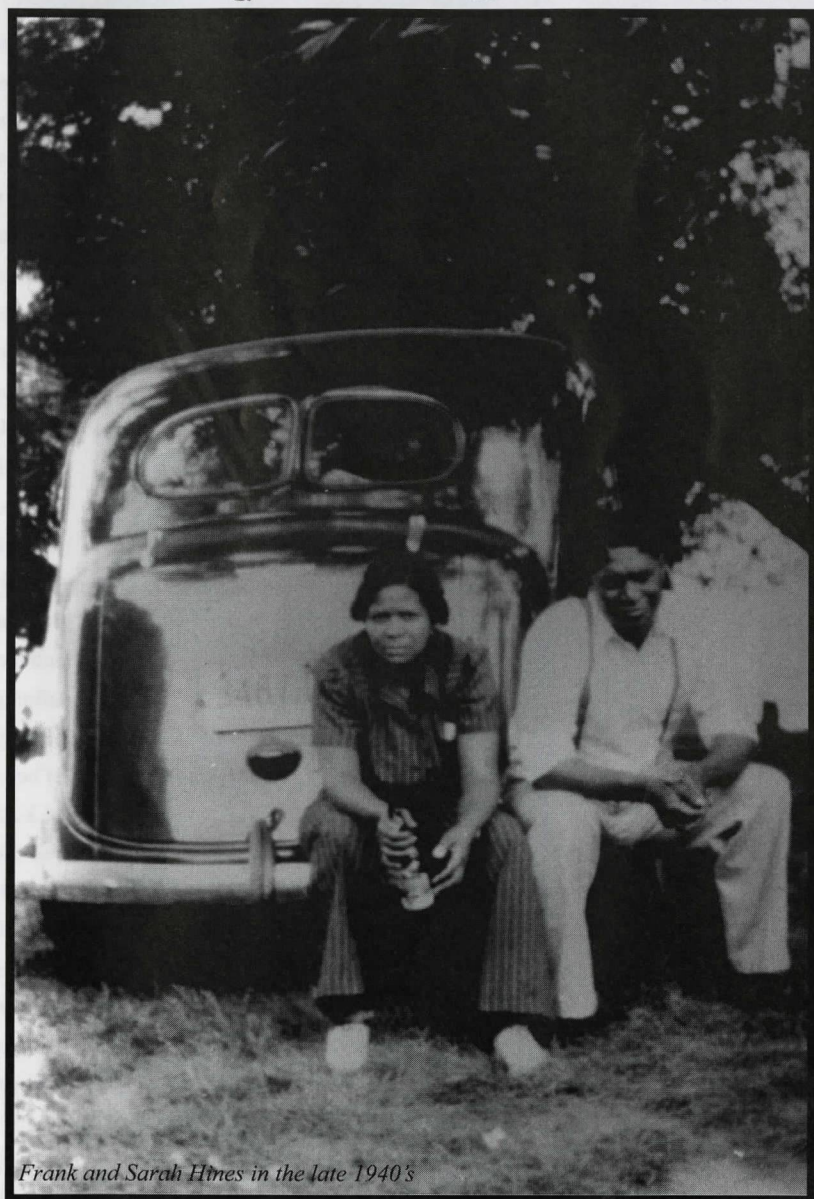
the way to the water and stood against the rusting fences and laughed, coughing and aching, but still alive and in one piece. the van had almost killed us, it's true, but even that didn't bother me. victoria was spread out before us and we had another three hours before the show was supposed to start.

* PUNK ROCK ACROSS BRITISH COLUMBIA!



later that night, we slept on hardwood floors and nothing had ever felt as good

I'll Take You There:
An Oral and Photographic History
of the Hines Farm Blues Club



Frank and Sarah Hines in the late 1940's

excerpts from the book
by Matthew A. Donahue



Patrons at the horseshoe bar at Hines Farm (above). Little Esther Phillips performing at Hines Farm (below)



Photographs courtesy of Henry Griffin and Matthew Donahue

For the past few years, I have been researching the history of one of America's most infamous blues, rhythm and blues and jazz clubs, known as Hines Farm. Hines Farm was and still is located in rural northwest Ohio, and was a major stopping point for African-American musical groups in the 1950s and 1960s. Musicians and groups such as John Lee Hooker, Bobby Blue Bland, B.B. King, Count Basie, Freddy King, Little Milton and others all played Hines Farm. In addition to the musical events, there were a variety of other entertainment on the grounds, including African-American motorcycle races, horse racing and exhibition baseball games.

The club has its beginnings with an African-American couple, Frank and Sarah Hines. Frank and Sarah Hines moved up from the South in the late 1930s to the industrial Midwest, to work in the automobile factories in Toledo. Tired of city life, Frank and Sarah Hines looked for property that was available to blacks in the rural community of Swanton and Spencer Sharples. It was during the depression that Frank and Sarah Hines purchased a house 30 acres of property in this community which was becoming home to other African-Americans who were looking for a change from city life.

Inspired from the house parties and juke joints in the South, Frank and Sarah Hines began to feature entertainment in their basement, consisting of live blues music performances, a jukebox with the latest hits and homebrewed liquor. Blues musician Bobby Smith, who was a session

player for Sax Records as well as a solo performer, remembers the early days in the Hines' basement. "They had one amplifier and a set of drums and you know back in those days that was the main set up," said Bobby. "One amp, with two electric guitars, a harmonica player and a drummer. They had live music down there...they also played records, they played 78s and 45s on the jukebox...they was doing a lot of dancing down there too, they was doing the "Chicken" and the "Hucklebuck" ...all the popular dances...It was everybody talking at the same time, you know passing the bottle around and having fun...Sometimes Hines would be saying "everybody get out of here" so he could go to bed but sometimes it stayed open til 3:00 or 3:30 am."

Frank and Sarah Hines entertained in their house through the late 1940s. In 1950 they built a juke joint in a heavily wooded area on their property. This building was the site of entertainment in the warmer months. Resembling the juke joints of the south this wooden building consisted of a stage, booths for patrons, and kitchen and barbecue facilities. By this time, the Hines were the first blacks in the area to hold a liquor license. Frank and Sarah Hines hired local

bands and professional performers to play. This juke joint was a place to hear the blues once again in a rural setting. Henry Griffin the current owner of Hines Farm remembered, "A lot of people at that time, the majority of them were from the country, they had just migrated here from the South and they were just more country oriented. A lot of folks felt jammed up in the city and a lot of folks came out here to hear good music. The juke joint out here in the woods was like the ones in the woods in the South."

As word spread about their juke joint, more and more people came to Hines Farm for entertainment. In 1957, Frank Hines and his brother George built a blues club that was the only one of

its kind in the area. The 46 by 101 foot cement building took a year to build. The first floor housed the bar area, a focal point of which was the horseshoe bar made out of tempered glass that could be lit from behind. Blues musician Roman Griswald recalled the inside of the club: "I liked it the first time I walked into that place, that horseshoe bar was beautiful. In addition to the horseshoe bar, there were booths and tables for the patrons and a bandstand for performers. Next to the bar was the restaurant where, according to Roman Griswald, "they served the best catfish dinner, the best chicken or steak dinner, whatever you wanted as far as Southern style food, they could make it for you."

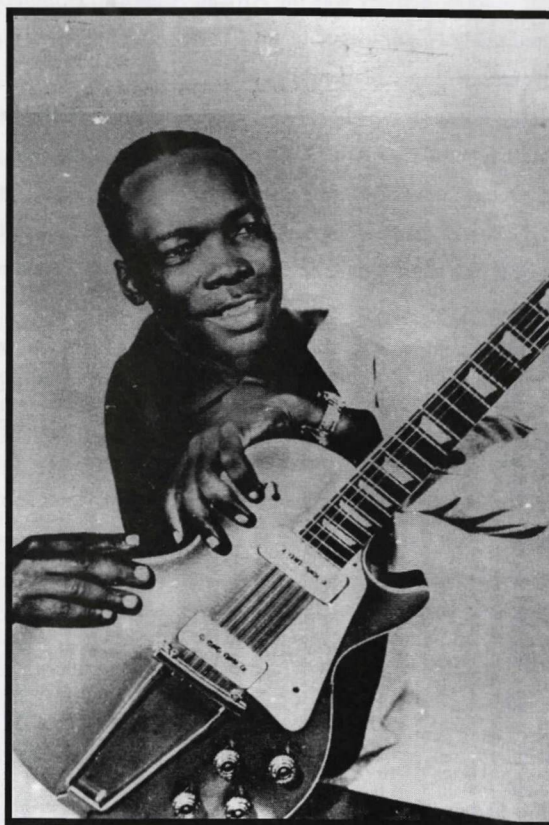
There were also living quarters for the out of town bands who could stay free of charge. "We were from Detroit," said bluesman Big Jack Reynolds, "after we'd get done playing, we could eat breakfast, and if you got sleepy, you could go upstairs to relax and go to bed." These living quarters also accommodated blues legend, John Lee Hooker, who played at Hines Farm and who often stayed there through the summer months. John Lee Hooker remembered, "We used to go out there all the time, even when I wasn't playing out there we used to go out there from Detroit, go up there and just have a good time... You could stay out there on the weekends overnight... I had my own little room it had my name on it... my own little place for me and the band. People used to come from all over to go out there, It was a one and only place-wasn't no other place that I have been to that was like Hines Farm."

Realizing that there was more potential for outdoor entertainment, the Hines' built an outdoor pavilion, which celebrated its grand opening on August 12, 1961, with an opening musical celebration by Count Basie. The pavilion could fit over fifteen hundred people, according to Big Jack Reynolds. "Outside was great," said Roman Griswald on playing at Mr. Luke's. "All you had to do was kill a few mosquitoes and keep doing what you was doing." Big Jack Reynolds remembered one particular evening coming down from Detroit to play at Mr. Luke's: "Well, I had all my people there, my brother and everybody from Detroit, and I got up on stage and my whiskey told me that I could turn a flip. Now I'd never turned a flip in my life, but I jumped up and said I'm gonna blow this sucker, you know my harmonica. I was blowing and they all was pulling for me and I says, I can do it, to myself you know. Man, I jumped up and flipped over and come right down on my neck. I'm laying there kicking and they say, 'Look at that sucker blow that harmonica!'"

In between musical performers, Hines Farm also featured female shake dancers who performed erotic dancing as a band or a deejay played accompanying music. Many of the shake dancers were just as popular with the audiences as the musicians. "We had Zsa Zsa," said Art Griswald, "She was the baddest shake dancer in the world, she could pick up dollar bills between her legs, no problem. They had a lot of famous dancers coming down from Detroit to perform there." There were also female impersonators who performed.

Music was the main form of entertainment at Hines Farm, but that was not the only form of entertainment provided for patrons. Thanks to the large 30-acre property, there were unlimited possibilities for fun outside the club in the warmer months. Hines farm had exhibition baseball games, carnival rides, hayrides, horse racing, and even miniature golf. In fact, almost every weekend there would be a different event.

One of the most popular events at Hines Farm was the motorcycle races, sponsored by local black motorcycle clubs in the Toledo area. The club's current owner, Henry Griffin, recalls that



Promotional Photograph of John Lee Hooker who performed regularly at Hines Farm

his fondest memories of Hines Farm were the motorcycle events. Henry reminisced: "Oh man, I just loved those motorcycles out there. There would be hundreds of guys in a bunch of different motorcycle clubs from all over, not only the Toledo area but as far as Mississippi and Alabama. They'd have all their motorcycles out here in this field and it was just a sea of bikes. Hines would send out a flyer that he was having a motorcycle race and he would have people come from all over, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. They'd get on their motorcycles and ride right up here and there would be thousands of them."

Many others interviewed also had strong memories about motorcycle races. Tilman Cowan, a neighbor across the way from Hines Farm, remembered, "They used to have motorcycle races back there," he said pointing to the field directly behind the club. "There was so much dust and sand kicking up, you couldn't even see the racers sometimes." Bluesman Art Griswald remembered going to the races during the day and playing the club later in the evening. "Those races were something else," Art said. "I really loved seeing those fellas race, some of them they'd do stunts. I remember this one guy, Johnny Franklin, he was one of the lead motorcycle men out there at the time, he was a bad man. He could ride up and down sideways and everything. Talk about popping a wheelie, he could pop a wheelie for three blocks!"

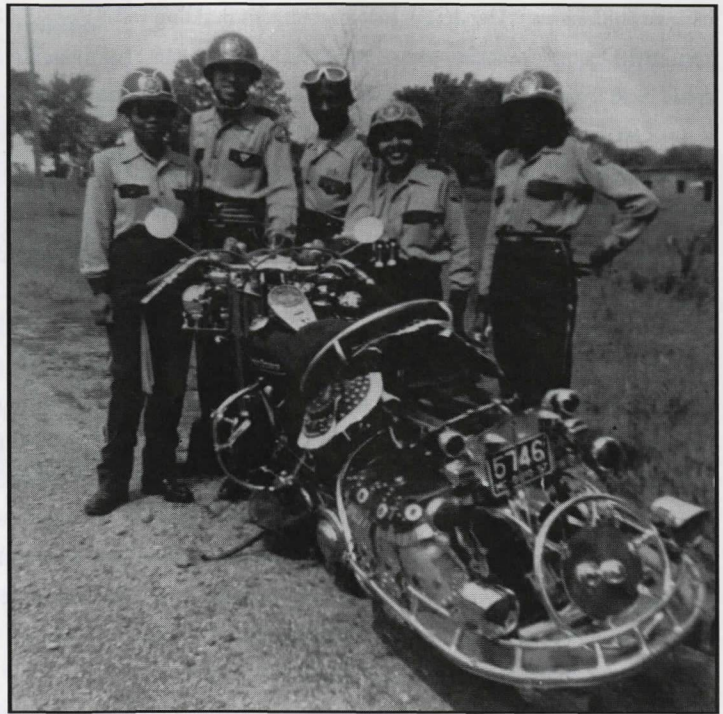
Another popular outdoor activity was the African-American exhibition baseball games, which featured many Negro league teams. Porter King who was a pitcher for local Negro baseball clubs, had special memories of the times at Hines Farm. "Oh yeah, I remember Hines Farm, it was an out of the way place everybody went to have a ball." The games would start around 2:30 p.m. "Hines had stands set up," Mr. King said, "nothing much, just three or four risers. And a lot of the people would sit on the hoods of their cars back in the shade 'cause along in July and August it got hot out there. See, the way Hines worked it, the game would be ending and he'd have a band ready to go and that'd start up the music."

Hines Farm remained popular from the 1950s to the early 1970s, and was popular amongst all races. Although the predominant audience was African-Americans, whites and Mexican migrant workers also frequented the club. "There was no discrimination there," said Big Jack Reynolds, "there were never any problems there."

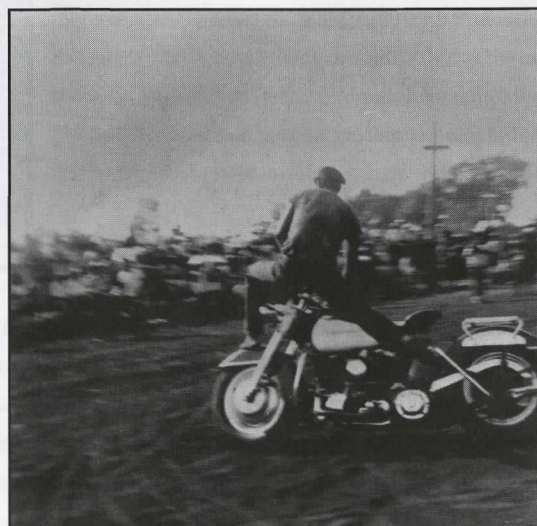
By the early 1970s blues music was becoming less popular, and soul and funk sounds dominated the African-American clubs. There was also a major migration out of the industrial Midwest by blacks in the early 1970s in search of better jobs. Frank and Sarah Hines were getting older and no longer had the momentum to keep the club going. Sarah Hines passed away in 1978, and Frank Hines in 1981.

Due to his memories of going to Hines Farm since he was a child, Henry Griffin purchased Hines Farm in the mid eighties. Since then he has taken his own time and money to refurbish this historic club. Blues music and its clubs have gone through many changes, but Hines Farm remains a testament to all the singers and players of an era long passed.

Looking for more information on Hines Farm? Send \$12.95 plus \$1.50 shipping (check or money order to Matthew A. Donahue) and get your copy of I'll Take You There: An Oral and Photographic History of the Hines Farm Blues Club, which includes many more stories and anecdotes on this historic club.



Atomic Pirates Motorcycle Club at Hines Farm (above). Motorcycle stunt rider at Hines Farm Motorcycle Rodeo (below).



ANYTHING DONE, CAN BE UNDONE:

CONFRONTING WHITE PRIVILEGE AND COMBATING RACISM

an essay-in-progress
by amy somie

"Until the killing of a Black mother's son becomes as important as the killing of a white mother's son, we who believe in freedom cannot rest."

—Ella Baker, Mississippi, 1964

I was 15 years old before I experienced firsthand the current manifestations of racism in the United States. As a white, lower-middle class woman, I was raised in a cultural bubble where I was taught to be "colorblind," to accept people despite difference, not to honor and respect them for difference. I learned that overt racism was a thing of the past, and modern-day white supremacy was something only skinheads believed, something no one else supported. I failed to recognize the currents of white supremacy fundamental to the world around me. I failed to see it within my community, my family, and myself.

Living in Philadelphia, I watched the 1985 police bombing of the MOVE family home on the evening news with little or no understanding of what was actually happening. This was a police-orchestrated attack that left six African-American adults and five children dead, not to mention 60 homes burned to the ground. To date, 12 MOVE members have been murdered by the Philly police and 16 have been jailed. At nine years old, I learned one of the primary mandates of our society: blame the victims.

Finally, at 15, I finally started to understand both interpersonal and institutional racism. One of the first incidents to illustrate this for me happened while in a K-Mart in a small town outside of Ocean City, NJ. I was shoplifting with my friend Keemia—underwear, socks, shampoo, tampons, food. We were living away from home with no parental supervision, little money, and no rules. We stole all the time, but this was the first time I ever realized the distinct difference between stealing with one of my white friends and stealing with Keemia, a person of color.

We were in different parts of the store. She was followed, caught and accused without anyone even seeing her take anything. I was not even glanced at. They were obviously watching her closely from the moment we walked in. What gave her away? I hurried over to the office and identified myself as her friend. Once behind closed doors, the manager accused her of stealing and interrogated her about what she had taken. There were no cameras in the store. She was suspect simply because she had what they called a "suspicious look." When we asked,

they defined this look as, "baggy clothes." Ironically, Keemia was wearing surf shorts and a not-so-large t-shirt. But, shaken and scared, she admitted to having taken a pair of socks, pulling them from the waistband of her shorts. When asked if I had taken anything I lied, hoping to keep us both from getting in more trouble for pre-meditating. Asked if I knew she intended to steal, again I lied, "No, I'd never known her to do anything like that." They decided to press charges anyway.

Since she was over age 18, she needed her I.D. The manager and security guard allowed me to go out to her car for it, taking my bag and hers. They let me walk out of the store with two bags full of merchandise—nearly \$200 worth—on my word, while she was charged, harassed and intimidated inside.

In those moments, I learned that racial oppression and white privilege came hand in hand. Because she was targeted, I was exempt. Because I was protected, she was accused. Because I was believed, she was disbelieved—from the beginning, from the minute she walked into the store. I was innocent until proven guilty. Keemia was guilty until proven innocent.

It would be dishonest to pretend I could have articulated all of this at the time. Far from it. I lacked a language to name it or even to truly support her, and I definitely lacked the understanding to challenge it. But this was the beginning of my consciousness of the complexity and everyday manifestations of racism. This was the beginning of my confronting and recognizing my own privilege.

Today, I am still learning to confront both sides of this coin. As an anti-racist educator and activist, I know I cannot do the work I do without both acknowledging and *confronting* my privilege as a white woman. This is essential in being a good ally. This is essential in building for social change. *What we do not confront, we perpetuate.* We must recognize that privilege keeps on privileging us even when we do not want it to, even when we are unaware of it. This is how it works. Whether we are conscious of it or not, it is always there.

I was aware of my privilege even before walking into K-Mart that day. But it was a different sort of awareness—I lacked a critical consciousness. I knew how to use privilege. I would wear nice cloths to go stealing and cover my plum/red/bleached hair with a hat. I would make myself look older. I would *work* the system—aware of age privilege and class privilege, aware that some punk kid wouldn't be treated the same as a girl who looked like a cheerleader. I would disguise myself and leave with a backpack full of shit; sometimes being careless because I

knew, without a language to name it, that I was a beneficiary of a system that would protect me even when I was fucking with it.

After leaving K-Mart that day, though, I was aware of my racial privilege in a very different way—a critical and infuriating way. Keemia couldn't name it. I couldn't name it, but once conscious of this privilege, we cannot help but see it everywhere we go. What is in place to cushion and comfort us becomes uncomfortable and unwelcome. But welcome or unwelcome, it is there—ever-present kin to racial oppression. From that moment forward, I was sensitized to it, and for a while, confused by the everyday realizations of my place and role in a racist system. It is important, though, to push past the confusion, wade through the guilt and not get stuck feeling helpless or sorry for ourselves. White folks are indeed *robbed* by the system set up to benefit us. We are stratified from 70 percent of the world by the specious ideology of white

White folks are indeed robbed by the system set up to benefit us. We are stratified from 70 percent of the world by the specious ideology of white supremacy.

supremacy. We are often divided among ourselves and spoon-fed a myopic, eurocentric version of history (and our own ancestries). We are misled to believe that feigning "colorblindness" is a respectful way to interact with folks of color. None of us are colorblind in a racist society. We are robbed in these ways, but not *oppressed* by racism, nor are we *victims* of it. We are not persecuted, exploited, disempowered, or dismembered by it. We still benefit from it, even when we actively combat it. For these reasons, we are responsible to recognize how we are implicated in maintaining white supremacy and must take an active stance in challenging it.

White supremacy is a *system*, not just a half-dozen bald kids a few towns over, or the David Dukes of the world. It is pervasive. It's a lethal system with a historical context and an explicit purpose: power for some at the expense of others. In the United States, specifically, white supremacy (and the concept of race) evolved for the purpose of creating and maintaining division between poor whites and the enslaved, both African and Native American. We are up against centuries of misinformation and violence.

So what do we do? My answer: we do it together. It is our job, collectively, to continue the battle to dismantle all systems of oppression. Confronting privilege is a journey, and we must commit ourselves to the long path, the *life-long* path of anti-racist work. Just as we must commit ourselves to actively combating sexism, heterosexism, abelism, ageism, classism/capitalism and all other forms of injustice. I focus, here, on racism in order to speak to other practicing or potential white anti-racist allies. We must continue confronting both privilege

and oppression (in ourselves and in the world around us). We must not let racial slurs go unchallenged. We must not allow fucked-up jokes to be justified under the guise of humor. We must speak out against the oppressive acts of our government—anti-immigration policies, attacks on affirmative action, cuts on welfare, lax hate crimes legislation, the expansion of the prison system, the criminalization of youth and poor people, the bombing of Iraq/Sudan/Afghanistan, and countless others.

I cannot provide a map for you, but in confronting and working to undo these things, we can build community that takes responsibility for educating and challenging itself and the world around it. We can create a community where a nine-year-old watching the evening news will have the language to articulate that something is wrong, terribly wrong, when police bomb a family home and kill children. We can begin to create a world where such attacks no longer happen, where people of color are not considered suspect just for entering a store. It is our work to recognize and act on the principle that anything done can be undone, anything constructed can be dismantled.

Suggested Reading:

The Invention of the White Race, Theodore Allen
Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?, Beverly Daniel Tatum
Memoir of a Race Traitor, Mab Segrest
Ain't I A Woman, bell hooks
When and Where I Enter, Paula Giddings
How the Irish Became White, Noel Ignatiev
The Possessive Investment in Whiteness, George Lipsitz
Women, Race and Class, Angela Davis
Race and Class, Alex Callinicos
Making Face, Making Soul, ed. Gloria Anzaldua
The Bridge Called My Back, ed. Gloria Anzaldua and Cherrie Moraga
The State of Native America, M. Annette Jaimes
De Colores Means All of Us, Elizabeth Martinez
Whiteness: A Critical Reader

Related Links:

White Privilege Shapes the U.S.
<http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~rjensen/freelance/whiteprivilege.htm>
More thoughts on why the system of white privilege is wrong
<http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~rjensen/freelance/whitefolo.htm>
The Challenging White Supremacy Online Workshop
cws@igc.org

For more information, or to give me feedback on this article, email Alsonnie@aol.com.

Creative—defined as "having the power or ability to create," and "characterized by originality of thought or inventiveness; having or showing imagination." To create—defined as "to cause or come into existence." Why is it the very essence of so many people's lives? Why?

I know people who care only about creating. They place their "art" (music, writing, artwork or whatever other creative endeavour they pursue) above all else. Their mission to complete their current project overrides their relationships, their family, their friends, their health, their welfare and their financial and emotional stability and well-being. The art comes before everything. Their drive is immense. Their motivation unlimited. Their desire to create overwhelming. But why?

I have given this a great deal of thought. I don't believe that talent is directly related to this creative drive in the slightest. It often seems to be the least talented people who push themselves the hardest. The ones with talent are often people who place other priorities over their art and then turn around and write a book or paint a picture or write a record that someone else could have spent 15 years trying to achieve with no comparable results. I don't think that people with this creative drive have all this 'stuff' inside of them that they desperately need to express. This dramatic notion, of a musician with all this music just inside of them, with this need to fulfill their destiny, does not ring true to me. It is a different drive that makes people want to create. Not one related to talent (if you even believe in that concept).

I have three theories. The first is related to society—where creativity is given extremely high status. Where people following creative dreams are given more respect than those following non-creative ones, regardless of whether they are actually any good at the goal that they are pursuing. If I have a friend and they are dating someone new and I ask what they do and they reply that they are a musician or that they work in a shop, I'm more impressed with the former than the latter. I have a new friend, and her husband, so she tells me, is a surrealist painter. I'm more impressed with this than with her occupation as a sales executive in a shipping company. Why?

He could be crap, and she could be great at her job. Why do we continue to give creative occupations more status than non-creative, regardless of success? Why do we, as a culture, look down upon people who paint walls, and look up to people who paint pictures? And architecture, who decides whether that is creative or not? If they build nice buildings it is, but if they build nasty ones it isn't?

So, people strive to be creative, not because they have this burning desire to say or express something original or new. Not because they want to reach people and touch others' lives. But because they want the status, they want the fame and fortune. They want respect.

The second theory I have is related to this respect. That this status that our society awards to those who are creative is so internalized that it affects our self-respect as well as our self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. Especially for my generation, with so many peers musicians and writers, albeit undiscovered talents,

it's almost expected that I do SOMETHING. That I would get angry with myself if "all" I did were to work and enjoy the company of those I love. Would that be a waste of my life? I don't think so. But it seems like we have internalized some belief that we have to be creative to be worthwhile. I know I always feel better about myself when I am in a writing phase compared to when I am not. I shouldn't, I'm the same person. I like myself more as I feel more special and that I am accomplishing something. I receive compliments and respect from those around me, and it is good for my self-esteem. Is this why I write?

My third and final hypothesis, is the one that I think I believe the most. I think we strive to create and to be original in order to make our mark on the world. In order to make ourselves immortal. If we write books or paint pictures or make records or films, then we will be remembered. Our lives will therefore be worthwhile. We will have made the most of them. If we live and die without some product that stays on earth and lives after we have died, then is it as if we were never here? The reason that I believe this is the driving force behind creativity is that those people that I know that work the hardest and sacrifice the most and treat those around them the worst are those that most fear death. Their art will ensure their immortality and therefore allows them to control the fear of death.

If we go through life afraid of death it will consume us one way or another. Whether we fear the death of those around us, or ourselves, it can eat us up alive. We must work through it, come out the other side, and embrace life, rather than living in such fear of death that it controls our life and makes it less than it could have been. An example of this would be someone who strives so hard to make themselves immortal that they fail to have close, enduring relationships while they are alive. You could die with a record or a book or a hundred of each as your legacy. But if you were unhappy all of your life, was it really worth it? You only get one go at this living thing. Why waste it striving to make something for those you leave behind? Sure, they'll know your name, but will they ever understand what you were trying to say? Did you ever even have anything to say other than life sucks and life is hard and you feel bad and guilty and sad? Wouldn't it have been better to try to correct those things rather than communicate them? The tortured artist image is a romantic notion that many aspire to. I think it's really sad.

Creativity is an amazing thing. When people create because they are inspired by love or grief or passion or a million other powerful emotions, they can create masterpieces. When people try to write words or music because they want to be famous or respected or to like themselves or to make themselves immortal they can create masterpieces too. But it's damn rare. For

the most part they create mediocre work, think themselves tortured artists who noone appreciates and drive themselves crazy. Life is for living. For making the most of. Write and paint and sing and do whatever you want when the inspiration takes you there. Don't force it. It comes out fake and artificial and shallow. Find what you are good at, say something that you want to say, and be real. Don't say anything if you don't have anything to say. Creative people aren't better than others. If you are not a creative person, then do not feel bad about it. Never apologize for that. Life is not about competition. It's about making yourself happy.

creativity and happiness
by Vique Martin



(re)claiming space:

Part 1 of a 2-part series.

"Taki 183 was a youth who lived on 183rd Street in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan, but worked as a messenger traveling by subway to all five boroughs of the city. In his travels he wrote his name everywhere, including inside and outside trains and on every station. In 1971, a reporter tracked him down and interviewed him. The resulting article in the *New York Times* apparently struck a responsive chord in the hearts of Taki's contemporaries. Kids impressed by the public notoriety of a name appearing all over the city realized that the pride they felt in seeing their name up in the neighborhood could expand a hundredfold if it traveled beyond the narrow confines of the block. The competition for fame began in earnest as hundreds of youngsters, emulating Taki 183, began to "tag" trains and public buildings all over town. "Getting up" became a vocation. Kids whose names appeared the most frequently or in the most inaccessible places became folk heroes. Simultaneously, the widespread introduction of permanent markers and aerosol spray paint gave the graffiti writers enhanced visibility." (*"History"*, pg. 14, *Subway Art*, Cooper and Chalfant, eds., Henry Holt, 1993)

The above passage recounts the accepted beginning of one of the late 20th-century's most misunderstood forms of expression—what has come to be known as graffiti. "Spray-can art" has evolved considerably in its relatively short existence, but continues to be oft-maligned and rarely taken seriously. In late fall 1999 I sat down with Nerd and Emote of KNK crew, two graffiti writers out of Columbus, Ohio, to try to lend some insight into a phenomenon scarcely touched upon in any form of media. Here is what they had to say.

Clamor: When and how did you become involved in graffiti?

Emote: I was a junior in high school. Somehow I got interested in it, but there wasn't any graffiti in my area, so I went to the bookstore and got a copy of *Subway Art*. A lot of kids just vibed off of that book. I was really into animal rights and direct action at the time, economic sabotage. One of my friends who did graffiti would mix the two, doing tags but it would

be political, and he had a lot of style to his shit. It was from there that I went and met other kids. I got really into it when I moved to Columbus where it was plentiful.

Nerd: I got started when I was in 10th grade, when graffiti was at a high point, when skateboarding was starting to hit big in the mainstream. Every skateboarder in my town was tagging. We didn't call it graffiti, though; we never really had the concept of a piece or anything, we were taggers. Plus I had met this kid named Benji, who was amazing. He really knew what he was doing, he really pushed us. Also this kid who writes ESK, we used to write with him too. We all did community service cos we got caught, before we learned the rule of deny everything. We all got called down to the office, so I gave it up. I was paranoid of getting caught. And then I met up with this motherfucker right here. I had no idea he did graffiti and then one day he said "We're gonna go buy paint do you want to come with us?" and I was like "I used to do that shit back in the day!", but I had no idea how good they were. Then I started kicking it with dude here, and, you know, you get to know people. I went to high school with APEX, he introduced us to a lot of people, which was beneficial in the beginning, getting introduced to the people in the scene and whatever; then that let us know that other people were out there. He introduced us to all the other kids and that was really shady too, it was a lot different than it is now.

Clamor: When did you start to consider yourself a graffiti artist?

Emote: I don't know if I would call myself a graffiti artist; I'd probably call myself a graffiti writer, because graffiti isn't always about art. It is artful, it's artistic expression, but that's not all it is. It's something completely different. But after I was into it a bit, and met a lot of other people, I became aware of all the people on the other side of the country who were aware of people on this side of the country... I don't know. What about you?

Nerd: Well I don't know, it's not like something you think about, it's not a conscious decision. It's a part of what I am now, and I'd like to think

interview and photos by Lee Pasado

talking with graffiti writers in columbus ohio

that it's permanent, but it's about doing something, about using my brain and my skills to do something that pisses other people off.

Emote: But even if we stopped writing a month from now, which we won't, but just being a writer, like any experience you have in life, you'll always have a place for it. I'll always be a writer, you'll always be down for it. I used to be big into skateboarding. I don't do it anymore, but it's always a part of who I am and I always support that. Going through the experience of being a graffiti writer has changed me forever, and my views on a lot of things. So even if we're not physically writing, when I'm 40 years old, I'll still have that writer's mentality, which is like a deep mentality, deeper than people realize I think.

Nerd: People have a lot of different attitudes about it, some people don't think it's art and say "I hate graffiti" yet they're still out there bombing. There's a lot of different attitudes in the scene.

Emote: Well it's just like music, some people make music to be rock stars, some people make music because they love it, so you know, graffiti, just like everything, has all sorts of different sides to it.

Clamor: What do you think are the political implications of graffiti and being a graffiti writer?

Emote: I see it as being very political. I got started doing it because of political motivation, direct action, but I didn't pursue it because of that. I pursued it because I thought it was cool to have your name everywhere in the city, you know? I thought pieces done with spray paint were cool. I thought, "Wow, I wanna do that."

Nerd: It's like being everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

Emote: Yeah, and I totally loved letters. I've always loved letters, and that's how I got into it.

Nerd: We used to draw band names back in the day, heavy metal band names.



Emote: Basically, graffiti attacks almost all conventional ways of thinking, and the number one thing it's about is property—this whole idea that people can own property, that people can buy and sell land. It completely says "fuck that". This world that we live in and the streets that we walk on are everyone's, and if I want to express myself on a wall, in my neighborhood, I should have a right to do that! And to say that I don't have the right to do that, because someone owns that piece of land, is fucked up. Because basically, and me and Nerd were talking about this, any piece of property is stolen land. You trace it back; it's fucking stolen land.

Nerd: We're living on stolen land, and how can you sit around and tell me about "property", you know what I mean? It's ridiculous to me that people are that materialistic.

Emote: It's really materialistic, and a lot of people don't understand. They say it's just scribble, or that it's real selfish, or that they just want to see their name everywhere, but that's legitimate-



Nerd: That's like self-actualization-

Emote: And to say that it's more important to keep a wall blank is more important than for someone to express themselves, it just shows you where people's priorities are, you know what I mean?

Nerd: Where society's priorities are.

Emote: Exactly.

Nerd: When I get these kids who come off as being so politically minded, and they see some shit on the street that they think is offensive, they like freak out! Yet they'll tell me they don't believe in censorship. And I'll tell them that if they don't like it, they should go and do something about it. But I'm telling you right now, they're just gonna put more shit up.

And that's another thing I think is funny, this whole idea that people believe they're gonna be able to stop it somehow; it's never gonna fucking stop.

Emote: Basically graffiti is a voice, a very loud voice, for people who normally wouldn't have the means, like capital, to express themselves on a large scale. People see tags everywhere and they freak out, but it's nothing fucking new. If you drive down the freeway you see signs for BP, Shell, McDonalds or a billboard every other fucking mile because those people have millions of dollars to put their name up all over the city. The difference is, the reason we do it, is to represent ourselves as people, our expression. They are doing it to sell a fucking Happy Meal. It's all in the name of money, while ours is in the name of personal expression. And it is, it's all about fame and all about seeing my name everywhere I go, because in my mind I'm an important person, I fucking deserve to have my name up everywhere!

Nerd: It's like putting your name in the stone of where you are.

Clamor: So do you think that can be traced back

to prehistoric cave drawings?

Nerd: Very much so. Graffiti has been around forever. It was the first art form. Writings on walls. Egyptians did it, there was political graffiti in Pompeii, cave paintings. Its old as fuck! We're at this point where we want to see everything "clean," because society has told us what is clean is what's right and proper: clean slates, blank walls...

Emote: I always say that blank walls are just like blank people, free from expression. Anything that stands out, a tag on a wall, is like someone raising their hand and challenging the way things are. That's what it is.

Nerd: That's what I keep trying to tell people. It's like taking a hand with a middle finger and attaching it to a wall so everyone can see it. And if you get offended by it, then they're winning. If you're the one that's like "I'm gonna let it affect me," then obviously we're doing something right because you're paying attention.

Emote: You have to stand up for what you believe

in. Anything that anybody has to say, there are going to be people who think its offensive. You can take the example of "Don't ask, don't tell." People are cool with homosexuality as long as it's not like in the public being expressed. They don't want to see two guys on the street holding hands, because that expression to them is ugly, wrong, and doesn't belong in society. But those dudes, they fucking believe in that shit, and why the fuck should they not do that because every other motherfucker thinks that it's ugly and disgusting?

Nerd: And the same "open-minded" person who thinks it's good that people feel comfortable to kiss in the streets, is going to get offended when they see a tag. You know what I mean? That's the kind of shit that pisses me off. I think certain people are open minded, and able to elevate themselves above the idea of property, and see that they don't actually "own" anything that they have, because when you die, what the fuck is it? It's shit. You need to just let that go, and if someone's going to put a tag on your shit, someone's gonna put a tag on your shit. Unless you're willing to go out and paint over it, it's gonna be there, and will con-





tinue to be there, because there will be some other kid who gets a marker, gets a can of paint and writes his name in the same damn spot.

Clamor: So do you think it teaches people a lesson about materialism or about getting too attached to "things?"

Emote: I think it can, but I don't think that's necessarily what people think because mostly they just get pissy. I'm not saying that graffiti is the best solution, this completely liberating thing. It can be that to us, but graffiti is basically a sign that things are fucked up. It's because things are so fucked up that graffiti exists. If you look at what's going on right now in this city, on campus, with the group Campus Partners, which wants to gentrify campus into a fucking mall. That shit is like fuel to the graffiti fire. I just want to destroy that shit so bad.

Nerd: The thing is, not everyone in graffiti grasps the immense implications that graffiti has. But that doesn't mean that it doesn't have those same implications.

Clamor: Do you think that on some base emotional level they understand what it's about?

Nerd: It's like the love of it, it's like an adrenaline rush.

Emote: There are so many reasons why people are attracted to it. It's really weird, you find kids who do graffiti in so many walks of life. Something about it, something about letters, something about the fact that it's illegal, the adrenaline rush you get doing it, the fame, seeing your name everywhere, something about that just grabs me. There's a reason I started checking out graffiti. It's awesome. All writers, even the most positive, educated motherfucker and some street thug, who's out packing heat when he's bombing, they share the same fucking thing. Beyond the political implications, it has its own validity in just going out and putting your name up everywhere.

Nerd: And it's truly an American art form, and it's totally undiscovered, and graffiti (as we know it) has been around for like 30 years. Not to say that

every graffiti writer deserves his work in the NYC Museum of Art, but it's an undiscovered, unappreciated artform. It's American as fuck. It's born in America, still going in America, it's spreading everywhere else, but it started here. But I almost feel like America is so against it. In Europe there is a way different attitude, not to say that it's encouraged, but they have paint companies specifically for graffiti, for doing "aerosol art."

Emote: The American dream epitomizes graffiti. The idea of fame, wanting to be number one, be on top.

Nerd: And in the end it's on your own, too, it's yourself that's out there doing it. No matter if you got crew, and crew is out there putting up your crew name, it's yourself that has to go out there and put your name up.

Emote: To prove yourself.

Nerd: Yeah, to prove yourself.





SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

*We want to hear
your stories!*

Submissions of original work are accepted on an ongoing basis. Along with articles and commentary, we also accept art, photography, comics, interviews, reviews (of film, music, books, zines, etc) and anything else you could possibly want to contribute.

While there are no set restrictions on length or content, we will not print everything we receive.

We think that you deserve to be compensated for your creative and written work, therefore we provide a nominal payment for all work we print.

Please contact us if you have questions.

Proposals for Issue 3 are due March 10, 2000.

APRIL 2000

Non/Monogamy
Of Statesmen and Klansmen
Juke Box Royalties □ □
Women and Straightedge
Healthcare

The Labadie Radical Literature Collection
at the University of Michigan

Green Economics

Male Sexuality

Advertising/History of Media

Worker Disatisfaction

Interview with John Zerzan

Part 2 of Jessica Mills' Pregnancy

Beds

Paris on a Shoestring

Non-Profit Organizations

and the Quest for Social Change

Poetry Zines

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Sample copies of *clamor* are available for \$4ppd in the United States, and for \$6 outside of the US.

Six-issue subscriptions are \$20 ppd in the US, and \$30 everywhere else.

All prices are in US Dollars only. Please make checks payable to *Become the Media*.

clamor is published six times a year.

Art
Commentary
Cultural Criticism
Photography
Interviews
Politics
Music

	REV:80 * LP/CD IN MY EYES "Nothing To Hide"
	REV:89 * 7"/CDep DROWNINGMAN "How They Light Cigarettes In Prison" Available 02.15.00
	REV:76 * CD SPARKMARKER "Treasure Chest"
	REV:82 * LP/CD BY A THREAD "The Last Of The Daydreams"
	REV:87 * LP/CD HIMSA "Ground Breaking Ceremony"
	REV:90 * 10"/CDep GAMEFACE/ERRORTYPE:11 "What's Up Bro?" Available 03.21.00



REV:88 7 * ELLIOTT
"Will You"
Available 02.15.00



elliott will you rev:88

A new 7" with one new original and a cover from Louisville's artistic masterminds. Full length album out this spring.



REVELATION RECORDS P.O. BOX 5232 HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA 92615-5232
AVAILABLE AT INDEPENDENT RETAILERS EVERYWHERE • TO ORDER DIRECT CALL: (714)842-7584

RevHQ.com
The Best Hardcore Record Store On The Web.



TREE OF KNOWLEDGE PRESS

Tree of Knowledge is a mailorder distribution & publishing collective struggling to provide the finest in alternative media at affordable prices. We have more than 350 zines, books, pamphlets, & cds focusing on health & social issues, activism, DIY (do-it-yourself), ecology, alternative living, anarchism, punk/hardcore, youth culture, feminism, veganism, & other forms of intelligent rebellion. We've got zines like *Auto-Free Times*, *Clamor*, *Fucktooth*, *Contrascience*, *Burn Collector*, *Inside Front*, *The Match!*, *Flavorpak*, *War Crime*, *Here Be Dragons*, *Cooties*, *Retrogression*, *Screams From Inside*, *Dishwasher*, *Temp Slave*, *Outpunk*, *Dwgsht*, *Femme Flicke*, *Cometbus*, *Doris*, *The Underground Auto Worker*, *Dwelling Portably*, *War Crime*, *Slug* &



Lettuce, *Backseat*, & *Enobled Mind*... plus a good selection of comics (including the entire *Migraine Press* catalog). We've got books by Emma Goldman, Noam Chomsky, Judi Bari, Graham Purchase, Ward Churchill, Grace Llewellyn, Mumia Abu-Jamal, and many other articulate folks. We publish stuff when we can... stuff like *The Playground Messiah*, a graphic novel by Emily Heiple & Nate Powell about some teenage revolutionaries who inspire an uprising in their high school, or *Spectacle Magazine*, a journal of ecology, activism, humor, & alternatives & resistance to corporate dominance & destruction of the planet. Our 2000 mailorder catalog is out & is just \$1.00 (or stamps) postpaid.

P.O. BOX 251766 / LITTLE ROCK, AR 72225
treeofknowledgepress@yahoo.com

Garrett County Press presents

1. Best of Temp Slave! edited by Jeff Kelly

Work stories by Dishwasher Pete, Leah Ryan, Malcolm Riviera, Jessica Cohen and others and crazy cartoons, general madness. Studs Terkel says, "Never has a book been more timely." Maximum Rockroll says they "raced through Best of TSI like Evelyn Wood on amphetamines."
—>200 pages. \$12.00 [postpaid]


2. Ivan Petrov Russia through a Shot Glass by C.S. Walton

A lesson in drinking, vagabondage, prisons and madness from Ivan Petrov. William Brumfield calls Ivan Petrov, "part roaring Rabelaisian tale and part social case study." Frank Bourgholtzer, formerly with NBC News, says "C.S. Walton holds a mirror to the lower depths of what was the USSR. It's not a pretty sight, but its truth is worth knowing."
—>241 pages. \$14.00 [postpaid]

3. Fuck Barnes & Noble bumper sticker with GCP logo —>\$2.00 for 1, \$7.00 for 4 [cheap!]

send cash,
checks, money
orders to:

Garrett County Press
PMB 248, 828 Royal St.
New Orleans, LA 70116
www.gcpres.com



Basically the message is: Steal It! Art, music, culture,
the odd book and the slab of cheese...
the new will be built upon the ruins of the old.
Buenaventura Durruti