

COLD TYPE

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ILLUSTRATION: BRIAN STRASSBURG



"I put the muzzle of the revolver into my right ear and pulled the trigger. There was a minute click, and looking down at the chamber I could see that the charge had moved into the firing position. I was out by one. I remember the extraordinary sense of jubilation, as if carnival lights had been switched on in a dark, drab street. My heart knocked in its cage, and life contained an infinite number of possibilities. It was like a young man's first successful experience of sex.

— Graham Greene

The Joy of Risk

By BOB WHITBY

At the top, 250 feet above the sand, I decided I'd made a mistake. Waiting in line for three hours, fastening God's own rubber band to my ankles, riding a spindly platform hoisted by a probably derelict crane — it was all wrong.

From the ground, bungee jumping looks simple. You pay your money, ride to the top, jump off, yo-yo, go home. I watched a one-armed World War II vet do it, bald guys do it, young girls do it, and nobody got hurt.

But from the metal half-cage swaying in the breeze, there was only down and enough of it to squash all perspective flat. There were no waves in the ocean, only lines of white foam.

Horizon to horizon,

Please turn to page 2

“Every time they had a commercial break, I would get up, hold my tie down and vomit into the wastebasket”

Continued from front page

no building stood higher than my temporary vantage point. There were two paths back to terra firma: head-first off the platform in a swan dive or, still gripping the half-cage rail, eased back down in disgrace.

“Are you sure I can do this?” I asked the guy who rode up with me. He rode the platform all day, encouraging people to jump off. The Safety Guy, I noted, was securely tethered to the platform. He’d known me for all of a minute, but the Safety Guy said yes, he was sure I could do it. And the ride would be smooth. To this day, when I recall standing on the edge of the platform looking down, my blood pressure rises and my eyes water.

I learned something of risk — and its henchman, fear — that day. Like nothing else, risk clears the mind, conjures up amazing powers of concentration and enables the body to perform incredible feats of stamina and athletic prowess. If confronted and subdued, risk has an almost narcotic calming effect that can last for days. Risk is erotic, addicting and, for some people, essential to mental well-being.

Bungee jumping was a risk some people would never consider taking and a risk some would take in stride. As a society, we tend to think of risk only as potential harm to life and limb. But risk is really whatever the risk-taker believes it to be. To one person, Russian roulette is not out of the question; to another, asking for a raise is too terrifying to consider.

In his book *Chancing It*, author Ralph Keyes interviewed risk-takers of all types: from a Frenchman who walked on a cable strung between two New York skyscrapers to a woman who considers getting out of bed an iffy proposition. Keyes found every one of his subjects had a personal risk threshold they wouldn’t cross. The wire walker, for example, was frightened of committing to a relationship; a woman who rescued her daughter from “a house full of drug addicts” at gunpoint was terrified by the idea of submitting an article to a magazine.

Keyes concludes that risk is rooted in fear, and whether the fear is real or imagined makes little difference. Fear of getting on stage before an audience is just as real as fear of falling from a mountain, which is just as real as fear of crossing the street. According to Keyes, risks taken are often a substitute for those considered too frightening. Thus, the tightrope walker who is really afraid of marriage doesn’t consider his balancing act nearly as dangerous as getting married. He is able to enjoy the benefits of taking a risk without confronting the truly frightening. “In many ways,” writes Keyes, “the risks we duck say something far more profound about who we are and how we feel than those we take. They speak to us of our deepest fears.”

Tim Cahill has spent the last 20 years taking risks and writing about them. His four books and numerous magazine articles for *Rolling Stone*, *Outside*, *National Geographic* and others chronicle a life well spent, if adventure and flight from boredom are the yardstick. Cahill has dived among sharks, been held at gunpoint, trekked through unexplored Africa in the company of pygmies, raced horse-drawn chariots and spelunked in the deepest caves of North America. If all goes well, he’s planning to spend the summer in Mongolia among an indigenous, nomadic people he says share many cultural similarities with American Indians of the last century.

But even Cahill has his limit, which he reached one night during the taping of a television show. The show, scrapped before it hit the airwaves, centered around the idea that great adventures would be interesting to listen to in a kind of faux after-dinner setting. The bold risk-takers, dressed in formal wear and quaffing brandy, would swap stories around a fire.



ILLUSTRATION: BRIAN STRASSBURG

“When I recall standing on the edge of the platform looking down, my blood pressure rises and my eyes water”

The idea’s Achilles’ heel, says Cahill, was that those engaged in such activities often are not overly anxious to brag. Especially on camera. “We are all terribly, terribly embarrassed,” he says.

The show, going badly on that particular night, spun out of control for Cahill, who says he “began to get the very worst case of stage fright I suppose anybody at an NBC thing had ever seen in their entire life. Every time there was a commercial break, I would get up — they brought a wastebasket in for this purpose — hold my tie down and vomit into the wastebasket. I’m sure it was one of the most hilarious things they ever saw.”

Like most engaged in risky business, Cahill doesn’t consider the things he does overly dangerous. Unusual maybe, but he keeps the danger to a minimum by intensive preparation. “When I do various things, I’ve researched them,” he says. “I’ve practiced for them, trained for them and generally know what to do in case of an emergency.”

That kind of preparation both minimizes danger and increases the benefits that come from taking a chance. The adrenal glands release two hormones to help the body deal with emergencies — adrenaline and nonadrenaline. Researchers working with monkeys have shown that, with sufficient warning, extreme stimuli caused the animals’ brains to increase production of “good” chemicals — among them, nonadrenaline. Stimuli that sprang forth unannounced and unprepared for released more “bad” chemicals — adrenaline for the most part — and the monkeys were basket cases.

Matt Stauffer, a 22-year-old senior at Beloit College, is big on preparation. Stauffer and three friends recently returned from a winter climbing trip in Wyoming’s Grand Tetons

range, where they tried to climb the 12,800-foot Middle Teton. After coming within 1,000 feet of the summit, they were turned back by 60 mph winds, zero visibility and wind chills of 120 degrees below zero — cold enough to freeze Stauffer’s fingers when he took off his gloves for a moment to adjust a boot binding. “It’s like fun, only different,” he says.

The payoff for weeks of preparation is a sense of the extraordinary. “Climbing mountains just provides a sense of adventure you don’t get in everyday life,” says Stauffer. “It’s a sense of isolation, of self-sufficiency. If something did go wrong, no one would be able to help you anyway.”

Frank Farley, psychology professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin, believes all people fall somewhere along a continuum based on their genetically predetermined arousability. The spectrum runs from what Farley calls “Big Ts” (people who need thrills and excitement to get revved up) to “Little ts” (people who are excessively responsive and therefore require little stimulation).

Most people fall somewhere between the extremes, Farley says, but it’s the Big Ts who leave an indelible mark on society: Amelia Earhart, Bonnie and Clyde, John Belushi, etc.

All people, says Farley, seek to maintain an essentially balanced central nervous system. Big Ts do that by seeking risk and the adrenal rush that follows. Little ts, already hyper-excited, seek a balance by avoiding such stimuli.

When channeled in a positive direction, Big Ts become scientists, performers, surgeons and artists. When no socially acceptable outlet is found, however, they gravitate toward delinquency and crime. Farley found juvenile delinquents more likely than not to be Big T types. And Big T delinquents were harder to manage in prison and more likely to escape.

Farley’s work has implications for early childhood development, education and prison reform — as well as for thrill seekers. According to Farley, the need to risk is probably as genetic as eye color and, if satisfied in a responsible manner, risk can be a factor in overall mental health.

In his studies of the psychological effects of risk, University of Chicago psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (pronounced Chick-simi-hi) studied rock climbers, dancers and surgeons. Csikszentmihalyi noticed his subjects often described a sense of euphoria that blotted out all references to time and irrelevant stimuli (such as doorbells and phones) and left the people with a sense of euphoria lasting for days.

He calls the state “the flow” and says that adults seek out this state of mind for experience alone. It is, he says, “an autonomous reality that has to be understood on its own terms.”

Tipping forward, I remember wind noise and the sand rushing up to smack me in the face. I knew, or believed I knew, there was little likelihood of dying on God’s rubber band. But I was also cognizant of experiencing what jumpers must feel before they hit the pavement. For a few seconds, nothing existed outside the wind, the sand and gravity. My time on the bungee was total isolation and elation, a joyous and exceedingly rare experience.

The bungee halted my fall imperceptibly, as if the air itself had become more viscous toward the ground. Then the sand receded and I was on the way up again. When I stopped bouncing, the crane operator eased me gently to the sand. It was all over in probably 20 seconds, but every second is permanently hard wired into memory. The Flow. ■

Bob Whitby is a writer for Isthmus, an alternative weekly in Madison, Wisconsin, in which this article first appeared.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL, TORONTO, CANADA

It's still a mad, mad, mad world

From the man in Colombia who attends his own wake to an Australian trade union that offers discounts to strip shows to attract new members, it's the same old global lunacy

By PHILIP JACKMAN

You see them languishing at the bottom of page 2 or filling small holes on pages lost in the depths of the news section. They're stories of strange happenings in all manner of places. You know the sort of thing: Philippine villagers run screaming from church when a statue of the Virgin Mary starts singing "Feelings;" or an English lord falls ill after ScotchGuarding his dentures — without removing them. Such important indicators of world wackiness deserve far greater prominence. Hence this report on global lunacy from the first few months of this year.

◆ Swedish customs police find 65 baby snakes in a woman's bra after noticing "something weird" about her figure. The baby grass snakes are discovered during a body search, along with six lizards under her blouse. The 42-year-old woman tells the stunned officers she intends to start a reptile farm. Most food and animals are subject to strict restrictions or quarantine on entering Sweden.

◆ A man walks into a pharmacy in Vernon, B.C., Canada, and tells an employee he is going to rob the place — but will be back in 30 minutes to do it. When the would-be crook and a buddy arrive to carry out the robbery, they are arrested by the RCMP.

◆ Police in England announce they have hunted down two elderly sisters, wanted over fraud allegations and nicknamed Britain's "Geriatric Thelma and Louise," after three years on the run.

Widows Winifred Bristow, 76, and Joan Payne, 74, went on a bizarre spree after they left genteel East Grinstead in southern England in 1992. They were led on their life of adventure by a friend, Angela Dodge, 51, wanted for a string of deceptions and frauds. "We don't know what part the old ladies played in this spree," one officer says, "but they've been at the center of a Bonnie and Clyde-style pursuit that can't be good for them at their age."

◆ Garbage collector Jose Alvaro Sanchez of Pereira, Colombia, attends his own wake after being tipped off in a bar by a drinking partner that his brothers have mistakenly identified a corpse with gunshot wounds. At his family home he discovers relatives and friends sitting weeping around a coffin containing an embalmed body that looks remarkably like him.

◆ A truck overloaded with potatoes attracts the attention of an army patrol in Swaziland, which finds a new Toyota Cressida beneath the spuds. Authorities believe the car was stolen in South Africa and smuggled into Swaziland under the potato cover with an ultimate destination of neighboring Mozambique.

◆ Sweden announces a new export — wolf urine,

which is sprinkled alongside busy mountain roads to keep elk from wandering into traffic. Traffic officials in Kuwait are hoping to adapt it to keep camels from colliding with cars in camel-dense areas of the country. In tests, camels and elk both take a wide turn when they smell wolf. Sweden first used real wolf urine but now produces a synthetic version that keeps its odor for more than nine months.

◆ In a bid to attract new members, one of Australia's biggest trade unions offers discounts on striptease performances for its rank and file. The move by the union, known as AWU-FIMME, which covers mostly male industrial workers, sparks an outcry in the trade-union movement. The Sydney company that agreed to honor the discount, Frisky Business, denies any suggestions of sexism, saying the discount applies to both male and female strippers.

◆ An angry bride and groom beat up a drunken Rumanian priest at the altar because he read out a funeral oration during their wedding ceremony. The priest, from the eastern village of Tisau, has previously been involved in a string of drunken brawls. The wedding foul-up proves the last straw for his long-suffering congregation, who break their silence and reveal his scandalous behavior to the media.

◆ British Finance Minister Kenneth Clarke praises the success of a steel mill that closed 15 years ago. In an interview with BBC Radio Newcastle, Mr. Clarke describes the northern English town of Consett as having "one of the best steelworks in Europe." However, the interviewer points out that British Steel

closed its Consett plant in 1980, throwing 3,400 people out of work and bringing unemployment in the town to the highest level in Britain. Less than two weeks later, Mr. Clarke refers to the same city as being a major centre for the manufacture of disposable diapers, but that factory also no longer exists.

◆ Lawrence Hanratty, 38, is named as the unluckiest man in New York. Nearly electrocuted in a construction-site accident in 1984 that put him in a coma for weeks, Mr. Hanratty lost the lawyers fighting for his disability claim — one was disbarred, two died — and his wife ran off with her lawyer. He had his car wrecked in a crash last year, and when police left the scene of the accident, he was held up and robbed. An insurance company now wants to cut off his workers' compensation benefits and his landlord is threatening to kick him out of his apartment. But Mr. Hanratty, who takes 42 pills a day for heart and liver ailments, is not giving up. "There's always hope," he says. ■

Philip Jackman is an editor on the Globe's Middle Kingdom page.



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EDITOR'S NOTES

When we produced the first edition of *ColdType*, we weren't certain there would be a second. Perhaps no one would like it.

Perhaps my bosses wouldn't want to pay the cost of publication. Perhaps it would be a waste of my time. Fortunately, the fears were unwarranted, the response was positive, so positive, in fact, that the first edition was reprinted in South Africa as a supplement to Rhodes University's *Review of Journalism*. And, through the generosity of Nasionale Pers — one of the country's biggest publishers, which picked up the print bill — the university will continue to make each edition available to journalists in that country. In addition, we arranged a swap of stories between the *Pasadena Star-News*, in California, and *The Age*, in Melbourne, Australia.

But the international reach of *ColdType* (and its companion tabloid, *RaggedRight*) goes much farther, with subscribers on all four continents. Our range of content will reflect that diversity; this edition is more wide-ranging than the first, due to the efforts of our new correspondents: Alan Morison in Australia and Kerry Swift in South Africa. There will be more.

Now, on to this issue. One of my aims, as editor, is to bring a surprise element to each issue. Last time, we featured Russell Monk's superb photo essay on the tragedy of Rwanda. Our special feature in this issue — *The Columnists* — is less dramatic, but no less readable. And we've got two photo features as well: exclusive photographs from Cuba by Monk and the end of minor league baseball at Goodland Field in Appleton, Wisconsin.

Enjoy this issue, write to me, and tell me what you think of it — and don't forget to send in your favorite stories and photographs for publication.

TONY SUTTON

Stop Press: We've just learned that *ColdType* has been short-listed for a Canadian National Magazine Award for photojournalism for Russell Monk's photographs from Rwanda in our first issue. We'll keep you posted on the result. Congratulations, Russell.

THE AGE, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

Pastrami on wry

Comedian and former rabbi Jackie Mason calls himself an equal-opportunity insulter

By MICHAEL SHMITH

Are you Jewish?" asks Jackie Mason. "Only from the waist down," I reply. We are sitting at a window table in the New York Deli, where they charge \$1.50 extra for a non-cholesterol omelette and serve twin pastramis-on-rye the size of a pair of platform heels.

Here we are, with the city's favorite comedian taking the inside seat ("Otherwise people walking past recognize me" — they do, in any case), asking me a personal question and giving the chance to use a long-cherished answer I would have used before, except nobody asked me the question.

But my witty response receives not the slightest glimmer of a smile. Nothing. Zilch. Flatter than a steamrolled gefilte fish. Was it funny? Or perhaps he has heard it before. Was it offensive? Hardly, to a man who the night before had his audience falling about when he told them that Bill Clinton was full of shit and that you can always spot the Jews in the audience because they're better dressed ("They get dressed up to put out the garbage") and are more arthritic than the gentiles. Like most comedians, Jackie Mason saves his wit for the performance. On stage, he struts and espouses like a bantam with attitude. But the man across the table is weary, almost mournful.

"The Age, what a weird title for a newspaper," says Mason, who is ordering something large with cream cheese. "You could call it The Sun, The Moon, The Stars. But The Age? I never hoid that before. Is it one of the more prominent papers?"

It is almost impossible, with just 10 fingers and one computer keyboard, to reproduce the cadences and subtleties of Jackie Mason's accent. Indeed, it is amazing anyone can understand him. He talks in a jabbering staccato mumble (the rat-a-tat of an Uzi, using a bagel as a silencer), punctuated with a nervous "heh-heh." Thus we are in Noo Yoik Ciddy, eden lotsafood an toikin bout noozepapers. "In Bridden, almost ewon rids two tree noozepapers" is unalloyed Masonspeak. "When I torgbout poldicks in Inglin, deyknow evrey single tingbout Merrigan poldicks. In Inglin, deyknow mordan Merrigans knowbout dereown peeble, heh heh."

By now, several people have walked past the window, done a double-take and are back, peering at Mason through

the hanging gardens of kosher salamis. "Hi, Jackie, loved ya show!" is the usual compliment.

Suddenly, we have gone from noozepapers to the state of the nation. "To call this a civilized country is a crime in itself," says Mason, jabbing at his meal and looking anywhere but at me (throughout the interview, Mason avoids any direct eye contact).

"There's nothing civilized about it. If somebody talks about a major city with 150,000 people wounded a year, 3,000 killed and hundreds of thousands of homeless, you would say, 'Where is this country?' If you hear about it in Africa, you'd say, well, naturally, it's uncivilized. But here? This is the supposedly most civilized nation. Everything is civilized except human behavior."

It would also be a misnomer to call this man's show, *Jackie Mason: Politically Incorrect*, civilized. I should say he deals with the subtleties of human behavior, particularly of minority groups, with the polite concern of a professional Central Park mugger. No one — Jew, gentile, gay, feminist, fat person, anorexic, Puerto Rican, lawyer, doctor, president — is immune from his lacerating observations. And the more he deals it out, the more his audience responds with enthusiasm.

I laughed, too. But uneasily. It is possible to be so offensive, but so popular? When I didn't laugh, my neighbor, in Row E in the stalls in the John Golden Theater, a man with the girth of a hog and the cascading whinny of a horse, shot me the kind of look that presumed I belonged to at least one of the groups under discussion.

What I found disturbing (I find myself telling Jackie Mason) is that the black man and woman in the row in front loved the show, especially the remarks about their race. An example: "Can you understand some blacks? When they start fires, they burn down their own homes. At least when a Jew starts a fire, he's making money."

I say to Mr. Mason: "If an Aboriginal heard someone talking about them the way you talked about American blacks, he would take offense. But these people were crying with laughter."

"I don't see anything in my show that's anti-black," he says, looking at me bleakly for a moment. "There's nothing anti-gay in my remarks. A normal woman would see nothing anti-feminine in my remarks about women. When you talk about equality, you see discrimination. Ten years ago, if you said whites should stop persecuting blacks, did they say you were anti-white? If I attack the Ku Klux Klan for persecut-

ing blacks, nobody says I'm anti-white; they call me a great liberal. If a black person robbed a bank and I attacked him, would you call me a racist?"

Another sideways glance. "The fact of the matter is you should be shocked when a black person can enjoy my show." "But they loved it," I say. "It was interesting to see that reaction."

"I'm an equal-opportunity insulter," he says, suddenly bringing Haiti into the argument. "I attack anyone who agrees with Clinton about Haiti or who forgives him for his treatment of the blacks and Haiti. We treated the Haitians like animals only because they're black. We treated the Cubans differently and got them in as political refugees. A Haitian is not a political refugee?"

Bill Clinton is not Mason's favorite person. "The man is a f***ing liar," he tells his audience. "I say that with the greatest respect."

He tells me: "I haven't got any personal hate against Clinton. He's just the lowest form of all life. Nobody could be lower than that guy. There's no morality clinging to him."

Did you vote for him? "No, nor for the other. For me it was like saying, 'Which gun do you want to be shot with?'"

Jackie Mason has been on the American comedy circuit since Woody Allen was in short pants. When he was 28, he left the family business to make more money and get more laughs. The family business was religion. Jackie Mason was a fifth-generation rabbi, with three rabbinical siblings. "I always did comedy in my monologues ... er, my sermons," he says. "The idea that you shouldn't be funny when you're talking about a serious subject is idiotic. The same with a rabbi. A rabbi can make a speech, condemn any kind of immorality, preach about goodness and decency, compassion and idealism. But with humor he can make his points sharper than in any other way."

His comic style, he says, has always been confrontational. In the early days, though, this proved too much for his audience. "I was much more vicious," he says. "It was too close to the truth. I hit the nail on the head, but people couldn't face it."

But time and changing morals have caught up with Jackie Mason, who has gone from the Borscht Belt to being a small big-time hero on Broadway, television, but not Pennsylvania Avenue. "My object is to give laughs. I will not sac-



rifice laughs for a message. I am not giving a message," he says. "I will be an educator in my own terms, but not at the expense of being a comedian. When I attack O.J. Simpson, I make sure, although I attack him as a total fraud, that I do it in a way that gives me lots of laughs. I'm not there as a preacher; for a preacher, they go to church, not the theater."

What makes Mason's show intriguing, I say, is that he says in public what everyone is thinking but would never say, except in private. His audiences, although no longer afraid to laugh, are still reticent to express the views that Mason pugnaciously puts forward.

"That's the comment I get from everyone," he says. "They're all too intimidated to say what's on their minds. They don't even realize they have given up freedom of speech in this country. People say you're not allowed to express yourself in a dictatorship; they don't realize they've lost their freedom of speech here, too. Whether they're intimidated by society or the system, what difference does it make? People just don't disagree with you — they call you a racist. What way can you call this a free country?"

In Jackie Mason's eyes, the only group immune to political correctness, and therefore subject to persecution by minority groups, is white American gentiles. They are made to feel guilty for the attitudes of their ancestors. "Nobody helps them. Black people never came up to the support of the white victims of persecution. If they kill a white person, he deserves it. This is worse racism than the whites ever thought of, but everyone accepts it. I suppose it will take a generation for the white population to overcome the guilt complex."

He receives mostly favorable reactions from audiences. "I used to get letters saying I was vicious, but not any more. All I get is support. All people say is I'm right and it's about time somebody said it. I have guts. It's unbelievable. Somebody

"If I attack the Ku Klux Klan for persecuting blacks, nobody says I'm anti-white; they call me a great liberal. If a black person robbed a bank and I attacked him, would you call me a racist?"

would think that I am saying something that is unique in some way. Why should it be unusual for a person to say it was about time we had real democracy?"

Im not saying in my act that I prefer whites over blacks, Jews over gentiles. I'm not justifying any person — blacks, homosexuals or anyone else. What I am saying is there should be no discrimination against any of them. It's because I say that that people say, 'Boy! Where did you get the noive to say that?' If you say it against one denomination, you are liberal; say it in reverse, you are a gutsy radical. Why does it sound revolutionary? That's what I don't understand."

Jackie Mason has to rush, to meet someone at Mickey Mantle's bar, just around the corner from 57th Street. "Come along," he says, bouncing out the door.

Outside the Plaza Hotel, an Indian taxi driver is arguing with his passenger. When Mason mentions Indian taxi drivers in his show, it almost brings the house down. "It is the most popular part of my act," he says. "Everyone has a frus-

trated hate, and I would say Indian cab drivers are more expressive of this than anything else in my act. It's almost like a mother-in-law joke: Everyone laughs; you're talking for everyone when you louse up a mother-in-law. With Indian cab drivers, you feel you're persecuting a powerless guy who's a victim of oppression who's travelled a million miles for a menial job and here you go attacking him. But every time people say an Indian took them in the wrong direction, they talk, with a kind of reservation in their voice, as if the guy might think I'm a low-life dreg for saying this — what they really want to say is, 'I hope the son of a bitch drops dead.'"

Mason's appointment hasn't shown up (maybe his cab driver is bringing him to the West Side via Salt Lake City). So we stand outside Mickey Mantle's talking about love, life, sex and religion. We sound a little like a *New Yorker* cartoon.

I take the John Mortimer — "Do you believe in God?" — approach. "Is religion still important to you?"

"I believe in the philosophies of religious teachings about morality, decency and compassion: not to steal, cheat or lie. The preachings of religion I believe in, but the rituals I'm not particularly involved in."

He goes to the synagogue on high holy days and sometimes conducts services. "But I don't use the national holidays for profit. I don't care what it costs me or where I'm working. I always cancel."

"Loved ya show, Jackie, terrific," says a beefy man, slapping Mason on the shoulder.

"Thank you," he says, shaking me by the hand and walking away through the crowd, a small figure, getting smaller. He speaks softly but carries a big schtick. ■

Michael Shmith is a New York correspondent for The Age.

Instituto N



o. 7: *The least of all mercies*



Cuba, an economic basket case since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the tightening of a decades-old embargo by the United States, is one of the most troubled nations in the world. But, in a dilapidated building in an industrial suburb of Havana, a dedicated group of people is teaching us all a lesson in the power of commitment

Exclusive photographs by Russell Monk

*The best evidence
for the standard
of care is the children
themselves*



By BRENDAN HOWLEY

Instituto Numero 7, a long, bottle-blue one-storey building, stands on a cul-de-sac in an industrial district of the west-central Havana suburb of Vedado. The open side of the Instituto's U-shaped structure, built in 1981, when Soviet roubles flowed like water, lies open to the Caribbean breezes rustling through overhanging shade trees; its gentle dilapidation suggests a California beach house imagined by Graham Greene.

The Instituto's street is eerily quiet, the silence broken only by the rumble of decrepit buses and trucks whose state of repair defies physical law. This is Havana in a time of collapse: sporadic power and water, comic telephones, milk science fiction, gasoline US\$1 per liter, fantastic bus queues echoing the street scenes of Weimar Germany.

The Cubans, despite the enormous social, political and economic pressures visited on them between the twin vises of their own regime and the American embargo, remain defiantly kid-struck. This instinct drives one of the few genuine marvels of Castro's 35-year-old dictatorship — that the crumbling island's health-care system still so inspiringly cares for the very least of the country's children.

Inside the institute, the echo of children's voices bumbles down the cool Spartan hallways, the two long arms of the U comprise the girls' and boys' dormitory spaces. There are no extras here: no surplus lights, no fans or air conditioning, no cheerful Disney murals, no stuffed animals guarding a classroom or dormitory doorway. One hundred and twenty chil-



dren, all mentally challenged but otherwise fit, have their home here, with a further 50 kids seen on an outpatient basis; disabled children are cared for elsewhere in the city.

The children of Number 7 — a *modelo departamento* facility of the Ministry of Health — “need constant care,” explains director Beatriz Marrero Gómez. “They are very dependent: We have to do everything for them.” The insti-

tute's staff numbers 73 nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, teachers and support staff, all of whom work for a pittance — I counted some 40 staffers present the day of our visit. Not surprising, all Cubans working outside the tourist-dollar economy moonlight like crazy, simply to survive. The *comeda empleado*, the staff kitchen, is blacked out and empty. The children,



Gómez assures us, receive three meals daily, with a milk supplement.

Number 7's toys are well worn, but the staff uniforms are crisp; the children's clothing, chiefly donated by the Spanish aid agency *Medicos del Mundo*, is well laundered; the tables and chairs worn by a decade's hard use. But these are details: The best evidence for the institute's standard of care is the children themselves.

Non-family visitors are rare here, never mind Westerners. We are instant local celebrities, welcomed by smiles and squeals and the subject — especially Monk's Leica camera — of conspiratorial whispering among the children. Their demeanors range from Marcos Costas' James Cagney song-and-dance extroversion to the heartbreaking shyness of the child I remember as "the girl at the end of the bench," captivated by the starling at her feet, not us, and Ariel, the bitter boy sequestered in the infirmary, fiercely alone.

True innocence has an almost physical force: It is impossible not to be won by the children of Number 7. But even more, it is impossible not to be moved by the patience and love of those committed to their care.

Cuba will change soon, submerged by a tidal wave of the new, as the island capsizes into what passes for normal life in the free world. These children bear witness to the best of what was; their fate in the new Cuba will bear witness again, mute measure of the best intentions of those to come. ■

Russell Monk is a freelance photographer in Toronto. A journalist and novelist, Brendan Howley lives in Stratford, Ontario.

Choirs, limos, gunshot wounds: In Dallas, life insurance salesmen's conventions can be pretty lively affairs

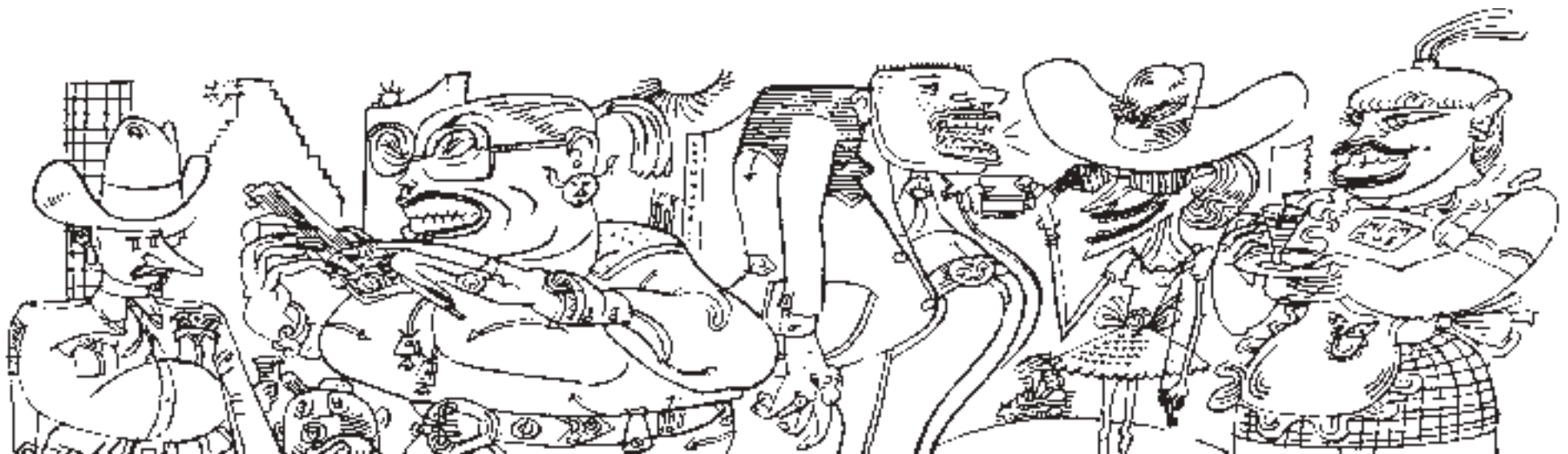


ILLUSTRATION: HEATH

THE INDEPENDENT, LONDON, ENGLAND

Will that be *with* bullets, sir?

By PETER ROSENGARD

THE taxi I took from Dallas airport had an eight-foot-wide pair of cow horns tied to the roof. The driver was Afro-American and wore a white stetson and cowboy boots. Curtis, owner of the Cowhorn Cab Company, told me about his battles with city hall to get permission to rope the cow horns to the roof of his car. "I know exactly how you feel," I said. "I had the same problem when I wanted to put a conservatory on my patio in Shepherd's Bush."

He nodded sympathetically. "So in the end we dropped the application to put the whole cow on the roof and just went with the horns."

Despite being a city about to be invaded by 5,000 life insurance salesmen — I was in Dallas for the 67th annual meeting of the Million Dollar Round Table Life Insurance Sales Convention — I couldn't discern any panic in the streets. Actually there were no people in the streets. I didn't like it. It was quiet ... too quiet.

On the way to my hotel — The Mansion on Turtle Creek — I stopped off at the Dallas Convention Center, where the meeting was due to start next morning. The Dallas Gun Show was in full swing in an adjoining hall. There were glass counters full of gleaming Smith & Wessons, Berettas, Glockes and Uzis. A Blake Carrington look-alike approached. "What kind of gun are you looking for, sir?" he asked. "Will you be shooting quail, pigeon, duck or boar, sir?"

"Actually ... it's to settle a family vendetta," I said.

"Sir, if you will follow me, I believe we can assist your requirements," he replied. I followed him to another room. It was empty except for a Jeep with a silver machine gun mounted on the back. "This is on sale, sir. Reduced from \$125,000 to \$80,000." I said I would have to discuss it with my accountant.

The hotel brochure I read in the car said the rusty-pink Mansion — "Where grace, taste and manner are the mode" — was originally built in 1925 for Sheppard W. King, a Texas oil and cattle baron. Oil heiress Caroline Hunt had bought it as a ruin about 10 years ago. Tens of millions of dollars later it was voted the Best Hotel in America. Throughout the hotel, Hunt had casually scattered around pieces of art and an-

tiques "found in the homes of internationally travelled collectors." I assume she asked them first. "We really want our guests to feel they are in their own homes," she was quoted as saying. It wasn't quite like my home.

At least half a dozen of the young staff greeted me with a "Good morning, Mr. Rosengard" before I had even got to the reception desk to check in. (During the week I was there, I kept trying to catch them out by wandering the corridors until I met one of the staff. Without missing a step they all said: "How are you today, Mr. Rosengard?" It was uncanny; even my mother forgets my name every now and then.)

"Good morning, Mr. Rosengard, how are you today?" K-Jo, my big, blond waitress, asked at breakfast. I ordered a waffle. "Would you like a raspberry waffle, a strawberry waffle, a blueberry waffle or a fruit salsa waffle?" she asked. I chose blueberry. "Blueberry on a whole wheat waffle, whole grain waffle or plain white waffle?" she asked. "With maple blue mountain syrup, Texas honey or cream?" Cream would be fine, I said. "Double cream, single cream, low-fat cream, semi-skimmed cream, 97 percent fat-free cream or non-dairy creamer?" I couldn't bring myself to order an egg.

Next morning at 7:30 I took the Mansion's courtesy limo out to the convention center. I registered and collected my name badge. They'd asked me for the name I would like to be known by. I'd suggested Mad Dog but reluctantly settled for Peter as there were apparently at least a dozen Mad Dogs already. The auditorium was so big that little electric golf carts were ferrying people up and down, and huge video screens were positioned in the aisles. I was welcomed with bearhugs by at least 20 total strangers.

The opening ceremony was not like The Pru's annual sales convention. It had a cast of hundreds of singers and dancers, choirs and cowboys and little kids and so many racial minorities that I felt I was sitting in the UN General Assembly. The climax came when the 1994 convention chairman rode through the hall and on to the stage on a white horse waving his stetson. Billy Jo Bob Darnton was six feet seven inches and could easily have lifted the horse with one hand. (Who wouldn't buy a policy from Billy Jo Bob?) I had never seen so many standing ovations. Even Billy Jo Bob's horse got one. It was too much for him, and men in blue overalls had to clean up afterwards.

The rest of the week was spent going between the air-con-

ditioned hotel and the air-conditioned convention center in the air-conditioned hotel courtesy limo. I didn't know how I'd managed up to then without my own limo and driver. I knew I was getting addicted when I started taking little limo drives round the circular drive.

On my last night, I was standing at the reception desk ordering my breakfast for the next morning when a well-dressed man with an immaculately trimmed small goatee appeared by my side in the otherwise deserted lobby. He waited patiently for a few minutes then said to the clerk: "Excuse me, sir. I do apologize for interrupting you, but I am suffering a gunshot wound to the neck and I wonder if you would be kind enough to call me an ambulance. Thank you, sir."

"I will be with you momentarily, sir," the clerk replied.

"Now, Mr. Rosengard, the courtesy limo will be at your service at 7:30 a.m." He picked up the phone and spoke softly into it. He turned to the man next to me. "Sir, regarding your gunshot wound to the neck, your ambulance will be here momentarily."

I braced myself (I'd just seen *Reservoir Dogs*) and turned very slowly to the man next to me. He was staring straight ahead. Nothing. Not even a little bit of blood, let alone the spurting, pumping carotid nightmare I'd prepared myself for.

"Are you quite sure you have been shot through the neck?" I asked him.

"Oh, quite sure," he said.

I walked round him and looked at the other side of his neck. "I've got some good news for you," I said. "He missed."

On the plane back to London I read a self-help/assertiveness book called *Get Out of My Way You Bastard!* (sub-titled *How to Get Everything You Want Out of Life ... By the Use of Small Firearms*). I'd bought it at the Gun Show. Or was it the life insurance convention?

When I got home, I found a note from the hotel. "Dear Mr. Rosengard. The Mansion on Turtle Creek hopes you enjoyed your stay and looks forward to welcoming you again soon." It was signed by the managing director: Jeff Trigger.

Believe me. ■

An ace insurance salesman, Peter Rosengard is listed in The Guinness Book of Records for selling the biggest-ever life insurance policy — for \$100 million.

THE DEADLY

A journalist chronicles his younger brother's

By TOM MISSEL

The emotions roll in like high tide, pounding in unrelenting waves at your eroding sanity, strengthened by an image you're not sure you'll ever shake. As the hours turn into days, and the days turn into weeks, the tears slowly dry, and the image begins to fade. But you can never erase the final picture of a man you once knew as your brother, whose looks you once envied until AIDS turned him into little more than a survivor of Auschwitz. You tuck it away in a dark corner of your mind, behind all the good stuff, but it's a mental snapshot you'll take with you to your grave. You can't forget.

SUMMER OF 1984

My mother and father wanted to talk with me on the back porch. I couldn't remember the last time they wanted to talk to me, together, as a unit. Parents never have good things to say in tandem, so I panicked. What could I possibly have done? Every indiscreet thing I'd done since I was five raced through my mind. The prank I pulled in senior high school was three years old. Couldn't be that. Maybe my psych prof called from college and told them I blew off 90 percent of his classes. Stupid me, scheduling an 8 a.m. class.

My mother can talk with the best of them, but she rarely wastes any words. "Your brother is gay," she said.

My immediate, selfish, unspoken reaction was, "Good, it's not about me," and, "I guess they mean Scott, because Ron and Jerry are married."

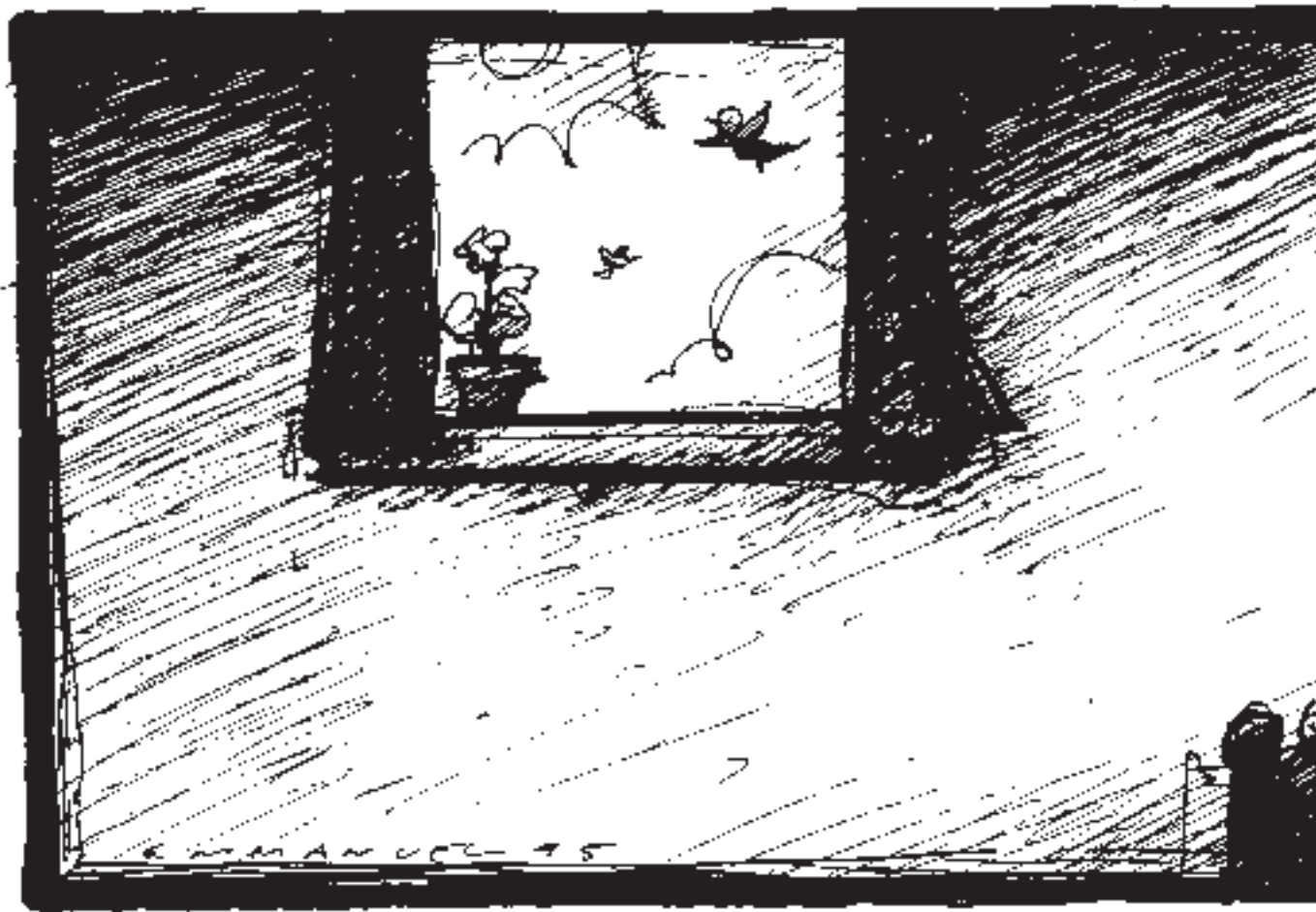
The uncomfortable silence lasted only a few seconds. I knew I had to say something. I knew they didn't know what else to say.

Eloquence didn't wash over me.

"So?" I muttered, groping for something to make them understand that I didn't care. He was my brother. Nothing else mattered. Go to a good-size state college and your educational horizons broaden more outside the classroom than they do inside. You meet so many different people — black, white, Hispanic, Oriental, street kids, farm boys, Jews, gentiles, gay athletes, straight theater majors — that you ultimately realize there are only two kinds of people: basically good people and basically schmucks.

I knew that's what my mom and dad felt. I just think they needed to hear someone else say it was OK that their youngest child was still someone they could be proud of, because his admission didn't change anything about him except the perception of others.

I walked away from that awkward conversation shaking my head. For years I had been jealous of Scott, the good-looking kid brother who was always at ease talking to girls. I spent my senior prom shooting free throws in my driveway. He had to draw straws to figure out which girl he'd ask. I didn't date until college. Like a lot of teens, I had the self-esteem of Charlie Brown. Had someone been told that one of my parents' six kids was gay, I'd probably have been the first guess. For the rest of



that hot summer day I was overcome by the irony of my jealousy, saddened that we were too scared to reveal to each other the unfulfilled feelings that hurt us so much. I only wish I was smart enough then to fear for his life but, living in a culture 10 years ago that had its head buried in the sand, who could have known?

THANKSGIVING, 1993

It was that rare alignment of Jupiter and Mars, when a quirk in the holiday in-law rotation had all my brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews gathered at my parents' home to devour turkey and football. Twenty-five people in all. The house was crowded, but no one seemed to mind.

"It's been such a nice day. I don't want to ruin it," Scott told my mom, confidentially, after dinner. But my mother knew the other kids finally had to know. They had a right by now, and Scott knew it. My mother agreed to break the news, to each child, sometime after he went home and before Christmas.

The family began to head back to their homes, but the long-distance travelers — myself from Olean and my oldest brother

from Rochester — had elected to stay the night and leave Friday morning.

The overnight stragglers were mulling turkey sandwiches and pumpkin pie in the living room when my mom turned the TV off. It was just after 9 p.m., and she asked my brother's two sons to go into the basement to watch TV. She and my father had something to tell us — my wife, my brother and me. The house was still warm from so many people, from so much food, but I was suddenly cold, and my mother hadn't said a word yet. She started to cry before she could say a thing.

"Your brother has AIDS," she said. "They don't expect him to make it 'til next Christmas."

The words were explosive, spraying emotional shrapnel around the living room, piercing my sobbing wife's heart, hitting my brother and me in the spine. We were numb, staring blankly at nothing, speechless.

How long had he known, had they known? we wondered.

"He's known since 1986. That's when he told us," my mom said. "But he was just HIV-positive. He didn't want any of you to know until his T cells went below 100."

For almost eight years my parents carried this around,

ALD, OLEAN, USA

FACE OF AIDS

his poignant struggle with an unforgiving killer



ILLUSTRATION: EMMANUEL LOPEZ, CRACKERS

of those around him, even as he struggled to breathe the week before he died. He often called my mom “Nurse Ratchet,” in an evil yet loving little tone. When a long-lost cousin stopped by to visit one day, he leaned down at bedside to give Scott a big hug. By then, strong embraces had become painful. “Jesus,” he deadpanned later that night to my mom, “didn’t someone tell him I was dying?”

He often joked about how low his disease-fighting cells had dropped. “My T cells are so low I’ve got names for all of them,” he’d say. He had a unique ability to make people feel like they were alive instead of feeling like he was dying, especially people who had just learned of his fate, of his sexuality. Most of them walked away with a newfound sense of compassion and tolerance.

To look at him in August and think he’d be dead before winter seemed preposterous. He had always taken such good care of himself, toning the abs, working the cardiovascular. He was, on the surface, the picture of health. But the disease was destroying him from the inside. He needed to sleep at least half the day just to function. But he was still upbeat. He wanted to be, to help my parents stay sane, to help them bear an unbearable moment in their lives.

I visited him September 24, when he was still able to get around. He could drag his oxygen tank to the living room and still make fun of people on *Wheel of Fortune*. He was dying but not ready to stop living.

One week later, late that Sunday afternoon, in the midst of bitching about the Bills’ futile effort in Chicago, the phone rang. “They nearly lost him this afternoon,” my sister said softly. “I’m not sure he’ll make it to morning.”

The 90-minute drive to Alden was one of those drives you make but don’t remember how you got there, when your mind races 10 times the speed of your car. You think of everything, and you think of nothing, and by the time you arrive your head is pounding so hard from crying so hard you want to cut it off.

I walked into the house, went straight to his bedroom, and there I heard laughter. Scott mustered a weak smile as he told the story of his near demise that afternoon. Dad, he said, was frantic as he began to rally back from the dead. The Bills’ game was to start in about 30 minutes, but that’s obviously not what worried him. “Dad, quit worrying,” he said. “I promise I’ll go at halftime.”

He wasn’t ready to let go yet, but it was painfully clear he had little time left. His coughing spells lasted as long as two hours, but he saved them for the strangest hours, usually between 1 and 5 a.m. In a recliner at his bedside, sleeping was a hit-and-run proposition for my mother, who must have had a bottomless reservoir of adrenaline to sustain her.

He’d get raging fevers and numbing chills, his temperature fluctuating between 92 and 105, sometimes within the span of an hour. It wasn’t unusual for him to have his saturated clothing changed three to four times a night.

Somehow, he continued to uplift those around him. He rarely turned visitors away, and the door never seemed to stop swinging. Brothers and sisters, friends and co-workers, even long-out-of-touch relatives stopped by and sat with him, some

knowing they’d probably outlive their youngest child. For almost eight years my brother kept secret a death sentence he couldn’t appeal. He didn’t want us to worry about him. He wasn’t promiscuous, just irresponsible. Once.

My parents made trips the next two days to tell the rest of the family. We all called Scott over the next couple of days, to tell him we loved him, to scold him for not telling us earlier, to say all the inadequate things people say at times like this. “I’m sorry” just doesn’t carry a lot of weight.

He had only one wish: to come home to die. My parents agreed. They were warned how difficult his care might become, how much pain he’d have to endure. They knew all the risks, the physical and emotional ones.

“What other choice do we have?” they said. “He’s our son, and he wants to come home.”

My mother’s life had come full circle. Twenty-five years before, she took in her bedridden mother and nursed her until her death. Now, at 67, with two legs held together by bailing wire and bubble gum, she was being asked to comfort her youngest child in his final days. Bad genes, high cholesterol and years of smoking conspired to destroy the arteries in her legs. That she

can walk at all is a tribute to her doctor. But she certainly wasn’t strong enough to care for a gravely ill man.

Somehow, though, the pain in her legs became irrelevant. “It’s amazing,” she would say, “what you’re able to overcome... what you can do when you *have* to do something.”

He came home the last week of August, realizing he could no longer put in even a limited schedule at the downtown restaurant where he worked. And with his wage flow cut off, he had no other choice. The last thing he wanted was to be a burden on his mother and father, but he knew in his heart he had waited as long as he could.

Hospice Buffalo eased the transition. The organization’s mission is simple: Make the terminal patient’s final days as comfortable as possible. They provided all the equipment, all the drugs, all the support necessary to lift some of the burden off my parents. They sent nurses and doctors and chaplains. They were remarkable. When you’re able to glimpse outside the tragedy swallowing you whole, you realize these people work with the dying for a living. And you can’t imagine a more noble job. They turn darkness into light.

So could my brother. His sense of humor buoyed the spirits

*“Your brother has AIDS,” she said.
“They don’t expect him to make it ’til next Christmas”*

just to wish him God speed, others to return time and time again, if only, near the end, to hold his hand as he mumbled hours away in a half-hallucinating funk.

Every other day seemed to be his last, but then he’d rally when you’d least expect it: carrying on brief, occasionally quirky conversations, wisecracking with friends or just talking, quite lucidly, about the details of his memorial service. It had to be on a Saturday, he insisted, so his friends from work could come but, more important, he demanded a big room.

We laughed at his presumption, his vanity but, after witnessing the parade of people in and out of his room for two months, we knew he was probably right.

The great hope of hospice care for AIDS patients, in rejecting all medication except painkillers, is that the end will come faster, with less pain, less devastation. Since early October, doctors and nurses said he could die any day, that he couldn’t last much more than a couple of weeks. Every time the phonerrang, I’d pray it was my father, telling me that it was over, mercifully, finally over.

But Halloween came and went, and he was still around, bedridden, emaciated, yet somehow taking air into his ravaged lungs. No one could understand how. Was there someone he hadn’t said goodbye to? Was there something unresolved in his mind, in his heart? Everyone implored him to just let go, told him that it was OK to give up the fight, but maybe it wasn’t that easy. That he was in such good physical shape only months before must have counted for something, except now his strong heart was his worst enemy.

NOVEMBER 7, 1994

My mother was crying on the other end of the phone, and she hadn’t even said hello yet. “Could be any day now,” she said, but then I’d heard that before. I was more concerned that she seemed to be on the brink of collapsing. Two hours later, I walked into their living room.

“If you were going to have a nervous breakdown, I wanted to see it in person,” I said as I hugged her. She managed a half-hearted laugh as she told me to go back and see him. It had been eight days since I’d seen him last.

There was no more laughter in his room, only darkness. His eyes were sunken dramatically, his teeth and lips red from the bleeding of his dehydrated gums. He might have weighed 80 pounds. I could wrap my thumb and finger around his leg without touching his skin. He was nothing but a breathing corpse, unresponsive since early that morning. He hadn’t taken fluids in three days.

“How much longer do you think it can go on?” my mother said, choking back her tears. There was nothing to do but shake your head and wonder, too. The chaplain was on his way, but not to administer last rites. He had done that two weeks before. He was coming now to explain another option to my parents, whose physical and emotional strength had been sapped. They weren’t sure they could care for Scott anymore. They could move him to the hospice center, less than 10 miles from their house.

The chaplain assured them they had done everything possible, that virtually all patients moved from home to the hospice die within a day. That was their greatest wish now, that his suffering would end. He felt obligated to explain the options to Scott, and they were these: Die today at home or you’ll have to go to the hospital tomorrow.

The worse part was this: If he didn’t die by Wednesday, the service would have to wait until November 21. The chaplain would be out of town for 10 days, and they couldn’t, in



*Scott Missel:
To look at him in August
and think he’d be dead
in December seemed
preposterous*

good conscience, get a substitute. You pray for a lot of things in your life, but you never imagine one of them will be for your son to die.

In two months, my parents had left the house as a couple only once. With me in the house, they decided they’d run to the store to pick up a few groceries. It must have seemed like a two-week vacation.

While they were gone, I walked back into his room and put on one of his favorite Streisand CDs. I grabbed his hand and told him — not really knowing if he could even hear me — that I thought he might like to be serenaded into heaven by Barbra. And ever so slightly, he grabbed my hand. Maybe it was just a reflex, but I’d like to think he heard me, that in some way he was trying to say, “Thanks for thinking of me.”

My parents were home by 7:30. The indiscretion they most hoped to avoid they now had to deal with. He had become incontinent, so they had to change him and clean him. It was the task that disturbed them more than any. Changing him wasn’t as bad as having to handle the dead weight of a man made of nothing but skin and bones.

“We didn’t need any water because we would bathe him in our tears,” my mom would say later. Five minutes later my mom walked out of his room and said it wouldn’t be long. “How do you know?” I wondered. “You’ve been saying that for a month.”

“But this is different,” she said, then walked back to his room. She called to us five minutes later. It was 8:30. “I think he’s gone,” she said, tears streaming down her face. “He doesn’t have any blood pressure.”

Incredulous, my father said, “What do you mean? He’s still breathing.” But he wasn’t. His chest was heaving involuntarily, but no air was going in. After three heaves, he stopped. He was shrouded in peace.

“Dad, she’s right. He’s gone.”

The words finally sank in, unleashing a thunderstorm of sadness I’d never seen before. He collapsed on the bedside chair, sobbing, inconsolable. “Oh, Scotty, why ... why,” he said, over and over again. And I picked him up and held him like I’d never done before.

Brothers and sisters trickled in as the night wore on, taking turns calling friends and family who needed to know. The undertaker arrived by 11. His body was gone by midnight, taken to Buffalo to be cremated. The haunting memories of the past two months couldn’t be removed so easily.

NOVEMBER 10, 1994

We got the big room, at least the biggest the funeral parlor had. There were seats for about 100. By 9:45, 15 minutes before the service, it was clear the room wasn’t big enough. Relatives I hadn’t seen in 15 years came, and more friends than I’ll acquire in a lifetime. About half the people wound up standing in back or in the hallway. We figured later that more than 200 people came.

The chaplain spoke, eloquently and passionately, about Scott’s life, about tolerance, about governmental inaction in the battle against AIDS and about Christ’s unconditional love for all his children. He subtly belittled the hate-mongers who cloak their intolerance with the Bible.

I spoke, too, because I promised Scott I would. I was convinced I couldn’t do it, but just before my time came, I stared hard at his smiling portrait on the altar and found the strength.

I get paid to string words together, to try to make some sense of the world, so the least I could do was let people know that my brother’s life mattered, that his sexuality and deadly affliction had no bearing on the beauty of his soul or the strength of his character.

Even after he was gone, he urged people not to mourn his death. He had written a letter for a close friend from New York to read at the service.

“I may have lived only 31 years but, with all the hate and violence in the world, I was blessed with living with the most loving family ... and some of the best friends a person could have. They made the physical and mental pain so much easier to bear.”

Now we are the ones who bear the pain. ■

Tom Missel is a writer at The Times Herald, Olean, New York.

THE POST-CRESCENT, APPLETON, U.S.A.

GOODBYE *to* GOODLAND

Photographs by Michael Leschisin



One last look, and it's all over. Sean Mills, 11, climbs the centerfield wall to watch the last minor-league game, between the Foxes and Silver Hawks, at Goodland Field.

By Mike Woods

It was hard to believe, but nothing happened. Really. When the Appleton Foxes' Wilson Delgado lined out to South Bend third baseman Greg Norton at 9:51 p.m. on Monday, August 29, 1994, minor-league baseball officially completed its 54-year run at storied but crumbling Goodland Field. The Foxes were defeated by the South Bend Silver Hawks 8-1. Moments later, about 2,000 fans, mostly kids, stormed through the players' cage and took to the field as Foxes players gave away everything from helmets to fanny packs. Everything, including a pair of players' gloves, was taken. Well, not quite everything. Goodland itself went home unscathed. In a complete abandonment of baseball tradition, not to mention natural human behavior, no one in the season-high crowd of 3,492 attempted to pick up a base. Nary a soul went for a shovel to dig up home plate. Every nut and bolt on every bleacher seat remained intact and no living creature bothered to reach down for one blade of Goodland Field grass. They may not have wanted it to go, but they didn't want to take it home either.



Floyd Hammer sells raffle tickets on the final night of minor-league baseball at Goodland Field, Appleton. The Foxes bowed out with an 8-1 defeat to big rivals South Bend.



Above: It's the end of a sporting era. Helen Casey, right, and Adeline Buss have been watching baseball at Appleton's Goodland Field for nearly 40 years.



Above: Marge Hinchley, who grew up just six blocks from Goodland Field and attended games for nearly 50 years, gets an autograph from Foxes star pitcher Robert Krueger before the final game at the stadium. Right: Ryan McLead, 7, is given a helping hand by his mom, Carole.



THE INDEPENDENT, LONDON, ENGLAND

Iron fists: How the west was one

The West should not assume moral superiority, argues Noam Chomsky

By ROBERT FISK

Kuwait at the height of the latest fraudulent crisis was a good place to read Noam Chomsky's new book. America's legions were pouring into that tiny, rich, pliant country as Saddam Hussein's "elite" Republican Guard — some of them wearing mismatching boots, their uniforms frayed — were camped out in the desert around Basra.

No one dared display what Norman Podhoretz once called "sickly inhibitions against the use of military force." No form of journalistic challenge, no critical faculty could be employed to halt the television clamor for war. Saddam was threatening Kuwait again, and America was here to protect its ally. Suggest that things were not as they seemed — that this might have something to do with sanctions against Iraq and the fall in oil prices in the Arab Gulf states if sanctions were lifted — and you were met, as I was, with a question from an American television reporter: "You think Saddam's a nice guy?"

No, it was George Bush who thought the odious Saddam was a nice guy before the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, and it was the American press that failed to uncover (until it was too late) the White House's intervention for another \$1-billion loan guarantee for Iraq because Saddam's regime was "very important to U.S. interests in the Middle East," "influential in the peace process" and "a key to maintaining stability in the region." And so, of course, it still is. If we can't get rid of Saddam, we'll keep him around until we need him to oppose Iran once more, which is why we ignore the Iraqi democratic opposition.

As Chomsky puts it: "They were saying quite the wrong things: pleading for democracy before the invasion of Kuwait when Washington and its allies were tending to the needs of Saddam Hussein and their own pocketbooks; for pursuit of peaceful means while the United States and Britain moved to restrict the conflict to the area of violence after Saddam broke the rules in August 1990; and for support for the anti-Saddam resistance in March 1991, while Washington returned to its preference for Saddam's 'iron fist' in the interests of 'stability.'"

Watching CNN and Sky and hearing the same old BBC voices emphasizing the cheerful preparedness of Allied troops — a sad, tired rerun of the 1991 war — Chomsky became a kind of antidote, the ultimate injection against propaganda attack. For every two hours of satellite television news, read 20 pages of Chomsky, and you were almost im-

mune to the harmful effect of what he calls the "doctrinal managers," the respectable intellectual elite who can justify the unjustifiable by constant reference to the moral superiority of the West.

Chomsky takes as his motif for the 20th-century New World Order Churchill's contention that "the government of the world must be entrusted to satisfied nations." Dissatisfied nations, of course, were led by the Soviet Union, whose Bolshevik progenitors dissolved the Constituent Assembly, the act that George Kennan regarded as the real start of the Cold War. The British and French set up their mandates in the Middle East, which were perhaps the kernel of this century's self-interested humanitarian concern, wherein lay the

up warlords, narco-traffickers and terrorists under the guise of fighting Communism and, most recently, Islamic fundamentalism.

This is pretty much the Chomsky thesis, argued with his usual frighteningly convincing references, supported by the scorn of a man who has grown weary of the establishment press and, in the United States, the intellectual orthodoxy of the academic community. *World Orders* is thus an angry history book; but it is not a chronicle of events, rather a record of the continuity of guilt. The hypocrisy against which Chomsky so convincingly rages is that of the West, though there are times when — if only to find a benchmark for the scale of our own outrages — it would be comforting to hear

more about the atrocities of our political opponents. And can all those journalists really deserve Chomsky's scorn when he fills 24 pages with references to their articles?

Yet his analysis of the history "hole" — down which all inconvenient facts are consigned when U.S. policy changes — is devastating. How come, after years blocking Arab initiatives on the Middle East, the United States suddenly discovered a "peace process" once the Arabs had lost their Soviet backer?

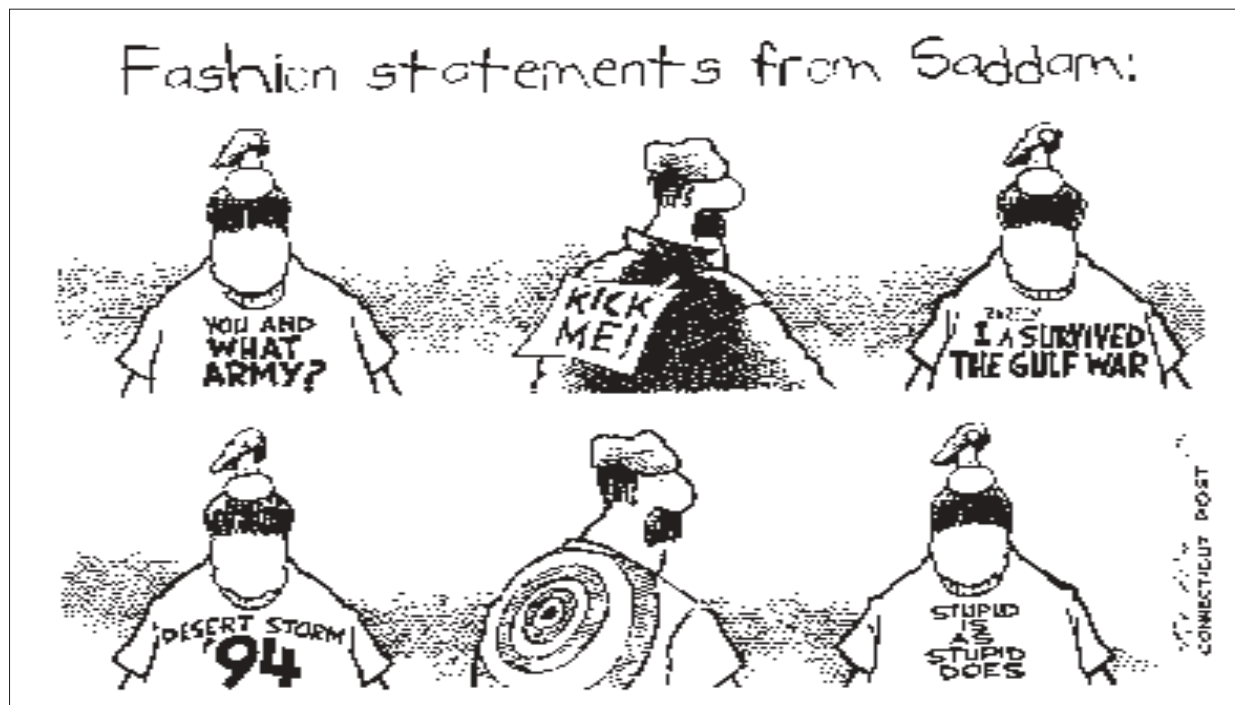
How come, after Sadat's original offer of peace in 1971, journalists were able to claim that only at Camp David had Egypt sought peace? How come recognition could only be vouchsafed to the PLO once it was bankrupt and

broken? How come Arafat had to "renounce" rather than condemn "terrorism," while Israel did not have to renounce its treatment of the Palestinians?

But these double standards are now so familiar that they are accepted — in the same way that anyone who questions the unfairness of the PLO-Israeli accord is now automatically condemned as "against peace" and "on the side of terrorism."

And, we saw the journalistic conformity when King Hussein was preparing to sign a peace with Israel this week. We were told about the "hand of friendship" and not reminded that Jordan has given up its struggle while Israel still occupies east Jerusalem and almost all the West Bank (or the "disputed territories," as the State Department now wishes us to call them). The most we can hope for, I suppose, is that every reporter might one day carry *World Orders* around in his back pocket, along with the notebook in which he writes the word "terrorist" so many times every week. ■

Robert Fisk is a journalist at The Independent. This review was written as U.S. troops massed on the border of Iraq and Kuwait during one of several "crises" since the end of the Gulf War.



BOOK REVIEW

World Orders, Old and New

NOAM CHOMSKY

Columbia University Press, \$Can.34.75

origins of Operation Provide Comfort and Operation Restore Hope and the rest. And U.S. marines dissolved the Haitian National Assembly, which had refused a constitution giving U.S. corporations the right to purchase Haitian land. Woodrow Wilson (he of the Fourteen Points and the demand for national self-determination for all peoples) imposed a treaty on Nicaragua that granted perpetual rights to construct a canal, thus preventing any competitors to the Panama Canal. From here on — barring the brief alliance with the repulsive "Uncle Joe" Stalin in 1941 — America's foreign policy hinged upon the mythology of the Cold War, projecting the power of the strong over the weak, propping

The Columnists

CONNECTICUT POST, BRIDGEPORT, U.S.A.

Getting set for Mr. Bill

By CHARLES WALSH

Walking the sun-streaked streets in downtown Bridgeport a scant 21 hours before the city was to see its first visit from a sitting (or standing for that matter) president since Harry Truman whistle-stopped us in the dim '40s, no sign of presidential fever is apparent. The man with the dreadlocks and black leather jacket who has taken up residence in McLevy Park over the past few weeks is having a quiet conversation with his reflection in a nearby store window. If he was excited about the impending arrival of the commander-in-chief, the keeper of the red phone, Chelsea's dad, he isn't letting on.

A yellow Jeep parked at the curb across from McDonald's, just a few feet from the front door of the Holiday Inn (nee Hilton), where Mr. Bill was to dine on steak and rub elbows with a few grand-per-plate intimates, is also talking to itself.

"Warning," it says in an eerie alien-from-Mars voice, "perimeter violation. Step back beyond five feet of the vehicle or the alarm will sound ... five ... four ... three ... two ... one."

No alarm sounds. It would not have mattered. Nobody pays the slightest attention to car alarms, even talking ones, anymore. The alarm/voice rattled out its warning and countdown every time a pedestrian came within five feet of the yellow Jeep.

At the busy bus stop at the corner of Main and John streets, somebody has dumped what looks to be a large order of

fully-ketchuped French fries. People are stepping in them and tracking mashed potatoes and crimson condiment in all directions along the sidewalk.

It looks like an L.A. crime scene, maybe two murders.

Like a lot of other places, Fridays are cheerier than other days on the streets of downtown Bridgeport. Or at least they seem that way. People are off for the weekend and have the remnants of paychecks in their pockets. The discount stores do big business in sweatshirts and snappy Korean sneakers.

Not far away from a couple trying on new sweatshirts, men are busy mowing McLevy Park grass, which could have benefited more from a dose of Minoxadyl.

Other workers are planting colorful bunches of mums in the barren disc of dirt at the center of sidewalks that roll like the North Sea in December. It's the Clinton crew. They have been dispatched by a downtown sprucer-upper group to try to make the old burg look more pleasing to the prez's passing eye.

But, hard as the crew worked, it was kind of like trying to make your old Uncle Lou presentable for a wedding by putting a new handkerchief in the pocket of the suit he bought just before D-Day. It can't hurt.

I never could quite grasp the logic behind these grass painting operations aimed at impressing visiting dignitaries. Wouldn't it be wiser when a guy with his hands on the purse strings is coming to make the place look as shoddy as possible?

I mean, if I was Mayor Joe Ganim, I'd



have hung signs that said Abandoned Building on every empty hulk along the Clinton motorcade route. Instead of displaying the time and temperature on that electric sign that overlooks I-95, I'd have it flash the current jobless rate and city debt.

Instead of spiriting Clinton into a soundproof dining hall behind tinted

windows, he might have gotten something out of a quick stroll over the hills of McLevy to see the new mums and maybe have a chat with himself in the magic store window. ■

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Charles Walsh writes *Fair Game*, a bi-weekly column for the *Connecticut Post*, in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Featuring articles from ♦ Australia ♦ Canada ♦ South Africa ♦ U.S.A.

THE STAR, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

The day I saw South Africa shrink

By SHAUN JOHNSON

On the wall of a smartly appointed office in The Hague are two large maps. One shows the world in the shape we are familiar with from school days. South Africa is an imposing chunk near the bottom, and the Netherlands is a pinhead in a busy cluster up towards the top. It makes a South African feel quite significant, looking at that map.

The second one also shows the world, but something very dramatic has happened to it: Africa has shrunk to a spindly spine, the tiniest and most frail of the continents, with South Africa a not-very-expansive blob at its southern extremity.

Japan, by sharp contrast, has ballooned to a huge size, as have other geographically small countries such as the United Kingdom, Taiwan and South Korea. The United States, Germany and France occupy vast spaces — as is to be expected — but it is odd to see our land of wide open spaces mutating into a much smaller mass than those of, say, Switzerland, Belgium ... and the Netherlands.

This strange second map is the work of the Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency and is based on figures supplied by the World Bank. A clever graphic artist has taken statistics of relative economic power and represented countries according to those proportions instead of their land masses. I wish you could see it; the redrawn map is transfixing.

The party of visiting South Africans, of which I was a member, sat staring at it on that rainy day in The Hague.

Afterwards, we looked at each other kind of sheepishly, freshly reminded of our beloved country's less than overwhelming economic significance in the world. The point was driven home with a sledgehammer subsequently on the visit.

Geographically, South Africa is 29 times the size of the Netherlands. But its budget is less than a third of the size of Holland's. South Africa has a population of 40 million against Holland's 15 million, and our population is growing at 2.6 percent a year, opposed to their 1.7 percent.

The average per capita income in the Netherlands is R63 884. South Africa's is R7 227. The average age of the Netherlands' population is about 26. Ours is way, way younger than that. And so on.

The pint-sized country below sea level has done an inestimably better job of running itself profitably than we have, and I have to say that this statement would probably be valid whether the apartheid nightmare had occurred here or not.

None of the countries of the southern hemisphere manages even to retain its



ILLUSTRATION: DAVID ANDERSON

original size in the redrawn map, while so many of the north have expanded.

The Netherlands is the quintessential example of a country not overly blessed with natural resources but which has more than made up for that with brainpower, forward planning and hard work.

Recognizing its useful geographical placement as a gateway to a continent, its pioneers knew that prosperity lay for them in distribution; their distribution techniques are now so good that — take just one example — flowers grown all over the world are auctioned in Holland in an industry worth billions of rands. Why Holland? Because they thought of it first and do it better than anyone else. One can only wonder how much more prosperous the country would have been had it been given gold under the ground, like us.

I recount this sobering litany in order

to work again towards a familiar moral, more topical with each day that passes: We South Africans have to start recognizing that our international "flavor of the month" status is a temporary phenomenon.

Soon, we will begin to be judged according to the harsher, unsentimental criteria of the late 20th century, and we will be found wanting.

Far from coming to terms with our own limitations and viewing them as challenges to be turned into opportunities, we still indulge in the culture of entitlement — as if it is the duty of the rest of the world to keep us on social welfare and forgive us our idiosyncrasies as we so readily forgive them ourselves.

This culture cuts several ways. It is at work every time a politician lists for potential investors the "conditions" under which they will be "allowed" to come into our country. It is at work when we convince ourselves that the world needs us more than we need it.

It is at work when people who have illegally occupied accommodation that does not belong to them inform the owner of what rent they are "prepared" to pay. It is at work in a country echoing daily to the words "we demand" instead of "we will work to achieve."

It is also at work among those formerly privileged classes who believe that the political change that has taken place is sufficient and that life can go on precisely as before.

We need to learn a little humility in a hurry and to start sweating a bit. Otherwise, we risk having the world snigger privately behind our backs at our inefficiencies wrapped in pomposity, while gradually losing interest. ■

Shaun Johnson was political editor of *The Star*, Johannesburg, when he wrote this *Undercurrent Affairs* column. He is now editor of the *Weekend Star*.

THE AGE, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

Get your kicks at Filthy Rick's

By SHARON GRAY

Iwent to see Filthy Rick the other night, not that I'm one for going out much these days. Call it the loneliness of the long-distance writer — not that I'm lonely, I assure you, but I'm still writing that biography I told you about. I've set myself a rigorous five-year plan for the job, using as much brain and self-discipline as I can muster, and I'm about halfway through.

Writers are the most boring, self-obsessed people in the world. It's isolated, unsupervised work, and there's no one to say "I'm working hard" to, except me,

and I'm satisfied. In fact, life feels pretty good just now. I'm enjoying myself immensely after what seems like 100 years of sorrow. I've even started running again.

I'll never run like I used to, flying into the wind and rain. I thought I'd have to give it up forever after my hopes and knees crumbled, but the kid taught me this funny, broken little trot he learned in PE. You take tiny little steps as slow and as little as you like, and I like. I've started to build up a bit of distance, and, slowly, the sad, heavy slabs of my body are starting to fall off and I'm beginning to feel good.

In the past when I felt good, my reaction was generally to set about making myself feel as bad as possible by liberal applications of calefacients, in hyperactive social circumstances. Now feeling good feels like something I don't want to destroy any more. I've out-drunk, out-smoked, out-shouted myself for so many years and the truth is I'm sick of it. I am as full of noise as I want to be for a while.

I don't want to do a whole lot of things I used to do any more. I don't want to have a whole lot of conversations over and over again, and I don't want to gossip or, rather, I wish I didn't want to gossip. This means I hardly ever



ILLUSTRATION: DAVID ANDERSON

go out, which is not necessarily a good thing. So, while the kid went to his first school social, I crept over the river to visit Filthy Rick's.

The world may tumble and roar, wine glasses crash to the floor, effort and struggle and talk talk talk, sofas and cushions, soft heating and cold soda, cleverness clattering among the coffee cups — there's none of this at Filthy Rick's.

Thirty years ago he was a merchant banker, but he lacked the required moral fortitude to mess around with men in suits. Five years ago he was a builder's laborer, which suited him fine until he did in his back.

"Your hands have gone soft, Filthy."

"Yeah, Jack, it's been two years off a shovel. Three blows on a crowbar the

other day, and I had a blister. I'm a wreck, Jack." He calls everybody Jack.

A great stump sits in the middle of the kitchen to prop up the long fence palings he feeds into the open fireplace of an old wood stove. A small, valve wireless sits on the table like a brown owl, presiding over a clutter of amazing things. There are interesting lumps of wood, various cogs, little propellers, bits of shiny metal — jewels plucked from the suburban muckheap, an eccentric museum collected by a classic car expert with no money.

He makes me wonderful rich coffee on the impaled woodstove and serves it in his best, least chipped mug. The day's newspaper is folded to the crossword and he is reading *Hag's Harvest* by H. V. Morton, one of my mother's old books about

some blokes who go searching the world for the ugliest woman they can find.

The rest of the little wooden house is cold and dark and empty, as only bachelors' houses can be. You leave your coat on at Rick's, and he just wears all his clothes at once.

We've been friends forever — our grandparents knew each other — and we play this little game that we're not in the city at all but huddled around a cosy stove way out in the silent hills, where the sheep press together to keep warm and sleep on the roads to get away from the frost. For some reason it always works better in winter.

Then, crash bang, one of his drunken mates arrives full of noise and bluster and talking about movies and sports results

and a whole bagful of ratty things. I look at the yellow-faced old clock above the stove for some kind of excuse to leave, because I know I can't stay. Filthy knows too and even sees me to the door, which is a bit sentimental and, of course, there are no sheep asleep on the road after all.

I get in the car and go pick up the kid from his thumping, black-room, teenage social, where you can hardly tell the girls from the boys because they are all dressed the same. Remember our school dances? My God. Bright lights, corsages, dance programs, hair spray and seriously silly dresses. With an introduction like that, no wonder I've become a hermit. ■

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Sharon Gray's off-beat Heart to Heart column appears twice weekly in The Age.

THE CAMBRIDGE REPORTER, CANADA

The wrong place to talk about stripping

By BOB GREEN

I have an elegant antique kitchen chair that I want to strip the varnish off and restore. It was given to me by Ms. Elliott of St. George shortly before she passed on, so it is a real keepsake, and I want to restore it right.

Few people know more about restoring furniture than my old friend, Leonard Iseler, who for years taught industrial arts and woodworking at St. Andrews School.

I gave him a call for his expert advice, but you can't do justice to the subject over the phone so I suggested we go to a nice quiet restaurant where we could talk furniture restoring and relax in peace and quiet. I suggested we go to the Traveller's on Hespeler Road.

Leonard said he'd rather not go there because he had heard that they had nude dancers, and he didn't want to meet any of his old elementary school pupils.

He wasn't kidding. One night several years ago we went to the Sulphur Springs Hotel in Preston to discuss picture frame restoring, and he spotted one of his former pupils on the stage, stark naked. She spotted him too and, after finishing her act with the splits, she hopped over to our table and said: "Mr. Iseler, sir! What on earth are you doing in a place like this?"

So he didn't want that experience again. Also, he has a recurring nightmare that one of these dancers will be from the Mendelssohn Choir, which his brother conducts.

I assured him that the Traveller's had been reborn and was more like Winston's than the Sulphur Springs. I cited an article in a recent edition of *The Reporter* by Kevin Swayze, in which he quoted the manager of the Traveller's as saying: "Nine out of 10 guys come here to meet

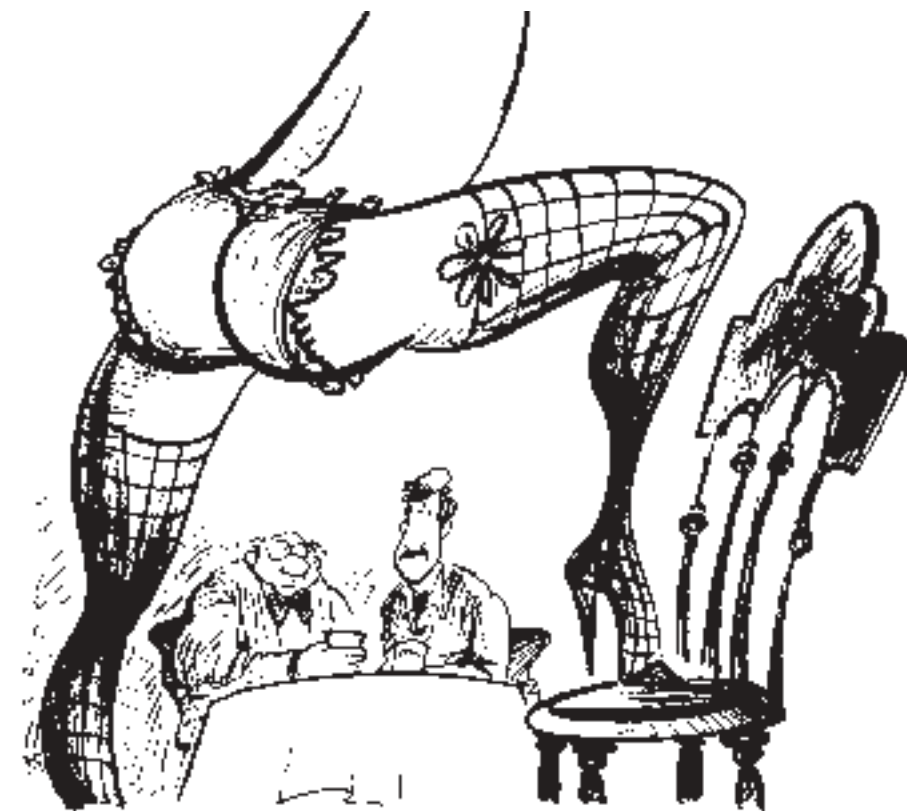


ILLUSTRATION: DAVID ANDERSON

their buddies and be away from the women. It's a boys' club."

That sounded like peace and quiet, so in no time Leonard and I were there, relaxing at a table. There must have been 50 other guys in there escaping from the women and having a few laughs.

I must admit that one drawback to discussing furniture stripping at the Traveller's is that the music is so loud you have to shout.

Leonard shouted that most furniture experts use the dry stripping method. Dipping weakens the joints. Purists, he said, even shun the Stanley Scraper and shave off the varnish with shards of glass.

"WHAT?"

"SHARDS OF BROKEN GLASS!" he hollered.

A waitress, thinking we had spilled something, rushed over. When I shouted to her that we were discussing stripping furniture, she said: "Well, it takes all kinds, doesn't it. One man who comes in here likes to undress Barbie dolls."

We ordered a beer.

By this time, the strobe lights and colored spots were bouncing off the lovely Emelia, who was pinwheeling, naked, around a steel pole just six feet over our heads.

"HOW IS THE VARNISH ON THIS BED?" Leonard asked.

"IT'S A CHAIR!"

We went on hollering about varnish that sinks in so deep it can't be scraped off.

"OLD PIECES SHOULDN'T BE STRIPPED AT ALL," he said.

Just then our waitress, returning with the beer, said that none of the girls dancing were over 30. She added that it was a classy place and that gynecologists dropped in for lunch.

After the girls finish making love to the steel poles on stage, they carry little plastic platforms down among the tables, where they perform for individuals at \$10 a shot.

At one point, we had platform girls performing on each side of us (one of them had at least a 40 D cup) and in hindsight I must admit it was a bit distracting.

"WHY NOT TAKE THIS DRY SINK ..."

"IT'S A CHAIR."

"TAKE THIS CHAIR AND URETHANE IT."

A guy at the next table thought urethane was a funny word and said the washrooms were in a corner to the right.

"Don't go urethaning in that little room to the left, the one with the little lights twinkling around the door. That's the VIP lounge and you might pee on someone's back, ha, ha, ha."

We gave up on the chair and ordered another beer.

The manager was certainly right when he said that the guys come here to get away from the women. They come to get away from the women at home.

We haven't abandoned the old chair. I know a quiet lounge in Brantford where we can really get into furniture stripping. It's called the Red Onion. ■

.....
Bob Green is an artist and writer and long-time Cambridge resident. His column appears bi-weekly in the Reporter.

Fright turns on a new light

By PETER DUFFY

It was quite the most unnerving experience. No, more than unnerving, it was quite frightening. For the first time in a long time, I felt the metallic taste of fear at the back of my throat.

It happened a week ago. I was meeting a colleague at a downtown Halifax hotel. When I got there, I felt the call of nature. (One cup of office coffee too many that morning.)

I found the downstairs washrooms and pushed open the door. The place was empty. At least, it seemed so. I had no sense of anyone else being there.

A few moments later, when I'd finished, I turned to walk to the washbasins and my heart almost stopped in shock.

In the shadows, about 20 feet away, was another man. I hadn't heard him come in, and to suddenly see him there startled me.

He was in his mid-to-late 30s and was quite well dressed in a green blazer, light-colored slacks and a light shirt. I don't remember him having a tie.

In every respect, he was just an ordinary-looking man. Except there was something about him that put me on alert instantly.

For one thing, he'd materialized out of nowhere. More disturbing, he was over where the sinks were, where I was heading. And he was just leaning against the wall — watching me.

I felt my "danger radar" click on, and the hairs on my neck stood up.

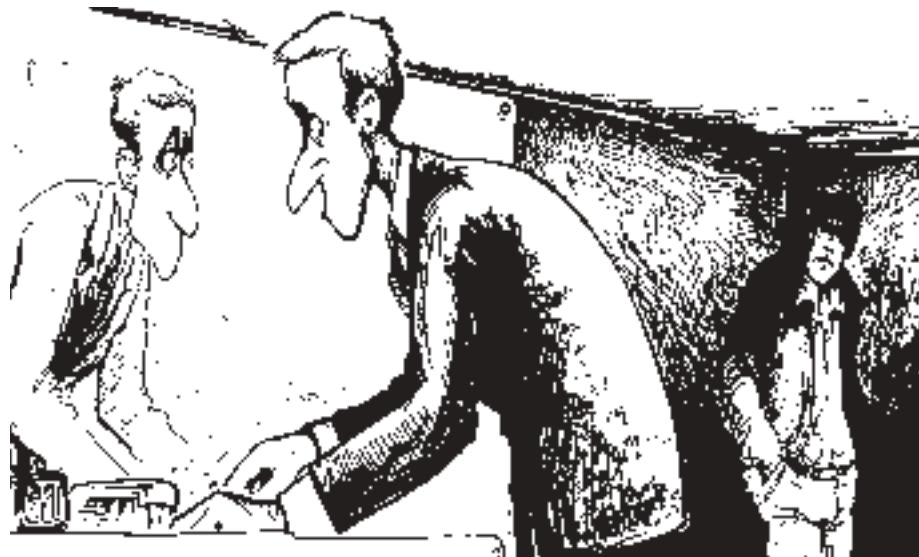


ILLUSTRATION: DAVID ANDERSON

So why didn't I just get the hell out of there? That's the strangest thing. I continued walking to the sink to wash my hands, almost like I was committed. My legs were carrying me into some kind of danger because my brain and my senses were having trouble sorting out exactly what the danger was.

Besides the confusion, there was also the male factor. It was almost as though I refused to be intimidated. Stupid, really.

The whole time all this was happening (whatever THIS was), the stranger hadn't said a word. He just continued to lean there, in the corner. In the shadows — watching me.

My mind was working overtime. What the hell was happening here? Was he going to mug me? Or slug me? Surely

not. This is Halifax. These kinds of things don't happen in broad daylight in downtown Halifax.

So I stood at the sink, washing my hands with my back to him. And finally my brain and my instincts and whatever else it is that's helped us survive since prehistoric times came into synch and screamed at me:

"GET OUT OF HERE!"

I did, not even waiting to dry my hands.

A little later, chatting with the colleague I'd come to the hotel to meet, I mentioned what had happened.

She looked concerned. "I guess you haven't heard the rumors," she said. "Seems the washrooms of this hotel have become quite a meeting place for gays

this summer."

It was news to me. But looking back, it seemed to fit. I did remember there being something sexual mixed in with the menace.

"You should report it," my colleague suggested.

I shook my head. "I've got nothing against gays," I said. "Anyway, he didn't do anything. Never even said anything."

At home that evening, I related the incident to my friend. She listened in silence until I was finished.

"Believe it or not," she said at last, "I know exactly what you've experienced. In fact, I'd bet most women would."

She told me that, as a woman, she can count on at least one experience daily of being made to feel uneasy by a male stranger.

With my own fear and panic still fresh, her words made me feel very sad. And angry. For her and all women. How awful that anyone should have to endure this menace as a way of life.

Now here we are, a week later. And the whole experience is fading from my consciousness. I'm right back going wherever and whenever I damn well please, even public washrooms. Without a second thought. For anyone. It seems walking a mile in another's shoes may no longer be enough. Some of us may be destined to walk two miles. ■

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Peter Duffy's column appears Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays in The Chronicle-Herald in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

HOOT, COLUMBUS, U.S.A.

Will soaps air cleaner laundry?

By IRV OSLIN

While President Clinton was off in the Middle East last month, far weightier issues were being discussed in Santa Monica, California — at America's first "Soap Opera Summit."

Daytime drama honchos gathered in Santa Monica and hobnobbed with the likes of Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders and Jane Fonda.

They discussed such weighty issues as sex, social responsibility and whether Brooke and Ridge will seek an annulment when Brooke finds out that she and Ridge are actually the same person. When the bubbles cleared, it was declared that the soap opera industry

would try to clean up its act.

Now soap opera fans needn't whip themselves into a lather. More than likely, this proclamation won't translate into a reduction of the current 6.64 implied or "tastefully depicted" sexual encounters per episode. It may mean that when the young get restless, they'll either be practicing oral sex (as in talking about it) or using condoms.

The latter should provide some golden opportunities for product placement.

Some might find it ironic that Fonda — whose steamy cinematic exploits in the '60s earned her such unflattering nicknames as "Jane Fondle" — would be stumping for responsible sex on television. Perhaps even more ironic are some of her comments at the soap summit.

Regarding the daytime drama audi-

ence in general, Fonda said, "They're kids who aren't in school. They're people who aren't employed. They're looking for dreams and role models."

Role models? These people aren't looking for role models. Frustrated housewives, kids playing hooky and the chronically unemployed are looking for escapism.

They're looking for vicarious experience. They're looking to see people blessed with perfect hair and nice teeth get their comeuppance. Injecting a few messages about responsible sex isn't going to change these people's lives. You've heard of preaching to the converted? This is more like preaching to the furniture. Fonda also stated that, "Television has to fill a void because families are collapsing."

Hell's bells! Is this woman daft or what? If anything, television created that void. Granted, TV has brought American families together.

It has replaced the hearth — sequestering mom, dad, sis and brother in one room. But to what end? So they could ignore one another? (Unless saying "While you're up, grab me a Diet Coke" counts as positive interpersonal communications.)

If soap opera producers want to nudge viewers towards sexual responsibility, more power to them. However, it might be more worthwhile for them to tout the virtues of total abstinence — from television. ■

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Irv Oslin is editor of Hoot, a satirical weekly in Columbus, Ohio.

WINNIPEG FREE PRESS, CANADA

She went. She camped. She almost conquered

By LINDOR REYNOLDS

Friday 9 a.m.: The car is packed. I have yellow rubber pants in the trunk. This is not my usual holiday. 11 a.m.: I arrive at the Manitoba Inn, just outside Portage la Prairie. It's crawling with women in sensible footwear. Some of them are carrying firearms. They look hearty. They look ready to hunt and fish. This ain't no Tupware convention, pal.

It's the first Canadian Becoming An Outdoors-Woman course, three days of intensive training in the womanly arts of jigging, casting, shooting and stir-frying venison. The 40 women who have signed up are eager to learn more about the great outdoors.

I'm eager to survive without shooting off my foot or being lost in the woods. As I check in, I briefly regret all those Bubba jokes. I'm about to spend the weekend with a large number of Bubbettes. I just hope they're not all *Free Press* subscribers.

11:30 a.m.: Darlene Garnham of the Manitoba Wildlife Federation gives the opening remarks. She warns us that all of the activities we'll be pursuing in the next three days "have a certain amount of peril or danger about them."

Great. I'm going to be the first journalist in history who dies while covering a convention in a small Manitoba town.

Noon: Lunch is friendly. My table is made up of women who are already very big on camping and hunting. One woman asks me who I volunteer for. I bleat: "My daughter's school" before I realize she meant which outdoors group. I blush fetchingly. An hour into it and they realize I'm an impostor.

There's a stuffed buffalo head overlooking the dining room. I wonder who

brought it from home.

Best lunch-hour quote: "You know it's true love when you can survive hunting together."

1 p.m.: My Basic Fishing Skills course begins. It's 3 1/2 hours of tips, techniques and icky details about worms. Best advice from the instructor: "You've got to start thinking like a fish." I miss an entire hour of instruction while I gnaw on this knowledge. I also learn that fish belly makes great bait. Because I'm still thinking like a fish, this is horrifying news.

When we get to the part where all good outdoors women learn how to put a leech on a hook, the room starts to blur. When the instructor says: "You get to the head part that has the sucker and you put the hook right through the sucker."

I start taking rapid, fish-type gulps of air. There are no tips for operating a bass-o-matic.

6 p.m.: Dinner is followed by door prizes. I snag a very nice Thermos and a bottle of Doe-In-Rut Buck Lure. As I make my way back to the table, I hear several women muttering that they wanted the doe pee. I decided to double-lock my hotel room door before bed.

We're treated to a fashion show — an hour of delegates modeling camouflage outfits, hunting jackets and coveralls with trees on them. No one from *Vogue* could attend, so I scribble furiously.

Saturday, 7 a.m.: I'm-a-going-fishing, everybody's fishing, I'm a-going fishing now.

I meet Dallas Stephenson, my fishing guide, a man who makes Grizzly Adams look like a weenie. We launch his boat in a fog so thick that the fish aren't going to be able to see my lures. Dallas turns on his fish sonar, a device that resembles a



ILLUSTRATION: DAVID ANDERSON

video game and exists purely to taunt me.

The sonar proves the river is full of fish. It proves they are swimming under, around and quite likely over the boat. It proves they are saying "neener, neener" as they turn their gills up at my bait.

It proves that all the technology in the world can't make a fish bite. We return to the hotel and lie our faces off.

1 p.m.: I'm auditing two courses, archery and camping. I have a natural talent with a bow and arrow and quit before I'm hurt. My classmates don't follow my lead. One of them gets a bosom caught in her bow, an experience that apparently compares with childbirth on the pain-o-meter.

I rejoin camping, where I learn that, on a simple day trip, "anything can happen anytime." I also learn that good campers don't wear deodorant, perfume or hair spray. The point, as I see it, is to smell and look bad while possibly courting disaster. Some fun.

We sample some Gourmet Camping Food, a label that's as honest as Healthy Junk Food. The instructors claim we're eating fettuccine primavera. I suspect a few worms are missing from the tackle box.

6 p.m.: Dinner is preceded by a nice little sampling of wild game, cooked by my fellow delegates. I have a firm policy of not eating anything that might fall under the category of dead deer or other friends of Bambi, so I pass.

The evening entertainment begins

with two delegates demonstrating their knack for bird calling. Before anyone can pull out their accordion and turn this into a real party, I head for bed.

Sunday, 6 a.m.: I am not hung over. Many of my fellow huntresses are. It's a sullen lot that gathers to learn how to survive in the back woods. When our instructor tells us that worms are actually quite yummy when they're dried and crushed into a powder, the party crowd moans.

I learn how to catch a fish with a piece of rope, how to build a lean-to out of branches and how to construct a bed from spruce boughs. I start fantasizing about cutting down on the grocery bill and redecorating the house.

The instructor lets me shoot the flare gun to summon help. He neglects to tell me that I'll be deaf as a post when I'm rescued. Ah, but who cares? I'll be well rested and full of worms.

11:30 a.m.: I'm on the road again, heading back home, my suitcase stuffed with fishing lures and deer pee. I know that if I had to survive outdoors, I could do it. For at least 15 minutes.

Technically, I can talk to the animals and lure fish into my homemade net. Practically, we better not move too far away from a 7-Eleven. But I'm a graduate. I survived the weekend. I am woman, hear me roar.

Lindor Reynolds is a columnist and sportswriter at the Winnipeg Free Press in Manitoba.

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METROTIMES, DETROIT, U.S.A.

Leftist, incorrect and proud

By JACK LESSENBERRY

Some of my loyal readers may have figured out by now that I am not exactly a right-winger. Matter of fact, I am not only a Hillary-loving, non-religious, gun-hating pinko, I am something worse: a self-described liberal.

As a teacher, I have always tried to make a special effort to help women and minorities realize their potential — and to be sensitive to the concerns and world views of cultures different from my Nickelodeon-inspired own.

But for the last few years, there has been an ugly new spirit abroad, largely on campuses but also now in the wider workplace — a spirit that threatens academic and intellectual freedom — and it is mainly our fault, fellow liberals.

What the name liberal usually means today is a sort of McCarthyism of the left. Political correctness, as currently understood, is the dogma that nothing should ever be raised that might make any group feel uncomfortable, particularly minorities.

Should a professor or a boss do so — even by accident or with the purest intentions — he or she is liable to have reputation and career ruined. *The Wall Street Journal* reports that Gerald Gee, a popular journalism teacher at a black college in Florida, urged a class to seize the initiative. After warning that he was about to use an offensive term, the professor said, “Anyone who doesn’t take advantage of the opportunities for themselves may be guilty of having what some would call a ‘nigger mentality’ — the sort of thinking

that can keep us on the back of the bus forever.”

Malcolm X used to tell blacks stronger things than that every day of the week. But Gee is white — and the university is moving to fire him. Never mind that a black student collected signatures from 50 other students supporting Gee and protesting that he was not a racist. He had “violated PC.”

What’s wrong with this picture?

Simply this: Colleges are supposed to make people intellectually uncomfortable, rattle their chains, make them think. Social progress often starts with ideas that disturb people, in the way the idea that the Earth went around the sun disturbed the Pope in 1635 or the notion that all men are created equal disturbed King George in 1776 and George Wallace in 1962.

But we’re abandoning that now, and that frightens me. What I think bothers me is that our new tyrants are not Rush Limbaughs. They are by and large so-called liberals, feminists and, in some cases, self-righteous minorities who think they own the whole truth and want to impose it on the world. Cathy Young, a columnist who has spent time in Moscow and knows left-wing fascism when she sees it, had a piece recently about a professor at the University of New Hampshire who gave this vivid example of a simile to a writing class: “Belly dancing is like Jello on a plate with a vibrator under the plate.”

Some PC women complained, and he was suspended for a year and ordered to undergo counseling — at his own expense, Joe Stalin would have been proud.



ILLUSTRATION: DAVID ANDERSON

A milder version of the same thing, I should confess, recently happened to me. I told a class a story I had been told as a student and have repeated for years: The difference between journalism and making love is that in journalism you don’t foreplay, you just cut to the chase. One student (who hadn’t even done the assignment) stalked out and filed a police report against me.

I felt terrible for two days and told an inquisitor I would not use that story again. That was a mistake; I did nothing wrong, and I intend to keep shaking students up, even if they fire me; I may even make some of them read books.

What is especially ironic is that some of those who promote PC are the same people who howled the loudest against it when it was right, who didn’t want controversial ideas on the campus. Our newly canonized national saint, Richard Nixon, once tried to get a professor named Eugene Genovese fired for suggesting that the capitalist system may not always have your best interest at heart. Other Babbitts howled when other professors said there were reasons to think the Vietnam War was not a Good Idea.

Most campuses beat off the barbarians

then. Now, many of the barbarians are within our gates, and I am worried. The first time I heard the term politically correct was at Michigan State University, on May 4, 1970, the day the Ohio National Guard shot to death four students who were protesting the Vietnam War.

That afternoon, as stunned students huddled, I saw a popular graduate assistant striding through a crowd, gloriously naked — except for a scowl of hatred and a sign: “F*** the system.” That was, one girl said admiringly, “absolutely the politically correct thing to do.” Parading around pantless seemed logical in a world where students were shot down. But there were liberals then who would have defended an intellectually honest conservative’s right to support the war.

Today, I suspect many people, some with PhDs, are afraid of the honest debate I think we desperately need on just who we are and where this society is going. We hush up our differences the way Victorians hid the crazy aunt in the attic.

Trouble is, Auntie isn’t getting better, and the virus isn’t going away. ■

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Jack Lessenberry is a columnist at MetroTimes, an alternative newspaper in Detroit, Michigan.

POSITIVELY THE LAST WORD

Desperately seeking a superwoman

The ad sailed across my desk ... “Wanted Woman With Four Breasts. Call Dean,” it said. So I did. Oh, sure, I know you cynics out there reading this are sniggering. You think I was attracted by the seedy and tawdry aspects of this advert. A voyeur-in-journalist’s-clothing.

But you’re wrong. I’m normal, just like you. And curious. I just wanted to find out what could have driven Dean to such a desperate plea.

His message demanded immediate at-

tention. Was this a bald-faced grab for money? Probably. Or was Dean just being a good businessman, looking for a grand gesture to make the business expansion of his Show World Center something really special? After the red velvet curtains had been stapled securely to the walls and the new coat of Staingard dried on the theater seats, did he realize he needed more. A competitive edge, perhaps? Would Dean stand astride Mount Olympus as Striptease Titan of the Big A when he found his new Venus?

And, even if he did succeed in his hedonistic crusade, how would he be remembered? There’s no special place in the Smithsonian for men of his ilk, no gleaming Oscar to take home. Like all men of true foresight before him, he will have to wait for history to judge him.

But I’m musing. Filling space. We’ll never know whether Dean found his Holy Grail because he didn’t answer my pleading messages. Even though I used my I’m-just-an-innocent-journalist-with-no-evil-intent voice.

