

Painting by Dylan Stone

Insight by Troy Bowers

ne Sunday afternoon in August nearly three years ago, I was at a family reunion in Idlewild Park. At one point that afternoon, I was sitting at a wooden picnic table covered by a thin plastic cloth, shuffling my feet in a shallow pool of tiny stones that covered the pavilion's cement floor. For the moment, boredom was my only companion as I sat between periods of downing home-cooked food, listening to relatives talking and the occasional blast of a train horn off in the distance Suddenly, I felt the bench vibrate ever so slightly, and I could tell by how the table felt weighed down that somebody had taken a seat to my left.

"Hi, Troy," someone said.

The familiar voice was slow and muffled, a voice that always seemed to

"It's cousin David. Remember me? We talked before about stuff."

"Hi," I said, shyly. "I remember you. We talked at last year's reunion, and we chatted a little at, I think, Uncle George's funeral, or at one of his viewings."

David Faith, who at that time was 37, was the deeply religious type. In times past, he and I had discussed, among other things, God and his power. One part of me enjoyed those talks but I wondered if David made some of that stuff up. David worked on a farm. In addition to milking cows and fixing machinery, he assisted with planting. He once told me how he'd prayed for it not to rain, so he could plant crops. David claimed that God answered his prayer. It rained that

day, but not a drop fell on the area he was to plant in.

"I'm stuffed, but I'm still thirsty. Do you want anything more to drink?"

"Sure," I answered. "I'll have some more Coke, if there's any left."

"I'll see what I can do," he said.

The bench rose slightly as David stood. He returned, sat back down, and placed a thin, plastic cup of fizzing Coke in front of me. I could tell by the we and cold feel of the cup that there was ice with the drink. The ice rattled as I lifted the cup. The ice didn't have much of a cooling effect on the Coke, but I was too thirsty to wait.

I thanked David. I heard him sip his drink, sigh and say, "It's such a beautiful day."

"It's a little bit warm, but it's not too bad," I replied. "I'm glad today's a nice day."

"It's neat how God works," he said. "I like how he still does miracles, even today."

'He's still really in to God,' I thought.

"You've seen him do miracles, huh? Are you sure you're telling me the

"Yes, I am telling you the truth. God hasn't changed. I have heard of blind

... why is it so many sighted men can't see?

"Are you sure you're telling me the truth?" I repeated. "You're telling me that blind people have been healed in this day?" I laughed a little. "God hasn't done any miracles on me."

heard people say about him. My mother said David was "a little strange." My parents believe Pentecostals like David are strange because of the way they shout, sing, dance and talk about God so much. Part of me agreed with my family but another part of me wanted to be more religious than I was at that time. I wanted to be more into God and going to church and see. having fun there. I just hadn't found the kind of faith I was looking for.

What interest I had in God was dwindling rapidly, thanks to two failed romantic relationships, along with intense anxiety about going off to college for the very first time. I had allowed negative thoughts to fill my mind.

"Yeah, and what about people, like my very last girlfriend, who had glass eyes?" I asked David, testing his statement for any kind of truth.

"God created you and me. Don't you think he could create new eyes for people who need them?" David shouted, chuckling.

"I guess," I answered, smiling. "It would be neat if that could happen to me. I would love to see for the first time in nineteen years, but this all sounds a little farfetched. I'll believe it when I see it, and I mean see."

I made a fist with my right hand and pounded it on the table, as I said "see." We both laughed.

"Why do you say that?" David asked. "Because I have asked for sight and he hasn't given it to me. He must want me this way."

"We won't know until we try," said David. "Try what?" I asked, sarcastically.

"Praying for it some more," said David. He sounded as if he were smiling.

"What if he still won't do it?"

"What if he does?" David asked. "I'm talking about this because in a couple of weeks they're having a revival at my church and there will be people praying for miracles. Do you want to come?"

"I'm not sure," I replied, hesitantly. "I'm afraid I'll be disappointed. It will be nice to see if that will do it, though. But I won't hold my breath. I'll probably see when it's possible for people to sunbathe at the North Pole.'

"Like the old saying goes," said David, as he took my left hand and shook it, "don't knock it until you try it. If I'm not working, I'll try to come down your way and pick you up for the revival.'

"Will you be on vacation?"

"Not exactly," said David, laughing. "I'm just about recovered from a broken ankle.'

"Oh, my!" "Broke it working on the farm. It's just about healed."

David's last word—"healed"—echoed in my

"Are you all right?" asked David. "You look

"Well," I began, "this talk about healing is

interesting. I hope we can go to the revival. But what do I do if he still says no?" "Just remember," David said, shaking my hand

again, "if it doesn't happen, always remember God still loves you, and you can still do things. He'll use you. No matter what, you will still do well in college."

As leery as I was of David, his enthusiasm made that conversation more fun than riding the park's rides or gorging. I had mixed feelings about David's inviting me to the revival, but I longed for the happiness he always seemed to demonstrate. I also wanted to see if this service could be the cure I had waited so long for. Maybe David was telling the

Throughout my life, I'd asked God for sight, but I did so halfheartedly, expecting him to instantly grant my prayer. God was my vending machine and my

One summer day, I was with my friend,

Stephanie. I was ten and she was six at that time. Earlier that morning, the two of us had accidentally drunk just a little bit of sour milk. Our fear of becoming sick caused us to pray. Later that morning, I knelt next to a twin bed in a large bedroom with sloping, carpeted floors in my grandmother's old

"God," I prayed, "don't let me get sick from drinking that little bit of bad milk. Also, I want to As David rambled on, I thought about things I had see, so please let me. I pray in Jesus's name, Amen."

Stephanie sat on the floor to my right.

"God," she echoed in her whiny, nasally voice, "I you want." don't want to get sick from that milk, either. Let Troy see, too, because he wants to. In Jesus's name,

In the spring of 1994, after attending a Christian rock concert, I began to become quite serious about knowing God better, and I more willingly attended my parents' church, a nearby Methodist church. After up-tempo church music played as we conversed, the that concert, I felt closer to God, and I knew he was truly out there because he

Drawing by Kenny Musko

saw my family and me through crises that followed.

Early one morning, in the summer of '94, I had a vague dream in which I seemed to recall asking God for my sight. Later that morning, I sat by a mattress on the floor of our carpeted dining room pondering the dream and telling God my feelings. "Lord," I said, silently. "I think this dream is a sign. After all, you said we can ask and we shall receive. God, I am asking you for my sight. Only you can do it. I want it so I can be like everybody else. You love me. Don't you? I pray in Jesus's name, Amen."

Once again, he gave nothing of the sort to me. I remained imprisoned in darknes, despite my many pleas for release into the light.

Thirteen days after David's invitation to the revival, I awoke eagerly, anticipating a new life ahead - a life involving eyes that function normally, providing this upcoming revival wasn't merely just a bunch of hog wash. I daydreamed of the days to follow. I imagined what it would be like not to be

Early that afternoon, my mother and I talked. As she washed the dishes, I paced the kitchen floor.

"Remember, Troy," said my mother, "if you get to see, you're going to do things like mowing the grass. Even if you see, you'll have to learn everything over again. You would have to learn to read and write, and somebody would have to teach you colors."

I care about. I wouldn't mind relearning everything, if I have to."

"Chances are," my mother told me, "you won't

"Why do you say that?" I asked, angrily. "I've heard of these faith healers," she explained, concerned, "and most of them are quacks."

"Why do you say that, Mom?" "These people believe that if something doesn't

happen, then you don't have enough faith." "Are you telling me not to go with David, if he

can take me?" I asked. "Go ahead and go," she answered, calmly, "but

don't get your hopes up. Just remember," she continued, drying her hands with a paper towel and coming over to put her arms around me, "people thought David Koresch was Jesus, but that wasn't

"Don't you want me to see?"

"Yes, I do," Mom said, "but I believe God wants you this way."

"You always say that," I said, disgusted. "You don't act like you want me to see."

"I do so," she protested. "Remember, a long time

ago when we went to that place in Philadelphia?" "Yes," I replied. "I was six. It was thirteen years

ago this month." "I was really hoping they could do something for you. I was disappointed when the doctors, there, told us the same things the ones in Germany said, that there was nothing that could be done." She hugged me again. "I just don't want you to get disappointed."

"I'm going to try and see what happens," I said. "You're over 18," said Mom, calmly. "Do what

Late that afternoon, David came to pick me up, driving solo in a small car. I sat in the front passenger seat. I could feel my feet kicking against food I was spared a stomachache, but God didn't let me wrappers and plastic soda bottles that littered the carpeted floor of the car.

"I love how God makes you do neat things," David said adding conversation to what would otherwise be a long, boring drive. A tape with some music flowing out of a speaker on top of the dashboard in front of me.

"What do you mean?" I asked. "Well, I can actually hear God speak to me, but it's different than the way you and I are

> "How so?" I asked. I wondered if he was actually hearing God talking or just voices in his head. 'Maybe he works too hard on the farm,' I thought.

"It's really hard to explain. You have to have the Holy Ghost in you to see what I

For a moment, I pondered what he said. "You mean, you can actually receive this Holy

Ghost?" I asked, wondering what I would have to do to put the Holy Ghost in me. "Yep," he answered.

"I know there is a Holy Ghost, but I didn't know you can receive it."

"Maybe you'll get it this weekend." 'Providing you're telling me the truth,' I thought. After a quick stop at David's house, where we moistened our dry throats with orange juice and briefly listened to the same kind of upbeat church music that played in the car, we headed for New Life

As soon as I entered that church, I felt something that was quite unusual yet also quite neat. There was so much excitement in the air that I could almost touch it. The air felt thick, as though laden with smoke but there was no cause for alarm but rather a sense of happiness, unlike anything I'd ever felt before. People shouted, sang and danced. That kind of joyous worship was foreign to me because I had been used to a quieter type which involved the slow droning of an organ sometimes accompanied by the ringing of a piano. In this strange church people sang happily and soulfully rather than slowly and monotonically. People in such churches, as my parents' Methodist church, did not clap or shout. Still, I didn't let the odd manner of worship in the New Life Tabernacle freak me out; I enjoyed it. As the unusual "I don't care," I said. "I just want to see. That's all church music played, I heard not just an organ and piano but drums and trumpets along with other It sounded a lot like the music David and I had listened to on the way there. It was certainly far more fun to listen to than the music at my parents' church. These people, at David's church, sang with emotion—happy emotion.

After a little while of singing and praising, the healing service began.

"Anybody in pain, please stand," said the visiting preacher, who spoke with a noticeable Canadian

I wondered if that part of the service was going to be real or would it be nothing more than a theatrical performance. I heard the man praying for people but I paid little attention. All I cared about was having my eyes fixed. Finally, I would have my opportunity to be prayed for and, perhaps, to see.

"My cousin Troy sitting beside me," David said, loud enough for all the whole congregation to hear, "is blind and he wants healing." "Yes, Lord!" some people shouted. "Let him be

David led me to the front of the packed church. Continued on page 32.

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Flipside

Cool To Do Drugs An anti-drug pencil campaign turned bad after the discovery of a 10 year-old boy from Ticonderoga, NY. The pencils which read "Too Cool To Do Drugs" when sharpened read "Cool To Do Drugs" and "Do Drugs." The student's explanation as to why the company didn't realize their mistake: "I guess they didn't sharpen their pencils."

Tales from the appisdils

Strange but ture stories from the so-called Real World.

They Found a Treasure A WWII bomb resurrected by treasure hunters exploded in the Phillipines when the men pounded on it with sledge hammers. The failed attempt to open the explosive killed the five men, officials said. Last month, in the town of Teresa in the Rizal Providence, 20 miles east of Manila, the hunters stored the two-foot bomb along with several empty shells in their house.

Suicide by.....Diarreah? There was this kid in college who decided to kill himself. One afternoon at his grandmother's house, he went to the medicine cabinet and swallowed an entire bottle of prescription medication. Apparently, he wasn't aware the pills were prescription strength laxatives. Soon after, he nearly defecated himself to death. He was rushed to the emergency room and was treated for severe dehydration. He returned to classes after a lengthy recovery.

Body Shots Olives and cherries are for little men. Real drinkers garnish their cocktails with human appendages. Way up north in Canada's Dawson City lies the World Famous Sour Toe Cocktail Club. For a fiver, you can join by downing the drink of your choice with this garnish: a real human toe. As long as the toe touches your lips, you receive an offical certificate and membership card. The club, which meets in a hotel, boasts 16,000 members worldwide.

Let's Play Doctor

A girl got her veterinarian degree out of a box. A poor cat had to undergo surgery to have a plastic thermometer removed from its rear. The cat made it through the surgery just fine but is too scared to move back in with the little girl who thought she was just playing doctor.

Robbery 101

Talk About Security Cameras!

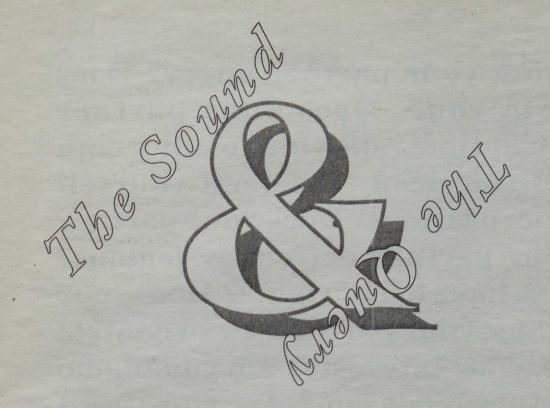
A 19-year-old struggled to steal a handbag from an elderly woman who happened to be sitting in an automated photo booth. The moment the thief ripped open the curtain and seized the lady's bag, the machine snapped the picture. At first, he was surprised and released the bag. After the woman got out of the machine, he tried to snatch it again. She called for help and he fled the scene.

The police were astounded that the victim could not only give them a crystal-clear description of the young man but furnished them a picture of him as well. The thief was arrested the next day.

Blank Shots

The assailant enters the all-night convenience store with a starter's pistol, which can fire only blanks. The young man had the pistol loaded with .22 caliber blanks. The store clerk refused to give up the cash and they became entangled in a brawl. The store clerk grappled with the bandit until he gained control of the gun.

While waiting for the police to arrive, the store clerk held the would-be crook at gunpoint with the starter's pistol. The robber reportedly begged the clerk, "Please don't shoot!"



Yo FlipsideI'm not
dead, na-nana-na-na!
Later,
TuPac

"Last semester,
Flipside published a
wonderful story
about...now, what
was the article
about?"

Ronald Reagan

Dear Flipside:

Ever since my daughter Chelsea started reading your magazine she's been engaging in devious behavior. The other day she tricked her bodyguards and went out by herself. Hillary and I can't possibly tolerate this reckless behavior. I hold your magazine responsible for anything that may happen to my daughter from now on. By the way, your magazine sucks even worse than Monica.

Sincerely,
Bill Clinton

Dear Flipside:

Your magazine rocks! I already cancelled my subscription to Cosmo. Why don't you publish it, like, once a month or something. The set's been boring since junkie Jason left, and I already read your last issue, like, ten times. But I just Looove it. Was that really Michael Jordan that wrote that letter? I think he is soo hot!

Smile, it's free!
Tori Spelling
PS-By the way, Daddy
said he could support
glossy pages for your
magazine, wouldn't that
be great!
PS 2- Can you, like, make
an interview on me?

Dear Flipside:
Ever since
Carmen Electra
and I divorced,
your magazine
has kept me
company on
those long
lonely nights..
Thanks for

Dennis Rodman

your support,

(So To Speak)

by Daniel J. Pacella

very Sunday night, I find myself on my usual drive back to school from New Castle, Pennsylvania. New Castle (City Motto: "The Soaped Window Capital of America") is where I lived and where went to school for some 18

Interstate 79 would be a very relaxing drive except that some idiot decided to put it right next to Pittsburgh (City Motto: "Death before Signaling"). So, I drive along at a casual 70 miles an hour, but nevertheless am passed by a steady stream of traffic. The drivers politely take time to make sure they

convey a famous hand gesture to me that states, in their book, I am "number one."

The hour and a half after leaving New Castle passes quickly, and that fact alone is pretty impressive since I drive a Geo Metro. My car is roughly the size and color of a wart and has a massive three-cylinder engine, so when a Geo is loaded down with luggage there are some basic functions it has trouble performing, such as moving.

After being passed at about 110 miles an hour on 1-79 by cars, trucks, police cruisers, horse-drawn carriages and a brigade of senior citizens driving 38-foot long luxury cars, I arrive at California University of Pennsylvania (Motto: "Educating Today to Fill the Trailer Parks of Tomorrow!"). I live at McCloskey

Hall on the northern edge of campus. After parking my car in the first available space, which in my case is always in the next time zone, I arrive at my dormitory. I stagger into the

outer lobby after a 21mile walk from the parking lot with my suitcase dragging on the ground behind me. The first thing that I

usually notice is that the place smells as if a convendown to Gallagher Hall and ground into cold tion of people who make their living under the Fort Duquesne Bridge stayed the weekend in the hall-

Drawing by Kenny Musk

The janitors work mainly on Sunday night, but most of them can be seen sitting all around the hall seven days a week. On Monday morning the halls smell minty fresh for all of about 2.6 seconds.

Where can this newfound smell be coming from? of the wall. It sounded as if he were slamming dead

There are several theories that have been developed as to what happened to this poor person. My favorite, and the most popular, is that he was killed

by his roommate and disposed of by being dragged

One evening as I was lying in bed studying, I

noticed that my wall light seemed to shake for a

second. Psycho Boy lives on the other side of this

A second later my entire room began to vibrate

I found it odd that Psycho Boy was able to yell so

of Buick LeSabres, and the five stalls that haven't

it up to my room, I have to sneak very quietly past

After I have held my breath long enough to make

the door of my psychotic neighbor. The kid next door

had a roommate for the first several weeks, but then

he just vanished. I swear I am telling the truth. The

guy just disappeared off of the face of the earth.

been flushed since 1983.

moves his mouth. The wall must have done something to offend him, because he screamed and pounded on it for nearly three hours. Another popular theory is that it his dead roommate being slammed against my wall. One can only hope that

Anyway, one I make it past Psycho Boy's room, I am ready to go to sleep. After a long day, I-need my rest for the torments to come.

I guess after living at my home for so long that I have become spoiled about how I sleep. It is just that I am used to lying in a bed with the special feature of

not sinking down to the floor the second you recline in it, sit on it or set something relatively lightweight on it, such as In the event that I

might actually fall asleep, every night around midnight they hold the "Sudden Hallway Outburst of Screaming Obscenities Competition" lirectly outside my room. The competition is a ime-honored event of who can insult each other's parents, which then wakes up the psycho next door, who immediately begins to bellow and slam his dead cow into the wall.

In the same amount of time that it took to form the planet Earth, morning has arrived. However, this day is not just another dull day of classes and notes. Today, have a test. In other vords, the next topic is: Tests That Professors Make Up so that No One Will Pass Them.

Looking back, I hould have savored hose old high school "What country is Mexico City the capital of?" The tests in college are not just harder, but they are purposely designed to fail

In a test I had recently aken in my history class, I had to write short answers to several

questions concerning what I had been sleeping through for several weeks. College history courses had to have originated as a method of torture for captured spies.

CIA Agent: "Still won't talk, huh? I guess we'll just move right along into the unit on the Spanish colonization of the New World."

and a tremendous pounding erupted on the other side Secret Spy: "No! Anything but that!

> Anyway, back to this test. I had studied for what felt like about 16 years for this exam, so I felt was pretty well prepared. But college professors are not

> > continued on page 8

Are you afraid of making your partner angry? Does your partner humiliate you? Does your partner threaten you? Are the bad times starting to out weigh the good? Do you feel you need to defend yourself against your partner's accusations? Does your partner call you names? Is your partner extremely jealous? Does your partner always have to be "right"? Does your partner criticize you? Does your partner try to control your time, your friends, your interests? Do you blame yourself when your partner hurts you? Are you afraid to argue with your partner? Does your partner physically restrain or hurt you? Are you losing friends to please your partner? Are you Afraid to end your relationship? Do you do things you don't want to just to please your partner? Are you losing self-respect? Are you afraid of making your partner angry? Does

Are you in a violent relationship? your partner threaten you? Are the bad times starting to out weigh the good? Do you feel you need to defend yourself against your partner's accusations? Does your partner call you names? Is your partner extremely jealous? Does your partner always have to be "right"? Does your partner criticize you? Does your partner try to control your time, your friends, your interests? Do you blame yourself when your partner hurts you? Are you afraid to argue with your partner? Does your partner physically restrain or hurt you? Are you losing friends to please your partner? Are you Afraid to end your relationship? Do you do things you don't want to just to please your partner? Are you losing

You don't deserve to be abused. There is help.



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livestock into the other side of my wall, and then as The bathroom, perhaps... There are several bathrooms located on each wing if physically abusing the wall were not enough, he of McCloskey Hall. They feature seven sinks, four began to scream at it. showers, three urinals and two overflowing trash cans. The dorm bathrooms also boast spiders the size loudly at the wall because when he talks, he never

stupid. They have taken precautions against the off chance that someone might actually study by fullproofing their questions to guarantee failure.

The test looked like this:

1. Explain every significant event that has occurred in human history since the birth of Christ up until today. Make sure to use specific details and limit your response to no more than two paragraphs.

2. On Christopher Columbus's third trip to the New World, how many members of his crew were named "Emilio?" Of them, how many had birthdays falling between March and May? Be sure to include details of their lives aboard the ship, their duties, ethnic backgrounds, nicknames, hair color, pet peeves, underwear preference (briefs or boxers) and other everyday aspects of their lives. Be specific.

3. How is today's use of tin foil an example of the American-NeoIndustrial-Clas sic-TransAmerican Victorian and-Alternative-Progressive-Ironic-Freedom Era in American society from June 23rd 1897 to August 3rd 1898 at 3:00 p.m.? Use specific details in your response

One might assume that there is a way to pass a test like that, but there is not. Let's just say that you somehow put this all together in a fantastic piece of short expository prose that should, at minimum, win

The professor still will mark it wrong and write a little note in the margin mentioning some seemingly meaningless fact and make it sound like you should have your bowels removed with a plastic butter knife for forgetting.

To wit: "Daniel, how could you forget that there were twenty-seven people named 'Melvin' born in the year 1136 AD, or "How could you leave out the name of George Washington's third cousin on his mother's side?"

The professor will always find a way to ensure that 20 years from now, you will be cleaning windshields on the streets of a major city.

Taking tests that are impossible to pass benefits both you and the university, but mostly the university. It is in these tests that you will eventually find the skills to analyze and evaluate things in the real world after you graduate in roughly 10 years, while allowing you a chance to figure out that with a little luck you could pay off your loans by the year 2416.

By the looks of things, I better go buy a squeegee while my parents can still afford it.

Since I have a schedule that conflicts with all normal routines of life, I am forced to sit in Remedial (Stupid People) Algebra while the rest of civilization is permitted to eat. If you have never had the thrill of sitting through one of these classes, you are very fortunate, indeed.

The average college student begins math courses with College Algebra level 101. Being a writing major, I am more able to fly a commercial airliner than perform a trigonometry problem correctly, and that is how I managed to test into Intro to algebra level negative 147.

Perhaps I would feel more advanced if the class were not taught with the assumption that math equations have feelings. Not only does this class go over math equations that a four-year old would find simple, but it is also assisted by the use of smiley faces for correct responses and frowny faces for wrong answers.

Math Professor: "Okay, Dan, the problem is x + 2w=5. What does x equal?"

Me: "Four."

Math Professor: "No, and now you've gone and hurt it's feelings."

Anyway, after an intellectually challenging class like that, one can imagine that I would've work up a rather substantial appetite. It is too bad that I live on campus; otherwise there might be a painless way to satisfy my hunger.

Let us review my on-campus dining options:

1. The Washington Food Court: If I wanted to get lunch here, I can count on friendly service, but I can also count on getting ripped off. Here is an example of the daily menu:

One Piece of Dry Bread, A Grain of Rice, and A Slice of American Cheese... 1 Meal + \$8.95 Flex + \$25.50 Cash + Your First Born + Your Soul.

2. Gallagher Hall: Here, with one swipe of the Cal-Card, you can get all that you want to or can eat. The only drawback is that the food there has been cold since the mid-80s. Perhaps they should liven up their menu selections by adding some of these

- Robert Palmer Burger served with Van-Halen

- Mouth watering Don Johnson Double Cheeseburger served with Wang Chung Chicken Fingers.

3. Herron Patio: This dining location is mostly for commuters and does not accept the meal plan. In other words, you need to take out a loan to purchase a chicken sandwich.

It is not uncommon to see a couple, confused and agitated, pounding on the counter, trying to figure out the complex forms that must be filled out to afford lunch.

Man (staring at form): "Honey, how much money did we use for charitable contributions in the last fiscal year?"

Woman: "I don't know. Have you seen our shopping receipts from last December?"

Cashier: "I'm sorry, sir, but without an accurate appraisal of your home, you are going to have to move on. You're holding up the line.'

As you can see, if you've somehow misplaced your calculator, you could easily starve to death.

I know what your thinking: "Okay, Mr. Smartass, could you do any better than they?"

Of course, the answer is yes.

I am not saying that the menu would improve much if I were cooking the food, but I would at least try and have some fun with it. I would sponsor daily "Guess What Kind of Meatlike Substance is on Your Sandwich" and "How Many Days Have the Fries been Sitting Here" contests.

Second, I would buy lids for the steamers in the Gold Rush dining room. The food there tastes as if it has been there longer than the food at Gallagher Hall tive." (Have you had your Bee Gee's Burger today?).

The next improvement would have to be public relations. As you all know, the company that provides most of the food on campus does so at roughly the same cost of the Hubble Telescope. Considering that a cookie is 85 cents, I would not be surprised if they began charging for oxygen.

Cashier: "Okay, sir, that's one chicken sandwich, a coke and three kilo's of air. Your total comes to

people skills as Saddam Hussein. All of the managers seem to wear that same expression on their faces expressing the joy in their hearts from watching

I can only imagine how the managers, beady-eyed and foaming at the mouth, think up insane new dining rules to inflict on us students.

"I've got an idea," they yell periodically. "Let's make them pay for their meals with their own plasma! Hahaha!'

Since the on campus food is the only source of nourishment for many of us, we probably would not live long enough to see any changes in the system. Well, now if you will excuse me, I am feeling hungry. I need to go sell my car.

Well, somehow I have managed to survive my freshman year here at Cal U. And, assuming that my GPA is not a negative number, I will be back next year. It's hard to guess what the future holds for me, especially if I keep eating on campus, driving here on the "interstate from hell," living in a dorm and going to classes that are so elementary that they make Sesame Street seem like quantum physics for so difficult that Albert Einstein, John Stuart Mill and Madame Curie couldn't pass them in collaboration.

When I leave here in four (or 20) years, I will be able to take the skills that I acquired and begin my career as a writer, or a cashier at Burger King.

I can just hear what the exchanges between myself and the customers would sound like:

Me: "Hello, welcome to Burger King." Customer: "You ain't got no salads left, do you?" Me: "No sir, and you just used a double nega-

Customer (very angry): "What? Listen here, I want two burgers and two fries and two chicken sandwiches and one fish with no sauce and a glass of

water, how much will that come to?" Me: "Sir, I do believe that was a run-on sentence." Customer: (Speeds away angrily).

On the other hand, welfare sounds nice. But, I can only hope that one day I can have a successful

career, a family and a house. When I finally do buy a home, I'll call you, and

Also, they have basically the same number of

you can help me take the wheels off. -Flipside

Religious Fad Diets

"Our Little Systems Have Their Day." - Tennyson

by Jodi Valo

of insects is covering this country like the locusts that descended over all the "infecting," mainstream America.

This powerful, highly contagious and peculiar strain of the religious bug has, itself, developed into a pseudo-religion of sorts, a form of worship more commonly practiced in shopping malls than in churches and more likely to praise Mammon than any form of Higher Power.

Drawing by Kenny Musko

CALL NOW, RECIEVE A

PAIR OF W.W.J.D

SOCKS!!!!!

0

Because many Americans seem to have a God-shaped hole in their lives and because adherence to traditional religion is, for many, unsatisfying, Americans have turned to an increasingly strange number of religious fads to fill the spiritual void in their lives.

Ten years ago, you would see the occasional "Smile, God Loves You" bumper sticker or "Jesus" license plate (you know the type: airbrushed onto an aqua-blue background, Jesus's face centered between two palm trees) or, of course, the everinspiring Jim Bakeresque televangelist who, with a slap of his palm to your forehead, can heal all your woes.

Today, stroll through any mall in any city, and you are surrounded by this nouveau-piety. Perhaps the most trendy icons are the letters "W.W.J.D."-

standing for "What Would Jesus Do?" That abbrevia- today, it would be an even bigger hit than it was in tions has appeared on earrings, bracelets, shoelaces, key chains, pens, tote bags, hats, stuffed animals, calendars, tee-shirts, even Bibles.

These items are aimed mainly at preteens and teenagers. Asked about the W.W.J.D. apparel, many teenagers respond like consumers rather than like practitioners of any sort of faith.

"It's more of a fashion trend now and the question behind [it] has become obsolete," one says.

Another, a 13-year old, says, "I wear it because

it's in style. The bracelet is cool. Everybody is wearing them." One high school girl claims, "I think they are

going totally overboard with the whole thing," while another believes that "you can't go overboard with

According to James Nestingen, a church historian at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, what Jesus, a man who bristled at materialism, would do about all of

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he religion bug has bit. In fact, a swarm this is "puke!" Nestingen added, "All that religious schlock, all that pious poop-you just get tired of it."

The entertainment industry knows what sells and land of Egypt, affecting, or should I say is taking full advantage of it by producing television shows such as Touched by an Angel, Nothing Sacred and Teen Angel.

> Hollywood, too, has a preoccupation with the afterlife. Moviegoers flocked to see spirits in the material world in Michael, City of Angels and Meet

If Ghost, one critic said, were to be released

1990. And it was huge then.

not rewritten him.'

Edited God?

Who can forget the highly anticipated release of

Prince of Egypt, the story of Moses, this past

However, Hollywood does have its way with

religion. Jeffrey Katzenburg, one of the creators of

Prince of Egypt, has said, "We have 88 minutes to

In fact, virtually all of these films lack one

Franklin's Family has topped the charts with the

hiphop/R & B style CD God's Property.

important factor concerning the afterlife-God!

tell the life of Moses. We've edited God, but we have

In the world of music, the gospel-inspired Kirk

Recent pop hits have included Angel by Sarah

McLaughlin, Angel of Mine by Monica, and I'll be

Your Angel by R. Kelly and Celine Dion. (Angel,

Angel, Angel, . . . America is unbelievably

fascinated with angels.)

Columbia House, a home-delivery CD club, has a new section dedicated to religious rock. (I imagine it is sandwiched somewhere between classic rock and

Heck, even Pope John Paul II has his own CD out on the Sony Record Label. Bob Carlisle's "Butterfly Kisses" was a hit in Christian markets long before it topped Billboard charts last summer.

In fact, overall sales of Christian music grew from 33 million units in 1996 to 44 million in 1997, in

general and Christian

As technology develops, religion does, too. Every significant advance enables religion, in all its forms, to reach a wider audience. Nearly every major religion has sites on the World Wide Web, and God even checks His e-mail.

It's true; an Israeli Internet access has begun delivering e-mail messages to Jerusalem's Wailing Wall, where the printed messages are stuffed into the cracks between the stones This service, offered by Virtual Jerusalem, is free. "Fax a prayer" service to the wall has been available from another company for several years.

Have you seen the commercial in which a weeping, depressed woman talks with a confidant over coffee? She should be happyher kids are great, her husband just got a promotion-yet she isn't.

not Prozac, but a free book available by calling an 800 number

to help her-and you-"find God."

In some cases the trend of religion, arguably, has become just plain weird. Two equal trends have teamed up to form the Christian Tattoo Association, which consists of 100 Christian tattoo parlors across the U.S. One member proclaimed, "I want to be a walking billboard for Christ"; another believes that "tattooing is a means of the soul coming to the surface." The irony being that, historically, tattooing was indeed thought as a way of the soul's coming to the surface. But in the world of Harleys and leather and Dennis Rodman, this original meaning has probably lost its significance.

The "Jesus Christ Miracle Doll" can be yours for the low price of \$15! A brochure claims that "Jesus knows that you need a miracle and the Jesus Miracle Doll will grant you just that."

It combines the "forbidden secret powers of voodoo with the miraculous powers of Jesus Christ" but is "100 times more powerful" than voodoo.

HELP WANTED

The California Times is seeking assistance in the following areas beginning in the fall semester of 1999:

* Correspondents - News, Sports, Campus Life, Greek Life

- * Layout and design
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Students interested in working at the California Times next semester should come to the Times office in the Media suit of the Natali Student Center, or call 938-4321 and ask for Doug Levering or Joy Helsel.

Flipside

Fads cont...

Orders can be purchased through a company located on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood, Calif.

At the University of Southern California, students enrolled in the philosophy course "Death and Immortality" will analyze all the deep thinkers: Plato, Descartes and Robin

packaged on a 30-minute videotape at your local Blockbuster.

Eastern religions, too, have their own bumper sticker to go along with Christian counterparts: "My karma just ran over your dogma.'

Yet there is a collaboration and cooperation that exists today between Christianity and Eastern religions

religious fury increases (take for example millennial suicide cults). The question remaining is whether the coming of the millennium and the growing popularity of religion/spirituality are related or simply coincidental.

Swyhart believes that it is just "an association of terms," while Father Vince asserts that (from what he

Jesus Christ. However, many Biblical scholars agree that we know little, if anything, about Christ, though many believe he was actually born four to six years before the year AD. In that case the third millennium occurred between

Other questions remaining concerning the turning of the ages: Some

There are even books entitled Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance and The Tao of the Jump Shot: An Eastern Approach to Life

and Basketball which "illuminates the principles of Eastern philosophy by exploring the simple act of shooting a basketball" and "takes the reader on a journey through the inner and outer mastery of the jump shot."

Williams.

That's right, the metaphysical aspects of yet another flick dealing with the afterlife, What Dreams May Come, is now included in Professor Dallas Willard's syllabus. He believes that it will enable his students to think about heaven in some way other than a "big white blob."

Eastern religions, often called "New Age" religions, even though they are over 2,500 years old, have found their way into our traditionally Christian society. (However, these Americanized Eastern religions are adaptations of traditional Eastern forms of worship.) As Barbara Swyhart, professor of philosophy at California University, points out, "Eastern tradition is popular [primarily] with a younger group—persons dissatisfied/distressed politically, dissatisfied with the complexity of the world, confused about direction. Eastern religions often offer meditative solace. It's an interesting kind of turn.

Because it is more difficult and less convenient in our predominately Christian society to have a firsthand encounter with Eastern religions, many people turn to literature to help them become "enlightened."

Book stores claim their hottest sellers are those concerning Eastern traditions: Awakening the Buddha Within, The Accidental Buddhist: Mindfulness, Enlightenment and Sitting Still-American Style, Jesus and Buddha: The Parallel Sayings (which sold 10,000 copies in the past

There are even books entitled Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance and The Tao of the Jump Shot: An Eastern Approach to Life and Basketball which "illuminates the principles of Eastern philosophy by exploring the simple act of shooting a basketball" and "takes the reader on a journey through the inner and outer mastery of the jump shot."

Watch out, Michael Jordan. And, by the way, that book, written by Phil Jackson, former coach of the Chicago Bulls, is also slanted toward Eastern religious beliefs.

The American Broadcasting Company is the home of the sitcom Dharma and Greg, in which the female character is named after the cosmic truth in Buddhism.

Even Madonna, the last person anyone ever expected to become spiritual 10 years ago, performed on MTV while adorned with ancient Hindu markings. And yoga, which is a complex, eight-step system of disciplinary exercises and meditation directed toward identification or union with Brahman (the Ultimate Reality in Hinduism), is now conveniently

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"that is different than it was years ago," as Father Vince Gigliotti, pastor of St. Mary and St. Peter Roman Catholic churches in Brownsville,

"For instance, the Dalai Lama was in Greensburg [in November] sponsored by Seton Hill College, which is a Catholic college, and the Catholic Bishop was there and embraced him in good will." The visit added to, or reemphasized, the popularity of the Dalai Lama; after all, everyone, even the blue-haired lady on my street, knows who the Dalai Lama is.

One has to wonder whether all this hype in religion is sincere and about faith or solely about profit. Catholics have pope paraphernalia, evangelical Christians have "Jesus junk," and Jews have kitsch. Every religious group from Muslims to Buddhists has its own line of products. Christian retailing alone is a \$3 billion a year industry (it has tripled since 1980). As some wise person once said, "There is good money in bad religion." In fact, two people are both claiming the rights to everything W.W.J.D. One says, "It pains me to think that anyone would be in it just for the buck." The other says, "Life is about serving God, not making money." They both seem sincere, yet

On retailing, Father Vince proclaims, "That's always been part of the church." If selling religious goods "help[s] an individual, that's great. Helping the individual by discovering who God is, that's good." He then adds reluctantly, "sometimes."

they are still fighting for the right to

Professor Swyhart, however, explains that "the mainstream [society] is going to Christianity in a very, very, unhealthy way. Unhealthy because it is not using an intellectual base for how we learn about religion. It is using a very basic need base which is being manipulated by very economically strong groups."

By economically strong groups one assumes she is referring to the televangelists. Because of their vast audience and accessibility (turn on cable television and you are bound to find one somewhere among the 100 stations), they have been able to produce an enormous amount of money. Some legitimately, some not. Father Vince talks about that kind of abuse in fund-raising; however, he believes that not every televangelist is the next Jim Baker.

But they have become stereotyped

"And trends are bad," he says, "because there is not a firm founda-

understands) "it seems that at the end of any millennium there is this great influx of change in people's heart. It is not unusual." Nonetheless, the year 2000 brings with it worries, uncertainties and expectations, some secular (like the oh-so-familiar Y2K computer crisis), others spiritual.

Strictly speaking, the millennium of Christian belief does not occur on any specific date (we do know neither day nor hour in which the Lord had appeared). So now the question arises, does the new millennium begin January 1, 2000 or 2001?

The calendar we use begins at year 1, not 0. Zero being the transition from BC to AD. Therefore, the millennium ends with zero, and begins with one.

Next problem: it is ambiguous whether 2001 is the beginning of the new millennium, because we Westerners base the calendar on the birth of

Christians wonder if the Antichrist has something to do with the Y2K computer problem and if this whole potential meltdown is all part of God's "master plan." By the way, local churches are offering "spiritual preparation" (monthly prayer services, to be exact) for the turn of the century. Historians are divided on whether the year 1000 was a big deal or not. Since "it" didn't happen in 1000, why did people choose 2000 for their next guess? Why not holier numbers like 7000 or 144,000? So maybe if something with God (or the gods) happens next year, we will be prepared.

Because, like many good Americans, I have watched every episode of Touched by an Angel, while cradling my Jesus Miracle Dolls and wearing my W.W.J.D. bracelet and matching earrings and having my tattoos colored

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You're Gonna Miss Me When I'm Gone

by Colleen Cramer

April 1, 1999

Well, here it all starts. I am just 15 school days away from being a senior in college. Time to start looking for internships and jobs and make some final contacts before putting on my black robe and graduation cap for the second time.

That kinda brings back memories of graduating high school. It seems like so long ago, but really it wasn't. On that night in June of 1996, I never could have guessed that my life would turn out the way it has so far. No one else I know has had to deal with the loss that I have had to deal with over the past year or so. And to think everything was so carefree when I graduated high school while everything now is so complex.

June 5, 1996

I've waited my whole life for tonight. I'm finally graduating. This year went so fast and I hope the ceremony goes fast, too. Jesse's mom, Lisa, is throwing us a huge party. Amy and I will probably go together and just meet the rest of the girls there. I'm hoping Brad is at the party. We have a lot to talk about...

June 10, 1996

Brad and I are back together. We talked all night long at Jesse's. I knew that we would get back together, that it would just take time, but I'm glad it didn't take too long. I think dating his best friend for a few weeks made him jealous. That wasn't why I started dating Jesse, but I guess it has worked out for me after all.

Jesse's party was so much fun. The girls were all there: Amy, Leslie, Sue

I've never seen Eddie so drunk in all my life, which is not surprising since I swear he came out of the womb holding a Rolling Rock.

I think the party reaffirmed a lot of relationships. Brad and I for one, Eddie and Leslie made up (although I think she is being stupid), and Sue and Josh were all over each other all night, but that's nothing new..

Sometimes I wonder if me and Brad's relationship is strong enough to last when I leave for school. I am only going to Pitt-Johnstown, but still who knows. I sometimes think we have made it this far and we can make it, but other times I question our relation-

January 14, 1997

School has been going well. I'm considering transferring to Cal U with Amy. It would be cool to live with her because out of all our friends we are the only one's who keep in touch. We write letters, send e-mail, packages and other stuff. I haven't heard from Sue or Leslie in awhile. They haven't really talked to me since Brad and I broke up. Sue is still with Josh and Leslie with Ed, but I'm boyfriendless so I guess

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we don't have too much in common anymore. That's they way they have always been though.

Brad and I had a lot of problems lately. He was jobless and had no direction. We barely had time for each other and I really think we are better off apart. (I can say this now only 20 million breakups later!)

I've met someone else now who is everything that Brad could never be.



His name is Shane. I've been at some parties back home with him and unfortunately Brad has been there, too. Brad and I have had some pretty nasty verbal confrontations and I really have no desire to talk to him anymore. Besides, I have Shane now...

June 12, 1997

Shane and I are still together. We have spent a lot of time together lately. We also spend a lot of time at Jesse's house. Shane doesn't know too much about Jesse's and my relationship but then again neither do I...

I think it was a few months before graduation. Brad and I had broken up once again and I went to a party at Eddie's. Jesse called the house and I answered. I told Jesse how Brad and I broke up again and he said "So when do we go out?" Jesse was never one to speak proper English. To put it straight, he was a hick! We decided to go out a few times. Jesse could always make me laugh. One time we were riding around and he could tell I was thinking about Brad. He popped a tape in and started singing (very loudly-his only tone) "He Ain't Worth Missin"" by Toby Keith. I always thought Jesse looked like Toby Keith...cowboy boots, flannel shirts, hair longer in the back but short on top. I laughed until I cried at his singing. The tears I cried were not for Brad's and my broken relationship, but tears of joy for the friend I had in Jesse.

Jesse was definitely a "ladies man" and I knew that things wouldn't last long with us. Brad had by this time gotten word of Jesse and I and started calling me again. Like always, I gave

Shane never really asked about Jesse and I, but he did know that we were very good friends...

December 10, 1997

From what I've heard, Jesse and Brad moved in together. Brad hasn't been getting along with his parents, so Jesse invited him to move in. I still haven't spoken to Brad. Our "convermy old math teacher used to say. I haven't been down to the "bachelor pad" since Brad moved in, not even to see Jesse, but I'm sure he understands

My friends have come and gone. Not too many call anymore. Amy and I live together. She's like my security blanket; I know she'll always be there for me. Too bad I couldn't say the same for Leslie and Sue.

Sue's too man-controlled and Leslie's too self-centered. She finally ditched Eddie because of his alcoholic tendencies to be with other girls. Thank God! I haven't lost any sleep over not talking to them and I don't think I will...

February 27, 1998

I've gotten a new job at Maggie Mae's. It's a bar and grill and I've met some really cool people. I've also started seeing some of my old friends again-since they are turning 21. I guess it just goes to show how we've all



July 1, 1998 This morning I woke up to a horrible phone call. Amy said that Sue called and heard that Jesse was in a car accident and was killed. I didn't believe it because Sue has been known to gossip. I told Amy it probably wasn't true, but then another call beeped in while she was talking to me. It was her mom. It was true. Amy's mom worked with one of Jesse's relatives and she just found out.

I felt the tears rolling down my face, falling on my pillow. I told Amy I had to go and this is what I've been doing all day: crying, writing and

remembering. It has been so long since I even talked to him and now I feel so bad. It doesn't seem real. It doesn't seem fair. It doesn't seem right. Miss Gossip Sue said that it happened like

Jesse had been working long hours. He complained to his girlfriend (a 30 year-old mother of four) that he was really tired, but he left for work anyway. Then the story had two sation allotment" has been used up-like different turns here. The first story was he fell asleep halfway to work broadsided an electrical truck that was ironically driven by his ex-girlfriend's dad. The second story was that his cell phone was ringing and when he bent down to pick it up off the floor, he took his eyes off the road and broadsided the truck. I guess no one will ever know the real story. But everyone has said that he was decapi-

> No matter how many phone calls I've gotten, how many people have stopped over, it doesn't seem real.

I went to see Shane and told him what happened. We just held each other; I cried and he squeezed tight

He and I are going to see Jesse's vehicle tonight and to see his mother. She has been out on the road selling leather to bikers and she is flying in tonight. I couldn't imagine getting that call, "I'm sorry your son, the only thing in your life that means anything, is dead." Jesse was everything to Lisa and us too ..

July 2, 1998

We spent most of the night at Jesse's house. Lisa turned to beer, pills and memories to make it through the night. We would all take turns talking to her, remembering Jesse. There were so many memories, so many good

Shane and I went to see the car. Jesse's 1985 Chevy Blazer looked like a convertible. Shane inspected the car while I choked back tears and the vomit that was fighting it's way out of me. I cried for a long time and little by little it started to seem real..

July 3, 1998

The viewing was horrible. It was a morbid class reunion three years too soon. I saw so many people that I haven't seen since graduation. Sue, Leslie, Amy, Eddie, Brad and Josh were all there. We all comforted each other trying to make up for the past months, years. I can still hear the echoes of the sobbing, sniffling,

The casket was, of course, closed. A John Deer hat, a picture from graduation and roses sat on top of the casket. Next to the casket was a collage of pictures... Jesse with friends, Jesse with family, Jesse, Jesse, Jesse... Every picture outlined Jesse's life: happy, friendly, loving and short.

I talked to Brad at the viewing and continued on page 12

I went through old yearbooks and other paraphernalia from high school. I that's how he's dealt with everything found a country tape Jesse let me borrow a long time ago. It was a Brooks and Dunn tape, and I did like them, but I couldn't remember why I wanted to borrow it. After I looked at it for awhile I remembered that one song there reminded me of Brad. But tonight it was so eerie because the song was called "You're Gonna Miss Me When I'm Gone" ..

July 4, 1998

At Jesse's funeral this morning Lisa gave us all roses to put on Jesse's casket. We placed them next to the keg said that he fell asleep and hit a tree, tap that someone had put there earlier. A "hick" funeral wouldn't be appropriate for anyone else but Jesse.

Leslie invited people over to her house tonight. I guess a lot of people are going. We all need each other right now and maybe this will be good for us. Our little group of friends have stuck together the past few days just like old times...minus one key person...

October 3, 1998

It's been three months since Jesse's death. My friends haven't really kept in touch like we all promised we

I saw Brad tonight (it's his birthday). He came into Maggie's and I saw Three years worth of happiness, him on the telephone. I yelled to him "Happy Birthday" because I thought he was leaving, but he decided to stay and have a couple beers with one of my tables. I gave him some shots on the house. I felt like I should ask him

I've seen Eddie more often, buying beer. I guess that's how he's dealing with his friend's death. Then again in his life. At least Brad and Eddie have each other to talk to, to comfort each other, to drink together..

December 7, 1998

Sometimes I wonder how much more a strong person, (like I propose to be), can really take before they can't take anymore

give me the news. Brad was killed in a over...but it was. car accident early this morning...

Brad was coming home from work late last night. The coroner's report less than a mile from his house. The accident supposedly happened around 2 a.m., but he wasn't found until 6 a.m. His dad would have found him on his way to work, but he took a different

I haven't accepted any phone calls since I got back home. I wouldn't know what to say anyhow. Can I say I still loved him? Can I say I still cared? Would it change a damn thing any-

Shane has been over to console me and I'm thankful for his companionship and support. I can't bring myself to look through yearbooks, memories or anything else from our relationship. sadness, love, friendship is all buried

in my closet, haunting me. A man I gave my heart, mind, body and soul to for over three years is now gone and no picture in any yearbook, no letter, no dried rose, no nothing will once a month...

ever bring him back..

December 9, 1998

I cried through all three viewings. Everyone who walked by me sitting in the funeral parlor would touch my shoulder, embrace me or hand me a Kleenex to make up for their lack of words. I didn't really want to hear what they had to say anyhow. No one could say what I wanted to hear, that it wasn't true, that I didn't just lose two ex-loves and two friends five months apart, that the body laying in the casket Amy came to get me out of class to wasn't Brad, that it wasn't all

Hugging his mom was the worst part. She seemed to squeeze the life out of me, almost as if to replace the life of her now dead son.

He looked so peaceful in his final resting-place. Unfair, but peaceful. His face was slightly deformed; his suit was nicely pressed. I stared at him lying there, hoping that his eyes would open and the joke would be over. But it never happened and somehow I believe it will never be over...

February 7, 1999

It's been two months since Brad's death and it's getting closer to Jesse's one-year anniversary. I visit Jesse's grave occasionally and Brad's frequently. It helps me to realize the finality of it all when I see their names blazoned in marble, engraved in stone.

Today is the two-year anniversary for Shane and I. It's just like Brad to be conceited and have his anniversary on the same day as mine. I think he just wanted to make sure I always thought of him, even if it was only

I haven't seen my friends for awhile. Only Amy was there for me at Brad's funeral. I guess two deaths in one year was too much for them. Josh was there, though, and Eddie was a pallbearer again.

I'm not so sure that I can forgive the other "friends" of mine that weren't there. I guess I thought they could have tried harder than they did to be there, but some things never

I know that what I have gone through has changed me though. For better? For worse? I'm not sure, but it has changed me forever...

April 1, 1999

So that's how it goes. No April Fool's about it. I lost two important people in my life in such a short time and it has changed my life immensely. So now I must look to the future and celebrate what I have learned from my experiences. I realize now that I must cherish every day, because how are we to know what tomorrow will bring? If I would have known that on Brad's 22nd birthday that was the last time I would ever see him again, I'm not sure if I would have changed a thing. And if I had known that Jesse's death was a sign to all of us to bring us back together again I don't know if I could accept that either. Of course, it has taken me awhile to realize that, and I'm sure those aren't the only things that I have taken from this experience, and I'm sure there is so much more to

I just hope that Jesse and Brad are

-Flipside

BACK, WITCH, BACK!

By Tara Majoros

"In the name of The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit," I lowered my head, not knowing what to expect. The water trickled down my forehead, running over my nose, and through my lips. I could feel the chills running through my body as I started to shiver. I looked up. All was quit in the tiny building. The crucifixes crowded the candle-lit room . . . intimidating yet beautiful. The conservatively dressed people sat staring at me, smiling, some propped on the seal below the huge with tears in their eyes, others shifting in the hard benches. My parents stood to the one side of me, and the man who performed the ceremony hovered above me in his long white robe, purple silky cloth hanging over his shoulders. They who were to be my God Parents stood to the other side, holding long white candles whose flames blew gently . . . back and forth.

What was I doing here? Seven yearold children were not supposed to be going through a rite that was to be performed at birth. They told me it was to cleanse my soul, which was blackened from sin from the very second I entered this world. For my parents to be married, I must have cold water poured over my head while relatives stared at me as if I were a circus freak. To have a child out of wedlock is a serious sin in the eyes of the Catholic Church, and to be forgiven, I had to be baptized.

I was escorted to the front of the benches, where I was told to sit. It was like sitting on concrete. Bells started to ring. Was I at a funeral? The bells stirred an emotion in me that I experienced at my great grandmother's funeral just three years before . . . the feeling of confusion (was I supposed to be sad, for I did not cry) and a feeling of anger (I did not know my great grandma enough to say "I love you" and mean it. Why did she have to leave before I was old enough to understand the meaning of love?) Everybody around me stood. I was nudged to do the same.

The man in the white robe entered the building from the back. How did he get there? He was just in the front a minute ago. Following him were two boys, a little older than myself, also clad in white robes, but with ropes tied around their waists. They were holding long metal things with cups on the end of them, as the man, from a huge round thing, sprinkled cold water on the crowd. Was it their turn to be cleansed? A strange smell, like a mixture of mildew and flowers, came from nowhere and filled my nostrils. We sat as the man and the two boys stood at the altar . . . all was quiet.

The organ suddenly blared. What? I sins.' had to stand again. It hurt my ears, and what followed surely didn't seem holy. Women's voices once again from where I couldn't tell, screeched. But what was it they were singing? The words were jumbled - hard words - it made no sense. After the women were finished I had to sit . . . again. The man deal. The man fed to each person, one stood behind the altar, hands raised, a by one, a big white cookie, which he

huge open book in front of him. The two boys were on their knees on both sides of him, their heads down. They looked as though they were enduring

From there, everything happened fast. The man spoke. It sounded the same as the screeching women. What was he saying? I looked up at my mother. Her eyes started to droop as her head rested upon her hand, elbow colorful window.

"What is he saying?" I whispered under my tired breath.

art by: Derek Pegritz

The bells rang again, and everyone

stood. I was getting dizzy. Couldn't

they make up their minds? The room

was spinning, I was nauseous from the

smell, my palms were sweating, and I

From behind, my Aunt motioned

for me to sit down. She leaned close to

my ear and said, "You're not ready for

this yet. You have not confessed your

WHAT SINS?! I was seven years

school, and I played some more. But, I did as I was told. I sat as I watched the

big people get in a line and make their

way to the front. I got up and stood on

my tiptoes to see what was the big

old! I played, I watched TV, I went to

had to stand AGAIN! But this time I

felt a hand on my shoulder.

"It's Hungarian," she whispered back in a tone that revealed disappointment at me for speaking. Hungarian?

could not have a cookie because I was full of sin? Wait - didn't my sins just leave me when I had my head drenched with icy - cold liquid? I wanted a cookie!

After they ate the cookie, the people sat, and all was quiet. Here came the organ, the screeching women from the sky, and we stood again. The man mumbled something in his foreign language, and everybody started to file out of the building.

I felt a huge smile crack on my face. I was free. I walked in front of my parents toward the door, where the man and the boys were standing. Wait! How did they get there? I walked past

the robed three, as they held out their

hands for me to shake. I guess they

were congratulating me for sitting

back seat of the car.

through something I knew nothing

an active member of the Hungarian

Roman Catholic Church. Not long

Communion. (I finally got my cookie.)

English to pass a grade school gram-

mar test. The only motivation I had to

attend weekly mass and studies was

I was made to confess my sins to a

man who could not speak enough

the fact that the really nice - looking altar boy would be there. That was the sad truth.

Somewhere around my junior year in high school, I started to have serious doubts about the religion that I still considered to be a part of my life. There were some aspects about the Catholic Church that I could not agree with nor follow. For example, birth control and homosexuality were sins. Abortion - something I strongly believed in - was a sin. I also did not believe that to repent your sins, you had to tell them to a guy sitting hidden in a box. When it came down to it, I guess I was slowly turning my back on my own religion.

I told my mother about my decision and she supported me one hundred percent, but made me promise not to tell any other family member, especially my grandmother for it would break her heart. Although I decided to become nondenominational, I was still confused about which direction I wanted to take as far as religion, for I knew there was definitely a higher power then the

"*Chris . . . I've been having really strange dreams," I said to my boyfriend, who sat facing me on the bed of my one - room apartment. It was my third semester in college, and I was still undecided about religion. I had met Chris purely by accident after a horrible blind date. We clicked . . spiritually and mentally.

"Well, what kind of dreams?" he asked. But I could tell he already knew what I was about to say, for even though I had known him for such a short time, I knew he was spiritually more powerful than I. I felt a tingle when I was around him, a tingle that started in the tips of my fingers, made its way up my arms and to the very front of my forehead . . . I knew he was blessed. I told him that many of my dreams had been coming true . . . anything from friends visiting me to something that was going to happen in class. But the one that came to my concern the most was my grandfather's having a heart attack and dying. I was worried that this was soon about to happen because I felt as though he were trying to call to me in my dreams. He would give me a look. . . a look that begged for me not to

worry about him anymore. His big It was raining outside that day. blue eyes would squint, and a tiny grin Huge drops of water splattered my would appear on his dark Native pink dress, as my parents hurried me American face. I woke up in tears, for across the street to the parking lot. It's I knew that it was not a dream . . . I over, or so I thought, as I got in the felt it deep inside, like something twisting my emotions like an electric For ten long years, I was made to be

"I'm telling you, Tara," Chris said as he got off the bed and stood with his back to me, looking through the after my baptism, I took my First Holy huge window that faced Kwik Fill. "You have powers."

I did not want to believe Chris. I guess I started to go through denial, which I learned soon enough was not Continued on page 15.

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Witch cont...

good. The more I denied my powers, the more afraid I became . . . afraid that the huge void I was feeling would never be filled.

I soon came to the realization that I possessed some form of power, but did not know what it all meant. Not only could I predict the future through my dreams, but I could "feel" things . things that were relatively confusing to me. I could tell when a spirit was present. I would get chills, and a few times I thought I heard them communicating with me, mentally. That had happened even since I was a child, as young as four years old. I would receive regular visits by entities higher than myself on a monthly, sometimes a weekly basis.

It was 1983, a cold Autumn night, and I was sleeping in my huge bedroom in a house that I knew was creepy from the very moment my family moved in. Clink . . . clink, clank, BANG! I shot straight up in bed, not knowing where the noise came from. Clink, tink, tink . . scraaaape. It was my toys . . . I had left a huge pile of toys on the floor at the foot of my bed. Afraid to look, but knowing somehow I should, I peeked to see what was going on.

What I saw made my breath stop, and I cold feel the short hair on top of my head begin to stand. Three balls of white glowing mass were hovering at the bottom of my bed. What happened next, I don't recall, but I remember ending up in the corner of my room, sitting cross legged on the hard wood floor. The three white masses were gone and I remember feeling no longer afraid, but at peace and very calm. From nowhere, a transparent apparition of some sort was hovering over me. I stared, fascinated. Then I heard voices. Not a single sound was uttered in the room, but I could hear them in my head. The presence was telling me not to worry. He was there because he had to be. At four years old, I did not know what that meant, but I knew I was safe. I do not remember walking back to my bed, but I woke up there. I asked my parents, and they told me that they hadn't set foot in my bedroom all night . . . but somehow, I ended up back in my bed.

I knew this was not a dream, and although some may argue this point, I am not crazy. I saw what I saw and heard what I heard.

Many people claim to have seen apparitions and poltergeists in their lifetime, so this is not the only "gift" I believe that came with my powers. For example, at times, I get frustrated, and something will fall or fly across the room. It feels as if my stress is taking itself out on inanimate objects by forming into very strong force. Also, I am able to finish other people's sentences for them, and a few times I have heard people speak negatively of me . . . but not out loud.

I wanted to know where this power came from. I needed to know so I could put my life together and stop driving myself crazy. I was confused, afraid, and had a huge fear of not being accepted because of my "gift," as I like to call it.

Chris was my "savior." He reassured me that I was not crazy, and that when someone starts to come to terms with her powers, she will go through a period such as the one I was experiencing. He told me that to help me find my direction, I should go to a bookstore or library and head straight

for the Religion/New Age section and pick up the first book that "called" to me . . . he said from there, I would know what to do

I stood on the fourth floor of the California University Library, pacing the religion section. I did as Chris told me, and the first book that reached out to me was a book about the Salem Witch Trials that occurred in Massachusetts in the eighteenth century. One of the first acts I do when I pick up a book is go straight to the index. I did so. There, I found a list of people who had been convicted of Witchcraft: some had been exiled, others burned at the stake.

"Huuuh . . . oh my God?" It was my voice that escaped the aisle and filled the others . . . rather loud, but nobody else was around to hear. I scanned the page and noticed at least ten of my mother's ancestors, names I remembered from our documented family history, on the list.

I closed the book and checked it out, not intending to read it . . . but to scan it and find out more about my

"Mom!" I blurted breathlessly into the phone, "We're Witches! I knew it all along!"

"Call PapPap," she said to me. "Tell him. He would love to hear it."

The tone in my mother's voice disappointed me, for I knew she was not taking this as seriously as I was. She was playing it off as a joke, when all throughout my childhood, I would say to her, "I bet we have Witches in our family, Mommy,"

I called my grandfather, and he confirmed the names, dates, and places of my alleged Witch relatives. They matched the information in the book. The relative who drew my attention the most was Abigail Hobbs, who resided in Casco Bay, Massachusetts. Some called her "wild woman," as she had claimed to have sold her soul to the Devil. Wow . . . to be the relative of a "wild woman," I thought was the greatest.

I could not believe all of this was happening to me so fast. Shortly after I found this information, my powers seemed to grow stronger and my intuitions greater.

Amanda, my best friend, who was a practicing Witch, and I sat on the floor of *Laura's apartment, beers in hand. chatting with Laura and several other women we had just met that same night. This, but a week after discovering my ancestor's roots, and Laura, a coworker, had invited us to her apartment for a seance.

A vision hit me . . . I saw it in my head and I blanked out to pay more

'Who here was involved in a serious car accident a few years ago?" All was quiet as they stared at me. wondering where the question came

"Ummm . . . I was hit by a car." The response came from a girl whose name I no longer remember.

"And it was blue . . . it was a big blue car." Where was this coming from? Well, it was coming from my mouth, but things just kept popping into my head . . . like a picture of a big blue car, smashed to pieces, being towed away, street lights glaring off of

the shattered windshield. "Ye - ees, it was," the girl stared at me, eyes wide with disbelief. "How did you know that?" The look in the girl's eyes said she was scared and

That night I amazed not only the

people in that huge apartment on Zulu Street, but myself as well. I made Laura cry because once again, a vision came to me about her deceased little brother trying to contact her . . . telling her not to worry. I did not know what "do not worry" meant, but I told her

"He's telling you to stop worrying, Laura." Here was this little boy, small in build, brunette, standing before me in my own head. He was smiling. My whole body was covered in goose bumps, and my body hair stood on

"Oh God . . . it's really him." Laura's eyes welled with tears as she placed her hands over her eyes and lowered her head.

Later, Laura pulled me aside and told me the reason her brother was reassuring her. Seven years before, she had been raped by a stranger on the beach, and she was in the process of waiting for the results of her HIV test. But she told me that, strangely, she was no longer worrying. She was at ease, and could not explain the sudden feeling of peace. She hugged me, tears in her eyes, and thanked me for all I

I was slowly coming to terms with my Gift. Chris gave me his Tarot cards. I was hesitant to read them at first, afraid of failing at them, but I got over the fear . . . and within six months, was reading them without the aid of the book. I was good, or so I was told. I hardly ever had an inaccurate reading, and when I did . . . Chris told me it was natural.

I could not believe it was happening to me. I knew that people would think I was crazy, and at first, I thought it myself. But what came later put everything into place for me.

I picked up several books on Witchcraft. I also visited several web sites about the subject. After some extensive research, I decided I wanted Witchcraft to be my religion. I found that contrary to much belief, Witchcraft is not an evil practice . . . but a beautiful one.

Witches worship nature and everything else in the Universe. They believe that not just one God could have created everything put in this entire Universe, and others are existing. That is what I wanted to do. That is what I wanted to believe. It seemed right.

What seems right to one person does not necessarily seem right to another. I made my new religion known to a few people . . . and by the middle of last semester, it seemed that

I was walking through the Student Union last semester on my way to class. "Hey, Tara!" I heard this voice call from behind. "Be sure not to sacrifice any small children on your way to class!"

I laughed because that's what I considered it . . . a joke. I felt that if somebody was ignorant enough to facts, then there was no reason for me to be upset.

I still receive comments to this day. but I think my favorite one is "Back, Witch, Back."

That line is usually delivered by a short black student who was in a class with me last semester.

(With his forefingers, he makes the sign of a crucifix and holds it up to me like I'm going to kill him).

His eyes widened in fictional fright . . he would back up slowly as he spoke, "Back, Witch, Back."

"Hi, I'm *Scott." A man dancing in front of me put out his hand for me to shake. I did the same . . . and as our hands clasped one another, I knew he had something. The chill soared up my arm and back down again . . . it was like an electrical shock. But I did not say a word to him about what I felt.

It was the middle of December and I was doing Tarot readings. An organization I am involved with on campus was putting together a dance to raise money for a charity, and each dollar I brought in a reading, I would donate. The room was dark, music thumping through speakers, not more than twenty pope on the dance floor, and I was in the corner sitting at a table illuminated by candles and black light shining down on me, clad in solid

"Hi, Scott. I'm Tara." I just looked at the man. Why was he introducing himself to me, and why me?

Nothing special happened that night, except for the fact that because of the twenty readings I did, my energy was drained and I felt like a vegetable.

I noticed Scott around on campus for the next few weeks, a few hi's here and there, but no extended conversation every happened between us. But I still got the chill whenever I was

"Tara, do you want to start a coven?" Scott's drunken body came staggering through the doorway. It was two months later, the start of my fourth semester, and Scott and I have become best friends. We began to talk when he noticed my recruiting table for my fraternity in the Student Union. I had the table there for a few weeks, and by the end of that period, Scott was pledging my fraternity (it is co - ed).

Throughout those several weeks, I found out Scott has been a practicing Witch since he was six. That explained my sudden rush of energy whenever he

Now we were at Mark's apartment. Mark was a friend of mine who was throwing a great party that night. Scott came stumbling through the doorway after having a cigarette in the hallway, and laid this question on me.

"Are you serious, Scott, or are you just delirious from the alcohol?" I asked laughing, but serious at the same

"No, Tara . . . I am serious."

That was it. We were on our way to starting a Witch's coven. I was excited, as was Scott.

I found through him that we were not the only Witches on campus, and we are currently up to five coven members . . . Scott, *Alex, *Dee, *Tom and myself.

Many people believe that I am mentally ill or worship Satan. But you need to understand that Witches cannot worship Satan, for we do not believe in him. We worship nature and all its surrounding entities.

We worship the Gods and Godjudge my religion without knowing the desses that make up the place in which we live. Yes, we cast spells and

> But they do not involve anything that would ever cause harm to another living thing.

The witch motto is: "Harm None." Witchcraft is a wonderful religion and should be respected, for it is the oldest form of religion on the face of

Take the time to understand, and maybe you will not judge

*Names changed for protection

Steib Hobbs and The Two Red, Soulless Eyes

by Bill Stanick Graphic by Dena Ciampi

swerve, but the, little torso had already The impact rolled the little body onto the hood of the car, flattening the ornament. The gray body tumbled

appeared to be that of a little girl, was prowling, red, soulless eyes and hungry mouth opened. The little girl

Her face shattered the windshield.

After a terrifying fifteen-foot skid, of the creature were crushed, and the vehicle stopped. Dizzy, Hobbs slowly lowered his head onto the leather steering wheel. A light cloud of smoke drifted over the roof of Hobb's

Shit! What the hell was that? it was. Anything but a child. I'll go to have. What am I going to do? I'm not have spent the rest of the night at her place. Yeah, but then, I'd would've had problem. He reassured himself that he what, I just can't win.

He turned the ignition off and stumbled from the sedan onto the unevenly paved back road. Hobbs coughed up the liquor from the night's binge and looked in the direction of the small lifeless mass; it lay there, as uneven as the pavement. He turned in the direction of the woods, crouched, and threw up again.

Hobbs wiped the vomit from the comers of his mouth and chin with the sleeve of his flannel. Not more than twenty feet in front of him, blinked two red dots once, twice, three times.

His knees were numb, and when Hobbs tried to stand, he almost toppled over. When he regained his balance, the two red dots had vanished.

What the hell was that?! Come on. get it together. It was just a radio tower. What am I going to do? This is the third accident in six months. But,

Hobbs shook his head and cleared

his throat. He staggered toward the grayish heap of mangled flesh. Dammit, it's a little girl.

just entering his mind. He would put her in the trunk and come out tomorrow night and bury her. Deep.

Her body was tucked in a fetal position. She lay there as if she was asleep, innocently awaiting for someone to awake her. Hobbs knelt

tributaries of cracked pavement. The Please, God, dont let it be what I think blood and behind the smirk of the torn lips, Hobbs saw gaps between its sharp

> given it a second thought. In fact, when he reports it to his insurance company, he'll be assured to tell them, It was a huge deer. Eight point. Rolled right up over the car.

A chill ran through his body and the flight. skin on the back of his neck raised. Why is it so quiet? Where are all the crickets and owls?

Hobbs suddenly longed for the sounds of the woods. The owls, the crickets, the bull frogs. He stood axiously, awaiting for some sign of life. Hobbs was never aware that silence could be so frightening. So

Crackling dead leaves and the snapping of fallen branches filled the woods that surrounded him. He stood and turned, searching for the source of the sounds. Feet trampled the ground behind him. The footfalls grew louder and closer. He wanted to scream but

Then, the little mangled monstrosity center of the road. Hobbs floored the started to crawl toward him. Unaware, right as it snaked closer and closer to

out him away for along time, even if

the unevenly paved road. He glanced allop toward the vehicle on all fours. Just as Hobbs was about to make the sharp turn of the bend, the winged ature spread its wings and took

"What the hell have I ever done to you?! "Hobbs screamed.

The beast flew effortlessly. It glided back and fourth until it enclosed the driver's side of the sedan. The beast opened its jaws. Hobbs franticly wound up his window. The beast turned its head and soared upward. Hobbs barely made the turn.

The sedan bounced heavily as the winged creature landed on the roof Hobbs swerved, trying to force the mammoth beast from above. The creature's talons ripped into the roof of the vehicle. Hobbs screamed as the roof of his sedan was pried open.

Not more than ten feet ahead of Hobbs' vehicle a deer ran out into the

brake pedal with both feet and slammed the palm of his hand onto the horn. The winged creature released its grip as Hobbs swerved to miss the animal. The deer stood in place, blinded by the vehicle's headlights. Hobbs missed the deer but continued

use key. A shadow drifted above him then circled the street light, creating a strobe-like effect on the front lawn. His stomach churned. Hobbs jammed the key into the lock and swung open the door. He slammed

"Shhh! You're going to wake Mikey," his wife snapped, rushing into the living room from the kitchen "Where the hell have you been? It's three in the morning, you womanizing shit! If it wasn't for our little boy, who hasn't found out what kind of monster you are, I'd leave you.'

Hobbs wasn't listening. He was more concerned with what had just peered out from the corner. Nothing the street light on the front lawn. Hobbs let the curtain go and leaned against the couch, shaking.

"What the hell's the matter with you? Worried that one of your whores followed you home?" From the corner of Hobbs' eye, the glow from the streetlight ceased. He peered through the mesh curtain into the darkness.

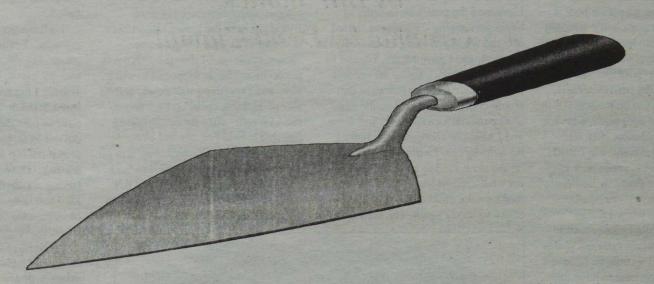
"What did you say?" He turned to his wife in a panic. I said, "Did one of your whores

follow you home?" "No. Before that." "That I'd leave you if I thought it wouldn't break Mikey's heart.

"Oh, my god, Mikey," Hobbs screamed, as he dashed for the stairs. "What the hell's wrong with you?! As he ascended the steps, an

upstairs window shattered. 'Mikey!!" Hobbs screamed, taking Continued on page 36.

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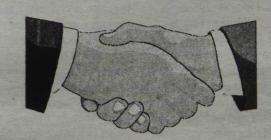
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We idolized the lifeguards, who not only looked after us more than our baby-sitters, but were also our friends. Every year, we would count how long we had until the summer we could become lifeguards.

That time came when I finally turned sixteen. I could hardly wait to take the test, and when I passed, it was a dream come true. I couldn't believe I was actually getting paid to be at the pool all day, doing the things I had done my whole life for free.

I continued to work for the City of Pittsburgh for the next few summers, handling small problems like occasional neighborhood fights, retrieving kids who swam out a little too far and removing glass from the feet of crying children.

For the most part, there were no real problems. I spent most of my time conversing with patrons and playing "Fox" and "Marco Polo" with the kids on my time off. Those were just some of the reasons that made my job so enjoyable and why I didn't mind going to work. However, nothing could prepare me for the tragic day that would come three years later, and would haunt me for the rest of my life.

One afternoon early in 1997, I was sitting by the front entrance to Beechwood swimming pool when two kids ran down the steps, screaming that a man was lying in his yard, not breathing.

I looked to the head guard, who was in the shallow-end chair, for some directions on what I should do. She pointed to the top of the steps and motioned for me to go. Faced with my first real emergency, I raced up the steps. Steve, a first-year guard, followed. I did not want to go. I was frightened that I wouldn't remember what to do and since this was a real emergency, I knew I had no room for mistakes. I was also furious that the head guard, who was supposed to take over the pool, not the whole neighborcontrol in the real crises, just sat in her hood. I hate the Good Samaritan Law, chair and sent an inexperienced guard and me to the scene.

The children showed us where the old man was. I arrived at the scene, a block down the street from the pool, to find an old man lying on the grass and lifeguarding far longer than I had. a running lawn mower moving down the hill by itself.

The man's wife ran toward me, screaming for me to help him. We dashed over to the man and knelt down on either side of him. His body was blotching purple. We removed his glasses and found his eyes rolled back into his head. I wanted to tell his wife to turn off the lawn mower because it was driving me crazy and I couldn't think, but she was too hysterical to understand. I felt like I was in a Stephen King movie.

I was never so scared in my life. A

man's life was in my hands. Neighbors positions. They began to shock the began to gather. Someone told me that 911 had already been called. Steve and I assumed the positions in order to begin performing CPR. Steve started off, and we began two-person CPR. He pumped, and I gave breath. I began to feel more comfortable as the process became more routine. I thought that we would continue working on the man until paramedics took over, and Steve and I might be recognized as heroes for helping out. I was wrong.

We continued to work on the man for what seemed like forever, yet the medics were nowhere in sight, and I began to worry again. The man still

man repeatedly. His body jolted, but he still did not wake up. Then they injected something into his arms. Blood ran onto the grass. I stood back in disbelief at what I was seeing. "Jesus, come on," I thought. "What is the problem? He is supposed to wake now, and everything will be ok, and he will go to the hospital and get better, and everyone will clap or something

I felt a fireman's comforting arm on my shoulder. I looked up at him, and he shook his head, then lowered it. I wondered what was wrong. He patted my back and said, "He's not going to



didn't respond. We were breathing for him. He was motionless except for our occasional repositioning of his limp and lifeless head. Did the medics think a cat was stuck in a tree or something? This was serious; there was no time to delay. Someone ran toward the house.

"This man's gonna die," I thought. "I can't do this much longer. This shouldn't have been my responsibility. I was only supposed to be watching or whatever it is. I hate everybody at the pool that didn't come to help me." I knew the other guards were scared, too, but someone had to do something to help the man, and they had been Finally, a fire truck arrived and the firemen jumped off and told Steve and I that they would take over.

I stood back and watched as the firemen continued CPR, but still no paramedics appeared. Time had been warped, so it is hard to say how long it actually was before they did arrive. Also, I wondered why it was taking the done, and how I couldn't save the man so long to respond. He lay there, unconscious and not breathing on his

He was turning more and more purple. Eventually, the paramedics showed up and took over the firemen's make it."

saying that? What did he mean? Steve and I worked on him. The firemen worked on him. Even the medics worked on him. He had to be ok. It was the only thing I expected of him. How could he let me down? Why couldn't I save him?

Questions began to run through my head, but I had answers for none of them. I looked to Steve for an answer, but he had already broken down and begun to cry. Steve was a guy. They weren't supposed to cry. If he couldn't be strong, how could I? I couldn't. It was over. I began to cry as well. People attempted to comfort me, saying things like, "You did the best you could," and, "He was old anyway." Shut up, I wanted to tell them. Don't talk to me. You don't know what you're talking about. You were just standing there. You didn't try to help.

I walked right by everyone, toward the pool, not making eye contact. I didn't want them to see what I had man's life. I walked into the pool where I was still on duty and went right for the guard's room to find my

As I walked past the pool, people asked what had happened. I didn't

answer, hoping that they would just know by looking at my grass-stained knees and red eyes that I had tried and

I left the pool, trying to suppress my sobs. I called my mom on my cell phone, but she wasn't home. I called another friend, but there was no answer. I began to walk. I left the pool and headed down the street. I would have to pass the scene one last time. I did not look, but I could hear the crowd talking and sounds of vehicles leaving. The people were probably talking about me, saying what a bad job I had done. I crossed the street to be as far away as I could, wanting to forget the whole episode.

I walked past the subway tracks at the end of the street and thought about stopping at my friend Brenton and Lackey's house. I wasn't close with them, but I had to tell someone what happened. I knocked on the door, but there was no answer.

I opened the door and yelled in, and finally they responded. They came down the stairs and looked at me and knew something was wrong. I told them that an old man had just died even though I had been trying to save him. I started to cry again. They tried to comfort me, but I pretended that I was ok. I finally got a hold of my mom, and she picked me up at the end

My aquatics director and head guard called me the next day to see if I was ok and I received two thank you letters in the mail, weeks later, from the Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh and the head of the Pool Division. The letters commended me on my "exceptional performance" but they felt more like insults. I hadn't saved anyone. I wasn't a hero.

Later that week, neighbors came by the pool and thanked me for my effort, but I felt worse every time they did. "What?" I exclaimed. Why was he This past summer, a lady came up to me and said that "so and so" had moved to New York with her daughter after her husband's death. I had never known his name because it would have been too real. Sometimes I'd like to think that it was all a dream. I asked now out of curiosity, and she said his name was John.

That's all I know and probably ever will know about him. The lady even tried to justify his passing as they all did, by saying that he was too old and shouldn't have been mowing the lawn on such a hot day. I smiled as I always did and said nothing. I guess it's better that way sometimes.

I still lifeguard every summer, but I have found myself hesitating when taking the required CPR exam before the start of the season. We must perform CPR on a dummy to prove that we are skilled to do so in a real

My mind goes blank and my palms start to dampen every time. Even though it is only a dummy, I still wonder if I can handle the result of my actions. I try to block that day from my memory but it occasionally resurfaces, causing me to relive the event in a morbid flashback and to try to figure out what I did wrong.

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bered the big event of two years

she appeared. I rose from the bench I

was sitting on and walked confidently

When I got next to her, she said,

Her lips were full and pouty, her

replied, "Hello I'm Marco. It's a

Trying to sound aloof and secure, I

At the time, I was a rough and trim

"Hello, my name is Helen."

eyes penetrating.

pleasure to meet you."

The devastation of 1988. 1 walked into the doctor's office, not knowing what to expect. I sat down in a small chair facing the front of his desk. He hadn't arrived, so I gazed around the room at pictures of boats sailing, family members enjoying a picnic, and a document framed in a solid wood casing, stating Dr. Henry Smith, Neurologist, U.P.M.C. Medical Center, 1956. Ironically, I thought, "1956, the year I was born." The doctor entered the room from behind me and sat at his

He was a short stodgy man of about 65. His graying hair had receded to almost the middle of his head. His movements were slow and deliberate as he removed papers from a folder on his desk. He still hadn't addressed me or even looked at me. I began to feel uneasy. Finally he said, "Hello, Mr. West, how are you feeling today?"

I took a weak stab at humor and replied, "O.K... Doc, but I've been better."

A weird little smile appeared on the pinkish face above his three chins. I started to sweat and told myself it was only because I was nervous.

Although I had been in the office for only 20 minutes, it felt like hours. Without looking up from the papers on soul. his desk he said casually, "Mr. West, you have Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, or in layman's terms, Lou Gehrig's Disease."

I felt a shudder, and my sweat became a cold chill.

He still had not removed his eyes from the papers. I asked, in amazement, "Lou Gehrig died from this illness?"

His eyed met mine, and I noticed they were green, almost vacant, and weak and tired, the eyes of a man who had been beaten, who had failed at a mission of importance.

and spend countless hours in the bedroom.

The days were arduous. Since I could not chew or swallow effectively, I had to eat food that had been annihilated in an electric blender. Bathing and going to the bathroom were no longer simple. I dreaded the prospect. My mother, simply not strong enough to lift and secure me, felt helpless.

Once again, the eyes. They had become my messengers I saw her pain in them, watching her only son deteriorate to a lump of useless flesh. A local medical system provided us with a home-care attendant. The attendant was able to lift and place me toward her. When I was about 10 feet in the shower and on the commode. He from her, our eyes locked, and a wasn't a bad guy; actually, he was very glorious smile crossed her face. pleasant. But his constant chatter about nothing annoyed me.

I wasn't the kindest person to be around. I realized he was just doing his job, and I was grateful. He would have to tie me to the shower bench so I wouldn't fall. He would wash me, wipe me and clean the dirt from my paralyzed body. That whole process appalled me. I would sit on that shower bench and watch the water flow into the drain. I felt as if my pathetic life were also running down that pipe. God had lost track of my

After my bath, the attendant would lift me back into my bed. I memorized every crack in the ceiling, every crevice in the walls that now made up my prison. I stared vacantly. Every so often, a tear would run down my face. People had always considered me strong. I lay there, saying over and over, "Fuck this, Fuck this."

My gun was in the night stand drawer next to the bed. No one knew I had it. I envisioned putting the barrel of the .38 into my mouth and pulling the trigger. But the disease had taken its toll on my hands. I could barely

[The] process appalled me. I would sit on that shower bench and watch the water flow into the drain. I felt as if my pathetic life were also running down that pipe. God had lost track of my soul.

He went on, "You will develop complete paralysis. Eventually your respiratory system will shut down and you will suffocate and die. I give you two to four years at best. I'm sorry,

The beaten eyes took on a glint of pity. I stood up to leave, and as I moved slowly out the door, I heard the papers shuffling in recognition of

Six months later I lay in my bed paralyzed from the elbows down, fingers curled, mouth drooping. I shared an apartment with my mother

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operate a TV remote. How, then, could I pull a trigger? I had to a way. I needed to end the misery. As I lay there wallowing in self-pity and anger, a more powerful thought took over.

The brain remains lucid throughout this illness, and eventually a voice seemed to come from my heart, saying, 'How can you think of killing yourself? What about your mother and sisters? They would be the ones to discover you blown apart. How could you do that to them?'

Shortly after, I had a mental image of my mother standing in my room,

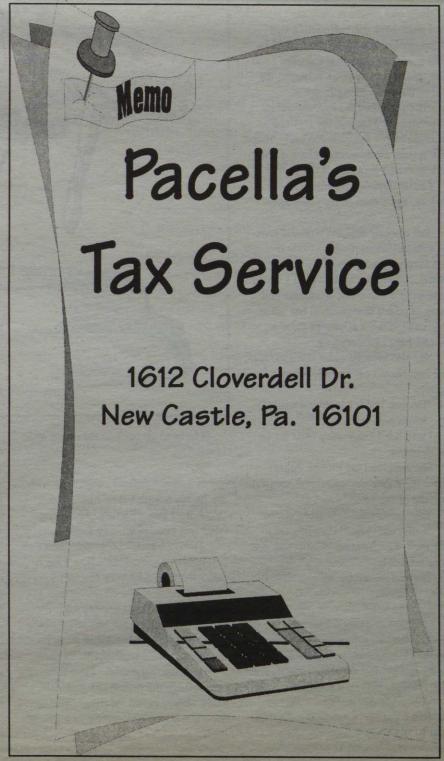
looking at my brains splattered on the carpenter. All my life, I had worked wall. Her expression horrified me. And hard physically. I was 6 feet 2 inches the voice inside me said, 'The Lord tall and weighed a solid 195 pounds. will help those who help themselves.' We stood there on the street, making Six months after the doctor levied the small talk. In a very subtle way, her death sentence, I fully realized what I eyes moved up and down. I marvelled at her beauty. Shoulder-length light-Lying there in that bed, I remembrown hair fell in small tufts across her tan shoulders. The strapless blouse she earlier. She was standing across the wore revealed a long, curved neck. Her street when I first saw her. I gazed at slacks were cut off at midcalf and fit her, until I had to force myself to pull her like a new skin. The lightly raised my eyes away. I had to meet her, to get heels of her shoes accentuated her close and see if she was as beautiful as finely muscled legs.

> "Walk to my car, please. It's only a couple of blocks away," she said.

Simply the way she moved suggested a quiet dignity and class. When we arrived at her car, I slowly pulled her close and gently kissed her. The scent of tangerine seemed to envelop us. If there is such a thing as love at first sight, this is the closest i have ever

The next year was a whirlwind of

Continued on page 38.



THE ULTIMATE GIVER OF GIFTS

by JUNE LEVIN ROTH

he doorbell rings, complacencies of the peignoir and late coffee, the rewards of my recent retirement, which has made every morning Sunday morning. As I tighten the sash of my shabby black cashmere robe (a gift I received in the sixties), the postman hands me a brown paperwrapped package, secured with twoinch filament-reinforced tape. The postmark, North Stark, Ohio, tells me Phoebe Warner is dead.

Whether it was the cancer that has been eating away at her throat these past five or six years or a self-administered overdose, I do not know. The sister, who thwarted her earlier attempts, will send me details, no

I cut through the tape and the pages of newsprint. Even before lifting the lid of the shoe box, I know what is in

Wrapped in sheets of yellowed North Stark newspapers is the bronze dancing girl. There is no note.

I push back the coffee mug and stand the bronze dance on the table. The geometric hair that caps her head like that of an Egyptian princess, the arc of the arm ending in the saucy, assertive hand on the hip, the cubist cones for breasts, and the stylized triangle below the rounded belly, make her appear monumental, although she is less than a foot high.

I have seen this dancing girl once before, more than thirty years ago.

Tall Phoebe Warner, with the look of a professional model, strode through the Edwardian Room at the Plaza Hotel, toward the table where I waited. She wore a black silk shirtdress and a rope of pearls that reached her waist. She carried what appeared to be a brown paper grocery bag.

She slid into the chair across from me and peeled off her white kid

"Do you know Lipchitz's work?" she asked me.

I told her I knew very little about modern art.

She removed the bronze dancer from the paper bag and stood her in the

middle of the table. Two men at the next table stared. "Cute, isn't she?" Phoebe said to

the men. Then, to me, "Collectors are into assemblage these days." She scrutinized me as she spoke. "But I'm not a collector."

"You're not?"

"Nope. I just buy whatever I fall in love with from time to time and I walked into this gallery an hour ago and I fell in love with this little dancer. So, I bought myself a present." "Some present!"

"Why not? It isn't every day a girl gets to celebrate a tenth wedding

anniversary." She was watching my face as she spoke. "Ten years for Pete and me. And you and Fred just starting out. Life is full of all kinds of little inconsistencies, isn't it?

The waiter stopped by for our order. Phoebe said a double martini and eggs Benedict. I chose chicken a la king and

Phoebe wrinkled her nose. "Iced tea? Aren't you going to help me celebrate?"

"I have to go back to the office after

"If a senior partner caught me with

"Aren't you a partner? How long

"Twelve years," I told her. "But I've

gin on my breath I'd be in trouble."

just made partner. That's how long it

takes women. And very few of us get

brought out a little tin box from which

she shook charcoal-colored particles

camouflage my breath before North

Stark library board meetings. You can

have a drink. Then just chew a few of

"Sen-Sen," she said. "I use them to

She reached into her bag and

have you been practicing law?"

hired in the first place."

out on the white tablecloth.

lunch."

"So?"

Drawing by Kenny Musko

"No, thanks." She shrugged.

"So I asked the woman in the gallery how much for the dancing girl and I was about to pay. But when I looked into my wallet, there weren't enough traveler's checks left. Not after the beauty shop."

Phoebe's honey-and-wheat-colored hair was pulled straight back and braided into a halo that circled her

The men at the next table were

who did my hair -it goes down to

my waist-had her nose about two

She nodded. "Said her boyfriend

didn't like her in glasses and contact

lenses cost a hundred fifty dollars. So

"She must have been flabber-

"I hadn't enough left for the the

in front of her and the miniature vase-

inches from my face while she

checks and told her to keep the

"Near-sighted?"

She lowered her voice. "The girl

eavesdropping.

change."

gasted." I was.

She put her glass down on the table and stared at me, squinting. "I like you." She had a disconcerting way of looking you too squarely in the eve. "I couldn't stand What's-her-name. She acted as though she thought I was a hick. But she was the Philistine. With all her fancy private schools and her college degree, I'll bet Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm was the last unassigned book she read. I may have

shaped pitcher beside it. Phoebe

picked up the glass and took a sip. She

licked her lips. Then she gulped the

whole thing and refilled it from the

"Imagine." she went on, "the

gallery owner just put it in this bag and

"You do. You do look honest. And

handed it to me. She said she'd send

me a bill. Said I looked honest."

your hair is stunning."

little pitcher.

I tried to steer the conversation back to the sculpture. It was awkward for me to listen to this talk about my husband's first wife. But Phoebe insisted.

dropped out of college to marry Pete,

but I'm an autodidact." She bit her lower lip. "I cheered when Fred left

"When are you two going to settle down and start a family?" Phoebe tightened her jaw and lowered the pitch of her voice in imitation. "As if we hadn't been trying for years. She made me want to puke."

"Let me look at your dancer." I reached across the table. I turned the dancer around in my hands and examined it as carefull as a piece of evidence in a trial. The character of the sculpture seemed to change, depending upon the angle at which I held it.

"Do you like her?" Phoebe, diverted, asked me.

"Yes. She's great. She looks like a gutsy woman." I looked up at Phoebe. "I'd guess you're one, too."

"Me? Gutsy?" She pursed her lips. 'I've never been tested. Listen. You can have the dancer when I die. I'll put it in my will."

Nervously, I laughed. Phoebe had met me for the first time at dinner the previous evening and here she was, making me a legatee.

"When you die? What makes you think you won't outlive me?"

"Fat chance. With the way I use these?" She hoisted the martini glass in one hand, the cigarette in the other.

The men at the next table took one last look at the dancer as they left. Phoebe beckoned the waiter and

I handed her five fifty-dollar traveler's pointed to her glass. Our lunch was served, with her

> She cut up the eggs and the muffin. She dipped her fork into the sauce and licked sauce off the fork. Dip and lick, dip and lick. She drank the martini.

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The waiter put the full martini glass She pushed pieces of muffin around on Continued on page 42.

The World as We Know It

Letter

My Dear Offspring:

Be suspicious.

Everything is a clue, except cheap smiles and chewing gum.

Do not go barefoot while walking on glass, unless you are thoroughly prepared.

The atmosphere is full of moving particles which could possibly become a part of you. Take these particles in. Everyone needs a home.

If you take your phone off the hook it will become bored, possibly lonely.

This situation could come back to haunt you the next time a call is made.

While thinking roll your eyes back inside your head so you can read your own

thoughts.

Donot forget to use your peripheral vision to locate lost thoughts attempting to escape to the discreet edges of the mind.

Hammers can hurt your fingers.

Love Your Patriarchal Other, Maximilian Belly Ache

-Robert K. Giesen

Little Dharma

Who are my deliverers? When parents sell their children for alcohol or drugs. Teachers leave a woman

and return a man.

Children plot

to destroy one another.

Religious men dip their fingers

into alms for the poor.

What good is a Papal music video? What sense is their to have a confidant?

She'll only sell the tapes

to Kenneth Starr.

I returned home to find everyone

addicted to numbness-

natural or manufactured.

I shake my head

pull wisps of hair from my face

I step out the light

Take deep breaths of air

untainted by human bile.

One foot before the other

leave it all behind me.

Head for my own utopia

somewhere out on my own-

they can't take me

I am my own deliverer.

-Noele Hornyak

CARGO DONKEYS

ARMED WITH BACKPACKS AND THEIR PARENTS' MONEY, FOUR LADIES FROM THE CARIBBEAN INVADE EUROPE

BY IVETTE GARCIA

imee, Monica, and I looked back for one last reassuring glance from our parents before we boarded the plane. They watched their three young daughters with watery eyes and smiled encouragingly. Our dream vacation was about to materialize. We were heading out to the Old World with only a backpack and the good judgement we learned from our parents. In this journey, I planned to discover freedom. I wanted to explore the singularity of cultures, encounter history, feel the rush of adventure, and share it with my friends; but most of all, I wanted to feel free, away from everything I've known, as if I were opening an illustrated book for the first time.

Aimee, Monica and I attended the same private Catholic school in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico. When we graduated, Aimee and I moved together to Mayaguez, P.R.; Monica went to Ball State, Ind.. We reunited in the summer and decided to go backpacking through Europe during the next summer vacation. For a year, Aimee and I had planned the 43-day trip. We kept Monica, who was now at Florida International University, updated with details. The book Let's Go Europe 98 was our guide and bible for this trip. Monica called one night to ask if her friend Ivette could come along. We decided it would be a perfect four-pack, since traveling in pairs is convenient.

After a 10-hour trip, we arrived at Heathrow Airport in London, where Ivette waited for us. She was asleep, hugging her oversized backpack to her strong, petite body. She was more than happy to end her nap when we woke her up. With all the confidence we could muster and walking like cargo donkeys, we followed the signs to the information booth. We booked m at the Colliers Hotel. We were relieved to survive the Underground (London's organized transportation system) and successfully arrive at our room without becoming lost in the strange and unknown streets of Mary Poppins' homeland.

London is a cosmopolitan city, in which a wide variety of ethnic individuals travel in pairs, regardless of their race. Some cultivated individuals walk without making eye contact, while dreamers and artists exchange their talent for pounds in the Underground's extended hallways. Two-story red buses waddle by on the wrong side of the streets, and prostitutes sell themselves with creative ads plastered inside crimson telephone booths. The climate is rainy and gloomy, a dramatic change from



our Caribbean sunshine.

After we dropped off our back-killing packs at Colliers, we ventured out into the city and found Piccadilly almost by instinct. Piccadilly is a famous plaza where many artists make a living out of entertaining tourists with their creativity. A steel fountain with an angel squirting water stood at its heart. Considerable modern structures surrounded the square. In the corner, a billboard that advertised Coke Cola, McDonald's, Samsung, Foster's, TDK and Sanyo stood colorfully above The Gap, The Body Shop and Burger King.

We met Pancho in front of the Piccadilly Fountain where he was selling large, bright, odd-shaped hats. A tiny olive-skinned man, whose lips tried to disguise his protruding teeth, Pancho was the son of a political refugee from El Salvador. His mother was a doctor who attended wounded political fugitives and then became an object of persecution for the corrupt government. Pancho's parents were forced to leave the country and moved to Milano, Italia, where Pancho grew up and decided to travel the world. He became a sort of travel guide and we came to appreciate his

quiet, patient, pleasant manner.
We referred to the people who

hung out in Piccadilly as the Piccadilly Crowd. A group of young guys from different nationalities reunited in the plaza to play congas, juggle burning sticks, and read fortunes while drinking booze and smoking pot during breaks. A blond, long-haired, painter colored the man with dreads pretended to be a robot, and a bold, pale musician with a goatee played the bagpipe. The crowd attracted many tourists that passed by and could not resist to be taken away with such a soulful performance. "We are sharing with exceptionally talented human beings, the positive energy I receive intoxicates my senses with serenity. Percussion rhythms travel in the cold wind, but I feel warm. And I ask myself about the lives of these special persons, of their adventurous souls. their unique street wisdom and intimate spirits" (May 25, 1998), I wrote on my diary while sitting like a stone with our new friends on the fountain at the center of Piccadilly.

"Even the homeless express some sort of creativity," I said when we

saw a man clothed in rags crossing the street. Feathers splurged out of his warm, wool, handmade shoes. A plastic bottle of orange juice hung from the waist of his pants and a white and black turban covered his long dark hair. Aimee ran after him to take his picture.

London was the place to meet the most eccentric individuals. Pancho introduced us to his friend CJ from Wales. CJ was a tall, almost transparent, hairless, outrageous male specimen that played the bagpipe at Piccadilly, an instrument that suited well his perturbing personality. CJ and Pancho took us to an underground cafe, a deteriorated building where a group of their friends hung out.

The place was a miniature apartment furnished only with a couch and a pool table. We met Anais, an adopted South Korean who grew up in France. Her petite body was pierced everywhere she had a hole and her pink hair was cut in a Mohawk. She lived with two Italians, Marcos and Mateo, both with attractive potential if you overlooked their neglected hygiene. Dirt accumulated in their long nails, Mateo's dread locks looked more like greasy sausages, and their perspiration filled my nostrils from three feet away. Anais French-kissed Marcos impulsively to mark her territory away from us. Marcos was a tall, tanned, green-eyed man with a white sparkling smile. Long dark lashes shadowed Mateo's serene hazel eyes. His relaxed manner contrasted Marco's hyperactivity; Marco never shut up. Mateo had picked up Marcos from the street and Anais later joined them at their abandoned building they called home. We communicated half in Italian and half in Spanish, because all of us preferred our native language to our rough

We took the train that runs underwater from London to Paris, but to our dissatisfaction, never saw the swift machine hit the sea. When we arrived to Paris' "Gare du Nord' (north train station), panic struck upon us. We had no idea where we would spend the night. The information booth was closed and the travel agency didn't make reservations for hostels. A semester of French was barely adequate to ask for train tickets, but with my dictionary in hand, I managed to ask the ticket lady for a hotel-prone location at Rue de Rivoli. We had a terrible time deciphering the Metro to reach Rue de Rivoli, Paris' main street. We were relieved to find a hotel sign the instant we surfaced from the subway

station

A warm, yellow morning escorted us on our first walk and satisfied us with the romantic enchantment we anticipated of Paris. We walked Rue de Rivoli and passed through Les Champs-Elysees, a passageway embellished with copious trees, Greek fountains, and green rest areas that led to L'Arch de Triumphe. I was mesmerized at the boundless amount of dead soldiers' monograms engraved on this monument.

graved on this monument.

To climb La Tour de Eiffel we had to wait in line for about an hour, then cram in an undersized elevator with stinky Europeans to get to the second stage, then squeezed into another lifter to finally reach the top. The city of Paris laid on my feet as a gigantic cement carpet fading in the horizon, a miniature optical illusion to my amazed eyes.

We went to the Real Palace thinking it was Notre Dame. When we finally got to Notre Dame, a mass concluded and people followed the cardinal out of the church. Between sites Monica lost two watercolor paintings she had bought for her mom and brother. We were not surprised. Monica doesn't lose her head only because it is attached to her body. After mumbling French phrases and walking from place to place, we found her estranged paintings. Monica didn't go to El Louvre because she had gone on a previous trip with her mom. Besides she had "had enough of art for a day," since we had visited Picasso's museum earlier. To Ivette's disappointment, we arrived to El Louvre too late. We went in just to say we visited it. Ivette guided us running through El Louvre with her brochure in hand. Urgently seeking the paintings her dad said she had to see: "La Giaconda," by Da Vinci, "Le bain turc," by J. A. D. Ingres, "La dentelliere," by CJ Vermeed and "La Vierge a l'enfant en majeste, entournee de six Anges," by

We had to spend our last night at the Auberge de Jeunesse (Youth Hostel) Leo La grange in Paris-Clichy, at the suburbs of Paris. Flor de Rivoli was booked with previous reservations for the Coupe du Monde 98', soccer's world cup. I was relieved for my pockets because the hotel Flor de Rivoli wasn't exactly economic. We were exited at the prospect of meeting new people at the Youth Hostel. The hostel had a kitchen so we decided to buy food and cheap wine in a supermarket. We settled in our two bed bunks, took a freezing shower in the coed bathrooms, and sat down at the bar/ lounge/kitchen of the hostel. We drank and exchanged promises of devoted friendship that only alcohol inspires. I noticed that the group of

people at the table to our left was speaking Spanish. I recognized their accent almost immediately, bringing back memories from my long-lost Chilean friend, Carolina Nieto. I kept glancing at a cute, bleached blond guy dressed in a red soccer shirt sitting at the table.

When he asked in English if I could take a picture of him and his friends, I answered "of course," in Spanish. A specific language creates an unspoken bond in a foreign land. After I took the picture, he grabbed me by the waist and handed his camera to his friend, asking him to take a picture of us. Then he asked my name and I asked his. He was Felipe Meyer. His group left except for him and two other guys, who sat with us. Monica excused herself from the table before she puked cheap wine all over us. Ivette left with her.

After too many beers, my casual acquaintance with Felipe flourished. We decided to go to the bathroom at the same time. We walked to the coed toilets, separated by a thin wall, laughing at the romantic setting. When I came out, Felipe was standing in front of the stall grinning. His bloodshot eyes met mine. For a delicious second, we presaged the extraordinary kiss that followed. We stayed up all night, exchanging sweet words and kisses, knowing we were never going to meet again. Felipe had come to the hostel to meet Chilean friends, who were visiting Paris. He was an exchange student in Paris, studying architecture. He liked to paint in his spare time. He asked me to stay one more day in Paris so we could get to know each other better. "My friends are going to kill me," I said knowing already that I was going

Aimee, who's use to my frequent careless impulses, couldn't believe I was splitting for a day with a stranger. On our way to the Sacre Coeur Cathedral, I barely said a word, listening to Robbi Rosa (a Puerto Rican music god), on my Sony Walkman. When we sat down to eat they looked at me as if I had just killed a dog. I could not believe they were so freaked out. "I got to tell you that this time you outdid yourself," Monica said to me looking down at her salad. Aimee wouldn't even say a word. She's an expert at keeping her thoughts inside, where they boil and burn; fire comes out of her eyes,

I agreed to meet Felipe at the Hostel at 4:00 p.m. My friends were preparing to go to Amsterdam, where I would meet them the following day at 6:00 p.m. I was nervously looking at the clock on the wall, it read 4:15 PM, and still no trace of him. The girls gave me worried looks, knowing they had to leave soon whether I was

coming or not. I desperately summoned supernatural forces to make him arrive soon. My friends probably summoned the same forces but for the opposite purpose. Either the gods heard me or destiny was already written, because Felipe showed up at 4:28 PM in black leather sandals, from which a purple-nailed thumb peeked out and a ripped leather jacket. My friends awkwardly greeted Felipe and left. The walk to the train station with Felipe was worldly ungraceful. I call it the post-onenight-stand syndrome. Somehow, the light of the day inspires uncomfortable silences and the magic of last night is the only motivation of becoming reacquainted. Plus, I'm sure my well-worn stinky baggie jeans, tangled hair, and tired face were as appealing (or should I say appalling) as his black thumbnail.

Shortly after our unpolished encounter nature reawakened magic and we rediscovered our attraction sitting by a tree in a park. The next morning, we had breakfast at McDonald's and walked to the train station. We sat on the floor of the station, waiting for the Amsterdam train to arrive. On the way to my train cabin, I placed in his pocket a poem scribbled on a page ripped from my diary, asking him to please read it later. When we got there, I looked at his caramel eyes for the last time and said, "Goodbye or see you later. One never knows."

"One never knows," he repeated.

I grabbed him by the neck with the palm of my hand and kissed him. I turned around and hopped on my train without looking back. Sometimes you stop yourself before doing something you'll later regret, and sometimes you have to do quite the opposite. I know if I wouldn't have stayed in Paris with Felipe, I would've regretted it.

I arrived at Amsterdam's train station with plenty of time to kill before my friends came at six. I wandered in the small station, and



bought a tuna fish and onion pizza from Pizza Hut. I sat down to eat, picking the excess onions from my pizza. A Rastafarian offered me weed to buy. Felipe had warned me about Rastafarians who tried to rip off tourists, so I was prepared to bombard him with a fast Spanish monologue that drove him away.

Minutes ticked by and my mind elaborated a plot against my sanity. Paranoia seduced my mind with the thought that my friends wouldn't make it. I was tortured by images of my traveling Europe alone, running into my friends at the Madrid Airport only on June 6 to go home. I posi-

tioned myself at the station's entrance until 6:30 p.m. I tried to calm down, and walked to the information booth to buy a calling card. I had written down some phone numbers of hostels where my friends might've stayed. I walked out of the stand feeling more desperate every second and searched everywhere for my friends. The first one on sight was Ivette, the shorter one, Goldie-locks Monica was on my right, and on my left Aimee, looking worried but as cool as usual.

Everything you hear about Amsterdam, the city where prostitution and drugs are legal, is true. As Vincent Vega said in Quentin Tarantino's Pulp Fiction, "It's legal but not a hundred percent legal. You just can't go to a restaurant, roll a joint and start puffing away. I mean, they want you to smoke at home or certain designated places. It breaks down like this: Okay, it's legal to buy it, it's legal to own it, and if you're a proprietor of a hash bar it's legal to sell it... it's legal to carry it! But it doesn't matter, get a load of this: If you get stopped by a cop in Amsterdam, it's illegal for them to search you."

In the red-light district, topless women greet men through their windows, inviting them to come in. Coffee shops and sex shops, with explicit showcases, line up in the crowded streets. Stores sell all kinds of paraphernalia and restaurants have all kind of munchies. Amsterdam is a blur of memories of smoke and indigestion. All we did was smoke, eat, shop, and sleep. We didn't go to the Heineken brewery, Anne Frank's museum, or even to the Marijuana Museum. We were ready to move on to a more productive itinerary. Every night ended with one of us passing out in a coffee shop, too stoned to open our eyes. Space Shakes, Space Brownies, Green Tea, Northern Lights, Purple Haze, Super Skunk, High Morac Super Pollen, Snow White, White Widow Skunk (my personal favorite), Afghani and K-2 Champion. My mouth waters at the memory.

We took the night train from Amsterdam to Berlin. We got off the train groggy and with a terrible case of collective morning breath. For a couple of extra bucks, the information center booked us in Art Hotel. We dumped our burdensome backpacks, brushed our teeth and prepared to go on a walking tour. Monica was stomach-sick (Amsterdam's dreadful munchies) and stayed in the room.

Gregg, our skinny tour guide from Chicago, took us through historic Berlin while narrating the city's history since wwil. We visited the plaza where Hitler burned books during his domain. In the middle of the plaza there's an underground monument representing one of Hitler's many disgraces to the history of humanity. The fiberglass tile sheltered a book stand below the floor, symbolizing the burial of literature during WWII. We stood up above Hitler's bunk where he blew his brains out after his wife's planned suicide because he knew he had lost the war. We visited the only remains of Berlin's Wall in its original place, where the tour ended. Gregg recommended the group visited Checkpoint Charlie, a museum dedicated to those who rebelled against The Wall, those who died on their attempt to escape communism crossing over to the Republic, and those who made it.

We were engrossed, reading all the

Omar's cousins were a little bit on the

square side, but I liked Omar and it

was nice to hang out with homeland

brothers in Berlin.

The scenery on our way to Prague was the most heavenly I ever saw from a train in Europe, except maybe the Mediterranean. Lakes stretched across valleys protected by green mountains, country houses sparingly appeared. I couldn't get over how fantastical the panorama seemed. When we arrived in Prague, a lady named Hanna introduced herself and asked us if we needed a place to stay. We hesitated but looked around in the dark empty station and saw another lady approach-



ing two other girls. We figured it was safe and followed her to her compact car. The ten-dollar-a-night room she had available was surprisingly clean and roach-free. Our next-door neighbors, Heather from Arizona and Stacy from California, introduced themselves and we chatted before passing out.

The next morning, Heather and Stacey joined us on a visit to the Prague's Castle. Soldiers dressed in blue, red and white uniforms stood firm at the entrance of the gate. They completed the changing of guards with impeccable coordination and maintained an expressionless face when we tried to make them laugh. We spent most of our time wandering in the lively gardens while Ivette bought the audio guide and toured the castle. The best part about this castle besides its gardens was the picturesque view of the pastel colored old village bistered on the hills with light hues of orange and yellow.

We browsed and looked for bargains around the streets of Prague, which is a great market for African and Asian crafts. On the way back, Heather and Stacey stopped to buy ice cream; Monica had to go to the bathroom. Monica carried a blue backpack with a sewn Puerto Rican flag patch on the back into the Zombie Bar. Instead of entering the bathroom, she distractedly walked into the kitchen. Two guys sitting on a nearby table screamed, "Boricua!" (Another word for Puerto Rican.) She turned to them smiling and spontaneously mouthed that she had to go to the bathroom "pronto" before further socializing. Carlos came outside of the bar wearing a shirt with a Puerto Rican flag to see if Monica was with somebody else from our island. Aimee spotted him immedi-

"Mira, ese tipo es puertorriqueno!"



Aimee said.

"Hey...tu, Puertorro!" (Another way to say P. R.) I called his attention.

He turned around, we introduced ourselves and he invited us inside to meet his brother. We invited Heather and Stacey but they declined because they had to get ready for a folklore dance. In the meantime, Monica came out of the bathroom and conversed with his brother Pedro. When we came in with Carlos Monica exclaimed, "Those are my friends!"

"That's my brother," Pedro answered.

> We sat down and talked until 10:00 p.m., when we decided to meet in an hour to go to nother bar.

"You guys are ate but I see the delay was worth it. You all look great!" Carlos said, looking up and down at us.

We found a crowded bar on a corner and decided to go in. We sat at a tall round table below a giant portrait of a female cartoon character smoking a joint and beside us a big amplifier that hardly empowered communication.

I accompanied Monica to the bathroom and waited for her at the front of the stalls. Two women spoke English with a strong accent and I wondered why they weren't speaking whatever language they spoke in Prague. One was apparently very drunk; the other was a robust woman with short hair in her late twenties. The drunken lady asked the other to put lipstick on her lips, explaining she was an alcoholic and that she would do a lousy job putting it on herself. While I observed these women with curiosity, Monica asked if I could get toilet paper for her. I automatically opened the door to the other stall and a girl was sitting on the toilet with her pants down, another knelt on the floor een ner legs. I apologized and quickly shut the door. The girls murmured and giggled. I said to Monica in Spanish as fast as I could, "I just opened the other stall and saw something very peculiar, just shake it and hurry up," so nobody would

Later we ran into a Puerto Rican girl who Ivette and Monica knew from the PRTA (Puerto Rico's Tennis Association). The exciting night in the bar culminated in a walk ensued by rain. We spiritedly walked to the night bus stop waterlogged, purposely stepping on the wet puddles with our sandals. The wait for the bus transformed our mood from vivacious to exasperation. After an hour we agreed to pay for a taxi.

Next morning we visited the Jewish museum and went shopping. We met Heather and Stacey for lunch to say

goodbye and barely made it to our train to Munich. The train left Prague and a man asked to see our passports and tickets. Ivette touched her tummy and realized her safety pouch holding her passport, traveler checks, credit card and plane ticket, was not wrapped around her waist. She frantically grabbed her backpack and searched for her pouch. She sat down and helplessly threw her hands in the air. "I left my pouch sitting on my bed in Hanna's pension." We all looked at each other and grimaced. We had to go back to Prague. We had no other alternative.

We stepped down the train on the Check Republic's frontier to catch a train going back to Prague. The train left at 3:32 a.m. and it was 11:30 p.m. We waited in the station with a collection of loonies. A man held a sick lady on his lap. She vomited a few times and he treated her tenderly with affectionate gestures and kisses. A man about 50 years of age walked around the small station solemnly searching for food in each trash can. Aimee handed him a half-empty cereal bag. He expressed his gratitude in a foreign language and walked away with his grub. A lonely dark-haired man around

train station after midnight. "I thought I could trust you girls," she simply said. Irene from Vancouver, B. C., came to Europe with her school and decided to extend her stay to go to Italy on her own. I advised her to be very careful, to buy mace or another self-defense device and to not trust anyone. Irene looked amazed at my advice and promised she would buy mace first thing in the morning "For the gypsies," she said. I chatted with Irene until the train to Prague arrived. We exchanged e-mails and said

Ivette and Aimee headed to the pension to look for Ivette's pouch in the room while Monica and I waited with their backpacks. The mission was completed successfully and after another exhausting train-ride we arrived at Haupthahnhof, Munich around 5:00 PM. We exchanged currencies, made a room reservation, and booked train tickets for Vienna two days in advance. Rain poured on our way to Van der Kunst Pension. The last thing we needed after such a long day. I usually enjoy rain but with a thirty-pound backpack on my shoulders, without any sleep and a physical urge for rest, a rain bath was totally unnerving. Finally in bed after 24 hours of extreme activity, I said good night to the world.

After a 12-hour sleep we were ready to bike with Mike Bike's Tours. We met Mark, our amusing Australian tour guide, at the Glockenspiel of the New Town Hall at Marienplatz. He toured us around the city through the never-ending rain habitual of this region for its proximity to the Alps. We could barely hear Mark's historical facts because of the crowded streets. We biked across the city to a bike trail along a lake. The sun overpowered the rain for several delicious minutes and his twenties who wore eyeglasses and we happily rode through the trees,



read a thick book sat across from us. hills, and valleys that led to the Ivette said that we ought to be cautious promised Beer Garden. We left our of that man because he looked as ordinary as serial killers are stereotyped. A group of punk guys wearing ripped jeans and bandanas arrived and unsuccessfully tried to start a conversation with us. I couldn't wait to leave that crazy station. The only attendant sat behind a magazine stand engrossed in a porno magazine.

An oriental girl walked in, placed her backpack near us and walked to the bathroom. Her lack of mistrust bewildered us: we kept our backpacks under surveillance 24 / 7, we each carried mace and regarded every stranger as a suspect. Half an hour later, the attendant banged on the bathroom door screaming to the girl. The girl came out, her hair wet. She apparently took a shower in the bathroom, When she came back I asked her why she abandoned her stuff and disappeared to take a shower in a

bikes at the muddy lot in front of the big, wooden outdoor bar. Everybody hurried to the line to buy beers and soft baked pretzels. Monica hurried to the bathroom. The group sat in a long plank table with capacious, glass mugs of dark beer. We ate slices of a fresh watermelon that Mark generously provided and sliced for us. We left the Beer Garden with a light buzz and agreed to meet Mark the next day at the Internet Cafe for lunch. We headed to the Hofbrau Haus, a traditional Bavarian Bar, to continue drinking rich

We took a half-day excursion that showed us the most beautiful sights of the southern part of Vienna Woods. We passed the Roman City of Baden. famous for its thermal springs and for its dazzling green beauty. The tour stopped at the Cistercian Abbey of

Heiligenkreuz, the medieval cloister that houses the remains of the last Babenberger. Babenburg was the franconian dynasty that ruled during the margraviate and duchy periods of

souvenirs at the monastery's gift shop. We turned around at the sound of the robbery alarm to encounter a man searching an elderly lady who was in our tour. She said that she had nothing more, but the man kept producing mementos from her purse and coat. Except for the two ladies that were traveling with the offender, everybody was surprised at such a sudden outburst of criminality. The Austrian sales clerks talked to each other in German repeating "klepto," the only word that I understood. The tour guide interceded and she had to buy all the merchandise. Minutes later she walked into the bus looking down her at shoes, holding a full paper bag with both hands as if it contained her remaining dignity. Her friends stopped talking as soon as she walked down the bus' aisle. She sat behind them and did not say a word for the rest of the trip.

We drove by a small town called Holdrichsmuhle, and the tour guide pointed out the house where Franz Shubert composed his song The Lindentree. We arrived shortly to the Seegrotte, where we took a boat ride through a small part of the largest subterranean lake in Europe, 60 meters spanked my butt as I passed by her. under sea level. The lake served as a clay mine before WWII. In 1943 the Nazis occupied it and used it as a subterranean weapon warehouse. We walked down the cold, dark cave. "This place would be awesome for a rave party," Monica said. We followed the tour guide trough the mine's big cavities to the wooden boat that took us around the lake. We also took a lovely boat trip on the Danube and visited the romantic wine-growing village of Grinzing.

The Piazza San Marco in Venice was full of tourists, vendors, and pigeons. I appreciated the warm weather of the Mediterranean after so many days of cold and rain. After visiting the Basilica in the piazza, we went to eat and drink wine at a restaurant. Our coordination faltered when we stood up the table and we giggled our way outside. We walked around absorbing the Venetian culture. Venice used to be a democratic republic with an economy based on commerce conveniently enhanced by the famous Venetian canals. Nowadays, tourism is the biggest industry and Venice has been invaded with foreigners.

This city is like no other. Venice has canals and gondolas instead of streets and cars. Yet the canals in Venice are so polluted that decades ago, Katherine Hepburn fell in the water during a movie scene and lost her sight for a couple of days. There is not much to visit in "La Serenissima" (the very serene), but that charming place warms with flowers and introduced us to your heart with its romance.

Murano is a small island near Venice where the famous blown glass is made. Shops that sell original glass masterpieces fill the town's narrow streets. The Murano Showroom sold sophisticated (and expensive) glass lamps and included a room for glassblowing demonstrations. The artists made this complicated task seem easy. They handled the long glass Ramblas," a street full of artists, epee like professional fencers. The two vendors and booths. He read the palms men worked together in silence,

reacting gracefully to each other's moves. The younger one twirled the glass sword with a glove over the blazing oven until the spade turned crimson. The older man waited, ready to mold the incandescent spear with Aimee and Monica were paying for giant tweezers, while the youngest turned the epee in his hand. Their combined efforts turned unpredictably into salad bowls, lamps, trays and glassware.

> Rome has a rich history, but lacks organization. It is hard to imagine that city as it once was. Traffic jams clog the streets, mobs overcrowd the sidewalks, loud noises compose an energetic symphony and dirt accumulates in the corners. The metro broke down almost every time we attempted to go somewhere.

The subway's hallways were full of homeless junkies; we encountered a couple late one night in Simona, the main train station.

As we walked up the stairs the lady asked us for a "cigaretto." We said that we didn't have any, which was the truth. The lady got mad and mimicked us loudly: "No tengo, no tengo..." (I don't have any.) The man took one of two hypodermic needles that lay on the floor next to them and followed us up the steps. We ran fast without looking back. Our heartbeats marked our pace. Another night we walked home from Julius Ceasar's Bar and an old lady She tried to do the same with my friends but they were already prepared to slap her hand before it hit them. Aimee screamed, "Not only you're old, but you're gay!" She swore at us and I answered back, "Ban fan culo!"

classic history. Ruins of a classic era are proudly preserved. The architecture while we played cards on the train to of the Pantheon, the detailed wonders Madrid. I tried to ignore my urgent of Michaelangelo in the Sistine Chapel, La Catedral de San Pedro and to another train toilet. The bathroom's La Fontana de Trevi are worth the hassle of visiting such a crazy city. visit Rome.

for Florence, our backpacks couldn't hold all the cheap hippie clothes we bought. With two backpacks (one in the back and the other in the front), and a bag in our hands, we walked through 10 cars of the wrong train. The moment we realized our mistake, we hopped off the train exhausted; Monica and I collapsed on the station's floor. This infuriated Ivette and Aimee, who screamed at us for being so lazy and left to find the right train. Monica and I decided to feed their fury by staying there chillin'. Later on they ordered us McDonald's before the right train

Barcelona was another place to meet eccentrics. We met a crowd at a bar called 2do Acto. Qico Palomar was a short, chubby man who sold watercolor paintings. His conversation was strictly about UFO's and his art. A Venezuelan named Mario presented us Fernando and Pepe. Fernando was a drunken chemistry teacher with a glass eye and a big scar from his left eyebrow to his cheek. He was too drunk to hold a sensible conversation. It was impossible to follow his high voice followed by a whisper. Pepe was originally from northern Spain but moved to Barcelona during the civil war. He performs as a clown in "Las

to Ivette. The bar served Canna Beer (a every man wants and the friend one beer brewed of marijuana) and didn't care if people smoked hashish or weed. up very early to meet Patricia at a train After touring the city, we hung out every night with our new friends.

with a terrible thirst provoked by alcohol dehydration. I couldn't go back to sleep and decided to listen to Robbi Rosa on my Walkman. In the lapse between songs, I heard a Spanish guitar on the background. I turned off the music and walked to the small balcony. A girl sat in the narrow street overlooked by my narrow balcony, playing guitar to a guy. My heart went out the window as I contemplated and listened. My gaze averted, noticing two men in their briefs, who stood at separate balconies across mine. The one wearing white underwear gave me a dirty look, winked and motioned me to come to his place. I turned my head, disgusted. The other guy in red spoiled the magic of the night with the crash of worked in the monastery. She gave us the bottle he flung near the couple.

We committed the grave sin of eating Chinese food before leaving Seville. I heard Chinese restaurants use the nuns. They were allowed to have Still, this magnificent city delivers a cat's meat; I never believed it until that day. Nausea lingered in our stomachs necessity to pee, not looking forward floor was covered in urine, and I had to in Madrid, we had a farewell dinner at think of a way of doing my business Flea markets are also a good reason to without getting dirty. I pulled down my pants, held up the hem and tried to By the time we were ready to leave kneel and balance at the same time. My acrobatic abilities faltered and I wetted my pants. I crossed the wagon with a damp spot in my bottom to get clean clothes from my backpack.



I grabbed only a long skirt because my underwear was buried at the bottom of my backpack. Aimee banged this journal. Its cover shows a little urgently on the door as I stood on top of the toilet changing. I hurried and opened the door to see the remains of chewed sweet and sour chicken flying from Aimee's mouth. Her vomit landed on an empty luggage compart-

Physics caused the vomit to flow like a cascade to the floor. Later, I had to walk in Madrid for an hour with a long skirt, no underwear, two backpacks and a bag. Every time I went up and down stairs I stepped on my skirt, revealing bare skin.

We met Ivette's Spanish tennis teammate from school (Texas Methodist University) in her hometown, Madrid. Patricia was tall, tanned and beautiful. She was the daughter of our hands and was especially drawn everybody wants to have, the woman



never forgets. The last day, we woke station. She was taking us to Avila, a city built inside a wall. Catholics built I woke up in the middle of the night this city like a castle to protect it from Jewish and Muslims persecutions. The historic city of Avila remains intact to this day inside a giant fort that overlooks virgin hills and the "modern" section of Avila.

The cloister La Encarnacion of the Carmelite sisters is in the new part of town. Saint Theresa reformed the Carmelites order because she strongly disagreed with the liberal life previous nuns practiced. The Carmelites wear dresses of eight to 10 pounds every season of the year and sleep on wood pillows and hay mattresses. They speak with each other only two hours a day. The rest of the day they spend praying for the needy and the sinners and doing house chores. Patricia's aunt a tour through the museum and took us to a mass service where a boy made his first communion

She also managed to introduce us to visits once a month and it coincided with that day. I was surprised to see young, happy, healthy nuns totally exited at meeting us. We left the convent and had the most delicious hot chocolate with Patricia's uncle. Back Patricia's.

While packing, I thought that I couldn't wait to go home. I was tired of waking up early every morning, of walking like a cargo donkey, of listening and hearing historical facts no matter how interesting, and of visiting museums and cathedrals. I anticipated my big bed, clean clothes and Puerto Rican food. Yet I realized, with nostalgia, that it was the end of a unique experience. That voyage set me free. I opened an illustrated book and filled the pages with my own memo-

I had to buy a new diary during my trip. I bought a Little Prince motive diary at the Deutches Museum in Munich. Another diary wouldn't have been as appropriate. Scribbled memoirs of this passage are immortalized in prince standing on his planet, looking at his red flower. The solar system surrounds him.

I titled the diary "Memoirs of a Vagrant." During one of our many train rides, Monica jokingly said to me, "You titled your diary because you hope somebody would read it and publish it, Ja, Ja, Ja, Ja... Memoirs from a vagrant." All of us laughed and I thought, "I will never stop being a visionary and romantic daydreamer." I still see here... a boa constrictor that swallowed an elephant



-Flipside

An ancient art and ritual is reborn in a modern fad.

Tatitoo You

by Lisa Tortelli

vitting on a cushioned seat, she fidgeted with her shirt. The room was almost completely dark with the exception of the lamp the artist was using to inspect bonding to the owner of the name. her flesh. The underground tattoo artist Another example of bonding is when looked up after he finished the outline on her calf. He lifted the leg for her approval and waited for a response. She nodded briefly.

"Is that a yes?" asked the tall skinny man, looking down at the petrified victim, the living medium for his work.

quickly, "Do it." He went to work

right away. The instant the needle touched her skin she grabbed the cushions. Her face became pale and sickly looking. Her knuckles turned white from her grasp, and tears slowly slid down her face.

After what seemed like hours of torture, the tattoo artist stopped and put the needle down. The girl finally opened her eyes. She looked down at the new addition to her body and tearfully smiled.

"I like it," she said without a trace of the pain she was had been enduring.

Giving strict instructions on caring for the tattoo, the artist showed her to the door. He walked behind her and before she left, shared some of his wisdom. "If you get another one in the future, drink a lot before you go. There ain't nothing like liquor to numb the body," he

id with a smile as she walked through the basement door. "I have a tribal sign on my left

shoulder, a sunflower on my left ankle and a sun and a moon on my right hip. I always wanted a tattoo. On the outside I look laid back and conservative. On the inside, I have a totally different personality," said Jennifer McElroy, a 22-year-old senior at Cal

Although most of her tattoos aren't very large, they are colorful. Like many other people who've had ink done, McElroy seems to believe that tattooing is a recent phenomenon. Most Americans would like to believe they invented tattooing, when, in fact, the process was being practiced long before the United States ever existed. Archeologists prove this fact every time a new ancient burial site is excavated. But what they fail to see is how close the present and the past are

Today, males and females alike have a certain someone's name inscribed on their bodies. The name signifies the individual's attachment or band members or cults or gang members have the exact same tattoo carved into their skin. The tattoo unifies the group, brings them closer together. It also sets them apart from other people, making it easier to find and identify them.

It was the same in the past. Greek Taking a deep breath, she answered and Roman writers such as Plato, Galen and Seneca have made mention ordering members of his court to be tattooed.

Although there aren't many slaves around today, the process of bonding does still exist. When a person has a foreign word written on his or her flesh, it is also a part of bonding. It may be for ethnic background or it may be because a person liked the way the word looked. Chinese, Japanese and Latin are just a few of the popular languages used in body art today.

Symbols are very popular, too. Many people have had tribal symbols tattooed on them, as McElroy did. Thorn arm or wrist bracelets aren't

women then had tattoos placed on their bodies to commemorate their victory. Historians speculate that Thracian women bore the tattoos to remind their husbands what fate would await them should they ever prove to be unfaith-

A person does not have to be religious and Bible-abiding to show his or her faith in God. Sometimes people do weird things where religion is

"I got my tattoo about three years ago. I was a senior in high school and my friends and I wanted to do something together. I picked the cross

> because I'm Catholic and I loved how it looked. It was so gothic and spiritual looking," said Tina Miller, of East Stroudsburg University.

> After having the cross embedded into her right arm, Miller went back to get two more tattoos done. The second was a small butterfly that looked like it was in flight on her hip. The third was four times the size of the butterfly and located on her

"It hurt like hell when Tony (her tattoo artist) did the tattoo on my back. I cried for a bit, but when I saw the results, it was worth the pain. The rose stretches from the tip of my left shoulder blade all the way down to my middle back. I got it in memory of my Grandma Rose," said Miller of her new body art.

Religious reasons were the most popular cause for tattoos in the past. A good example of this might be when archeologists found a 5,000-year-old man. Frozen solid, he apparently was caught in a snowstorm while hunting. What scientists

found most interesting, however, were the tattoos that he bore on his skin. The it made the tattoos all that more visible. On the side of his knee there was a cross, and six straight lines 15 centimeters long were located above

"I'd like to get a tattoo someday. I want to get the Croatian crest and incorporate it with the German crest. Below it I'd have an inscription that read, 'Best of both worlds," said Mike Stankovich, a 19-year-old sophomore at California.

His heritage influences his decision on what his tattoo would look like almost as much as religion did ancient

Other infamous carriers of body art are mummies. Although all of the Egyptian mummies found to date are female, Egyptologists conclude that they aren't the only sex to carry such

Continued on page 37.



of body art. Although "respectable" Greeks and Romans frowned upon such barbaric decorations, they did use tattooing as a way of keeping track of slaves and criminals. Roman soldiers were branded before war so all deserters could be easily identified.

The Latin word for tattoo is "stigma," which in a modern dictionary means "a prick with a pointed nstrument" and "a mark of disgrace or reproach." The disgrace associated with tattoos forced many people to have them removed, supplying Roman and Greek doctors with a very profitable business. Formulas for removal of tattoos consisted of vinegar, sulfur, wax, oil and lime.

Many thought that tattoos should also be used as punishment. Plato said any person convicted of sacrilege should be tattooed and then moved out of the city, never allowed to return. Suetone reported that the Roman Emperor Caligula found amusement in men he seduced. It was said that the

uncommon these days. Ornamental jewelry that never will break, that you'll never lose, that won't cost you a skin was almost in perfect condition so fortune. Even crosses have become popular in the tattoo industry.

"I have a teal and purple crescent moon on my ankle. It's too visible, but I like it that way. I've always wanted a tattoo," said Melissa Troyan, a Cal University sophomore. In the past, women would get

tattoos for different reasons. Many decorative tattoos from previous eras were done in societies surrounding Greece and Rome. Tattoos of Orpheus are found on many Thracian women. Orpheus, according to myth, was so depressed after the death of his wife, Eurydice, that he thereafter avoided all women and instead turned to men. Seducing the men who caught his attention, regardless of their marital status, Orpheus was eventually mutilated by the jilted fiances of the

APARTMENT #8

I HAVE FOISTED MY LIFE UPON THIS ROOM. STACKS OF BOOKS LINE THE WALLS LIKE SAND BAGS. THE BARREL CHAIR BY THE WINDOW HOLDS MY SHAPE.

AND THE OILS FROM MY HAIR AND SKIN. MY FOOTPRINTS STAY IN THE HARD CARPET; ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF A MAN OF AVERAGE HEIGHT AND WEIGHT,

WHO USED EVERY CORNER OF THE ROOM WHEN HE PACED. AND WHAT OF THE CLOSET DOOR ON WHICH I CARVED A POEM ABOUT LOST LOVE, DRUNKENESS AND THE OCEAN?

IT STANDS LIKE REDWOODS. WHILE I HAVE PASSED THROUGH YEARS OF SMALL TRIUMPHS, LITTLE BATTLES, AND **ENORMOUS LOSS.**

I SUPPOSED I AM LEAVING SOMETHING HERE— LESS AMBITIOUS THAN PYRAMIDS, FAR LESS BEAUTIFUL THAN HANGING GARDENS. SOMEONE SHALL FIND ME SOMEDAY,

TIDY UP, PAINT OVER ME, REUPHOLSTER ME, WASH OVER THE FOOTPRINTS LIKE A TIDE AND MAKE IT CLEAN FOR THE NEXT BRIGHT BODY.

—KEITH ALEXANDER

THE EMPEROR'S BED

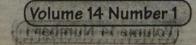
WITH A SCREAM FOR NOTICE ON THE MUSEUM. THE EAGLE GLARES WITH AN AGGRESSIVE EYE FROM HIS GOLDEN ERIE ATOP THE BED. SURROUNDED BY GILDED LAURELS, HE WAITS TO LAUNCH DOWN

AND BURY HIS TALONS IN THE EMPEROR'S FOE, WHILE THE WISE MAN SLEEPS. THE WINGED ONE ANSWERS THE WORDLESS CALL "GIVE ME YOUR ALL; GIVE ME YOUR ALL.

"DIE FOR ME, GRASP ETERNITY FOR UNQUESTIONED FIDELITY." HE PERCHES ABOVE THIS BARBARIOUS BED, SO NOTHING STIRS EXCEPT THE DEAD. WHILE MARS BEATS A MARCH ON AN OLD DRUMHEAD

AND THE EAGLE, EVERWATCHFUL, WAITS.

-JACK JAQUA



Insight, cont. ...

where people put their hands on my eyes and shoulders and prayed for a healing. I felt embarrassed at being the center of attention. There was so much commotion going on that I hardly knew what anybody was saying, other than David repeating, in a mournful tone, "Let him see, Lord."

David and others were saying these weird words, which sounded like, "hallelujah mahnahsee keyababalahara," or something along those lines.

The preacher said something like, "Spirit of blindness, come out of him in the name of Jesus

Again, I felt the ceremony was bizarre, almost many of the people talked, but I wanted it to continue. I wondered what the strange words meant. Were they casting some spell on me? If my eyes didn't work after the praying, would I be accused of not believing hard enough? Would I be denied healing because I don't have the Holy Ghost in me?

The praying continued. I waited and waited. It was not much different from when Stephanie and I prayed all those years ago. It was just like when I prayed in the dining room. Despite all the help and support, nothing happened. I believed darkness and I would be permanent companions.

After everyone had prayed, I was led back to the padded pew, where I sat feeling disappointed and let down. A flood of bitterness surged through my inner being. 'Why did I come here,' I thought. 'Mom was right. These people are out of their minds. Either these people are phony, or God's promises are. God, why have you let me down once again?"

I was on the verge of tears, as I continued to silently rant and rave about my discontent: 'God, I 'asked for it, and I really believed. What more do you

"I'm sorry it didn't work out," David whispered into my left ear, interrupting my angry thoughts. Then the preacher made reference to receiving the

"Do you want to go up and get the Holy Ghost?" asked David.

"Uhh, sure," I said, hesitantly, expecting more disappointment. At that moment, I thought about how David talked about receiving that thing. He was always so happy about God and his power. I wanted to feel his power for myself. I was going with the

'David,' I thought, angrily, 'if nothing happens, I'll be angry with you and this God you talk about for the rest of my life."

A man, who could've been the preacher, but I'm not sure, who, I guess, was wearing a suit, because of the thick and rough feel of the garment on his shoulders, came up to where I stood. He placed my hands on his shoulders and put his hands on mine. He had me repeat a sinner's prayer after him. I thought of how I'd said that same prayer many times before without much ever happening. Nevertheless, I

"Now," said the man, after I admitted my sinful nature, "try to follow what I'm saying and see if you can say words like what I'm about to say. When you speak in this new language, you will know that you have been filled with the Holy Ghost."

'Sabalaharbiadatiafaeir," he said

"Sabala," I attempted to say.

"No," he said, gently, "just let any sound you can make flow from you."

He started rambling on in that weird manner. I

timidly stood there and hesitated for a few seconds.

"Eieaeieuoparaiupbieasioushairalabbaha," I said.

I felt myself dancing and waving my hands in the

air. Suddenly, an unexplainable happiness came over

me. For the first time since I entered that building, I

felt that special charge in the air go through my body.

"Now," the preacher said, after I paused a little,

'Now I know why David always seems so happy,'

"Aeoeaeioua," I uttered, self-conciously. 'What am I doing here?' I asked myself.

But the man cried, "That's it! Keep on going!" 'Whatever,' I thought.

At this point, my memory of that evening becomes foggy because of the strange religious I'm at Heaven's gate.' commotion around me. I do remember feeling lightheaded. I felt like I was about to lift off of the carpeted floor. It seemed like I would fly.

sight," Diane said, "but you can't live without God."

"Hallelujah, manaseeolahaba."

Kayla wept.

I stayed the night at the Faith residence, not far from the church. I tossed and turned on the hard bed

"just keep thanking Jesus."

"Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Jesus! Hallelujah! Shabalarabaieufashaiorlorla."

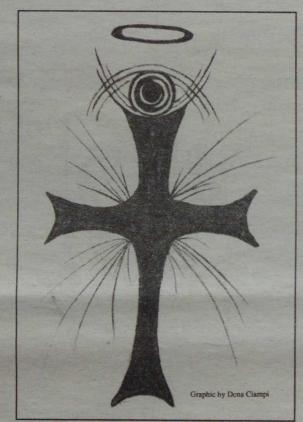
Rather quickly, I became like others in that church and the awkwardness I felt along with the bitterness, Little did I know my new life would get even better. rapidly melted like a massive snow pack being destroyed by a torrential rain.

"You know, David?" I said after the service. "this may sound weird, but I almost felt like that man standing over me was Jesus.'

cooled. Inside, however, I felt warm. David's wife, Diane, and their baby daughter, Kayla, had joined us like some Indian ritual because of the weird way that in the car. Although it was nearly midnight, we had decided to go out for a late dinner with members of the church. I was much too happy to be hungry, though. I felt like a brand new man.

"It was Jesus working through the man," David

"Wow!" I continued, "Now I know what this weird talking was. I can't believe what was coming out of my mouth! I didn't know what would come out of my mouth next! Before it happened to me, I



thought you guys were talking Hebrew or some-

"We probably were," said David, laughing. "God knows what we're saying, because when you speak in tongues, it's the Holy Ghost that's speaking through you."

"I'm glad you have been blessed," said Diane, leaning back from the front passenger seat and looking at me; her voice transmitting in my direc-

"I never thought I could feel this good," I said. At that point, Kayla, sitting next to me, yawned and cried. Diane comforted her year-old daughter. "Man! You really got that Holy Ghost in you

fast!" David said.

"Yeah, I'm amazed," I said, remembering the feeling of lightness and warmth that had enveloped me. "How did I get that Holy Ghost so easily?"

"You obviously had your heart open," Diane said, after Kayla quieted down a little.

"Well, Troy," David said. "You didn't get what you really wanted, but God gave you something that will always help you. I guarantee it."

"Yeah, I guess you're right," I said.

'After all,' I thought, 'I could see perfectly, but if I don't have God in me, it doesn't mean a thing. I now know what God feels like inside me! I feel like

"You can go to school and work without eye-

"Thank you, Jesus, for saving my cousin!" David shouted. He then lowered his voice, as he said,

"I know you're tired," Diane soothed. in the living room, not out of discomfort but out of excitement. In my head, I kept hearing the sound of high-energy church music. I was not worried about a

The next morning, we went to church again.

Before the service began, David asked, "Do you want to get baptized?"

"I guess so," I answered.

I had been baptized more than 10 years before in a Methodist church, but I felt as though something or The sun had set a few hours before and the air had someone were telling me this baptism would mean a whole lot more.

> Toward the end of the service, a man who might have been either the preacher or the man who prayed over me as I received the Spirit the previous evening, said in a loud voice from the pulpit, "Brother Troy wants to get baptized."

Other people shouted praises to God.

David guided me to a partitioned area of the sanctuary where a table stood. I stripped out of my shorts, short sleeve shirt, socks and shoes. I removed my watch, placed my belongings on the wooden table, and put on a baptismal robe. The robe felt heavy against my shoulders. David guided me out from behind the thick curtain and across the sanctuary. I walked down a few cold, wet metal steps and into the water. I shivered as I stood about chest deep in the water. Despite the singing and loud praising, I could hear the trickling sound the tank's filter made. People sang. I felt a strong sense of peace and happiness.

"Troy," David said, gently, "plug your nose." The man in charge of the baptism stood near me, his hands on my shoulders.

"Brother Troy," he said, "I baptize you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins." He gently pushed me under water for a split

According to what Diane later said, I came out of the water speaking in tongues. I might have been. What I do know is I came out of the water shivering with cold and trembling with excitement.

After that service, I had to go home. I hated to see the fun end because I knew that weekend was even more special than I had imagined.

When I got home, I told my mother how it had gone. We were in the living room, sitting on the couch as the TV belted out some show.

"So you're not disappointed?" she asked. "No," I said. "I know I got something better than

"As long as you're happy," said Mom. "I'm just worried about you, though."

"Why?" I asked.

"You believe everything you hear," she explained. "I don't want to see you get involved with a Jim Jones or David Koresch type thing."

"Don't worry, Mom," I said. "There was no cyanide-laced Kool Aid there and no man said he was Jesus. We Apostolic Pentecostals aren't like those people who play with snakes to see if they have faith. David even told me that if he saw a snake, he'd head for the door."

Each day, I thank the Lord for that wonderful experience. Sure, every once in a while, I feel cheated out of eyesight, but I know I now have something that lasts forever: God's Spirit in me. I still make mistakes and have to repent for them. I still have problems because all people have troubles in life. However, I know I have become a stronger person, not because of something I did, but because the Lord has opened a door and led me through. By his grace, I was saved.

Nowadays, I don't see God as a vending machine as I used to. I still ask him for things, but I am learning that, to paraphrase the song, even if I don't get what I want, I will always get what I need. God knows what will help me, and I am thankful that he doesn't always give people what they really want. Sometimes, answered prayers can be more harmful than unanswered ones. I received my spiritual sight that special weekend.

Physically, I was born on November 1, 1976, in Frankfurt, Germany, two and a half months early, blind, and not expected to live. Spiritually, I was born on August 18, 1996 in Greensburg, Pa., blessed with new sight and guaranteed to live forever. That new birth didn't come soon enough.

-Flipside

Flint Steel: The City

by Josh Elicker

oc, Ward, Cleric, and Boy followed Green through the dark tunnel. The men had walked for days through the hot wasteland, lost a man in an attack by two killers sent by The City, all the while not knowing their destination. Yet something about the tunnel made them think that they were nearing the end of the line. The question was: what exactly is at the end?

The tunnel abruptly stopped and Boy crashed into Green in the dark. "Looks like this is the end," Ward

whispered.

"Is there a way out? I can't see," Doc asked from the back.

"I can't see anything," Green answered

The five men huddled at the end of the tunnel, feeling around for a door or another hole to continue on their journey. They found none. Ward, the tallest of the five, then disvcovered something

"I touched something up there." He stood on his toes and reached up into the darkness. The other four men looked on as Ward pulled himself up, then lowered himself

back to where he stood. "It feels like the lower rung of a ladder," he said, smiling.

"Give us a lift then," Green replied, smiling himself.

Ward and Green helped Doc move up the ladder, then Cleric, who still clung to his Bible, then Boy. Green jumped, caught the rung, and did a

the others quickly and easily. "Well, now where are we?" Cleric

pull-up. Last was Ward, who joined

A scratching sound seemed to answer. The sound came from a few feet before them, but when Green moved forward, he found nothing but a cold metal wall. Just then, the wall opened and a woman stood on the

"Green, I assume?"

Yes, who are you? The woman extended her hand to Green, which gesture Green promptly

"Who are you?" Green asked again, this time more harshly. "My name is Ally. I'm sorry if I

startled you, but we've been waiting for you. We knew that King sent people to the Outlands to kill everyone off. We only hoped that you would save as many as you could and bring them here. Also, we heard the explosion. Do you remember a man

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named Kingsman?" Ally moved aside and gestured for the men to walk

"These men are not going anywhere just yet. I do remember the name Kingsman, but I cannot, however, recall why I should."

"Very well," Ally replied. She had been told of Green's inability to remember and that she should expect suspicion from these refugees from the Outlands. These people had been living outside The City for so long that they trusted only the Outlands and told me that it was by order of a man named King."

Ally sighed and shook her head. "King is the killer, Kingsman works

for him. I know it's confusing, but that's the way it is here. Kingsman was arrested for running an illegal operation: The Outlands." "Why are the Outlands illegal?"

Doc asked the question from the back while everyone else remained silent. It was, however, a question that plagued the minds of everyone.

"That...that's a difficult question



the people whom they are familiar

"Kingsman is the man whom you've been working for. He keeps the Outlands furning from the inside, you do so on the outside. It is he that supplies you with everything: books, money, food. He sends the traders to the Outlands, as well."

"And is it Kingsman who is behind the killing?"

"Where did you get that piece of information?"

"A few...soldiers tried to kill us.

to answer questions, but I know who is. Follow me."

Ally led them out of the tunnel and around a corner where before them "If you can recall, Green, this is the

river that leads to the burning grounds. The burning grounds, which are technically under rule of King, are the only legal operation outside of The City. This is King's River. It's a terrible name, we know, but the joke among us is that the river is aptly They have been killing off everyone in named since it flows to the trash

dump." Ally chuckled to herself and tried to read the faces of the others. "I suppose you don't get many jokes out "A sense of humor is a necessity

when faced with death day after day," replied Doc, lacking humor. "Who, exactly, are 'us," asked

"That is a question I can show you

the answer to if you continue to follow." They followed the river upstream, then turned into a stairwell. All the men were silent as they ascended the stairs, but Ally was humming a tune to herself.

They went through a door and entered into the lobby of a large building. Ally turned around and locked the door. The key she used hung on a silver necklace. As she took her place at the head of the group, the men took long looks around.

Very few people inhabited the room which made it look all the bigger. The people whom they did walk among moved quickly and looked at the ground. Everyone looked like to be in a hurry to get to wherever they were going. Everyone around the group from the Outlands wore all black, except for the women, who wore light blue. Among the others, the women were the only ones to have keys around their necks.

Ally walked ahead of the men, holding her head up high. Her brown hair was cut short and she wore no other jewelry save for the necklace. Green walked directly behind her and stared at her brown hair. Something was coming to him, a memory that he

"You might want to watch where you're going, Green," remarked Cleric. "These people don't seem to be." Ally laughed. "These are the

couldn't quite grab.

underlings. They must walk like that by order of King.' "And why aren't the women?"

for me to answer. I'm not in a position Green asked.

replied quickly, smirking. They walked out of the building and onto the street.

The street was deserted. "Where is everybody?"

"Preparing for King's speech tonight. He gives one every other

"Will we be attending?" Green

"If you like, it can be arranged." They walked in silence the rest of the way, ending their trip in a large

The series finale of a story about a man with a forgotten past, a world that's been left in ruins, and the memory that changes both forever.

Flipside

"What is this place?" Boy asked. "This is where people go when they're dead," Doc answered.

"This is where people's bodies go when they're dead," Cleric added

"This is the center of The City. Where you go from here is to be revealed to no one. Agreed?"

The men agreed and followed Ally to a mausoleum in the center of the cemetery. Again, Ally used her key to unlock the door and the men followed her down into the cold crypt. At the bottom of the staircase was a small door that opened inward. Inside that door was the complete opposite of the inside of the latter.

The bright room was full of people, noise, and warmth. At least 30 people, mostly men, stood together eating, drinking, and talking. Along the left wall stood a table of extravagant food and drinks in types of which the men had never seen...or couldn't recall

"If I start the introductions, can I get to meet these men?" A large man held out his hand to Green and held a mug in the other. "My name is Marshall Steersman, I'm the president of this fine establishment. Ally here is the vice president and a fine one at that. Don't you think she's nice? Put your eyes back in your head there, kid." He placed his large hand on Boy's head and ruffled his hair.

"This man is known as Green," Ally

"Well I'll be damned."

The man drew back from Green and eyed him up and down. He was a large man with thick limbs and broad shoulders. He had a loud voice which sounded very disproportionate when compared to Ally's, whose voice was frail and timid. His ample gut billowed out over his belt and he carried it like a professional. Obviously, his weight was nothing new to him.

"So this is the Green we've heard so much about. Pleased to finally meet you." Marshall enveloped Green's hand with his and pumped it feverishly. Everything on the man jumped and shook as if his body was nothing more than a large balloon filled with

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Steers-

"Hell, call me Marshall."

"Marshall, these men behind me have come a long way. Is there any way we could postpone the niceties and move them along to the food?"

"Sure, sure. Hell, I haven't missed a meal for 45 years. I wouldn't want to keep these men from missing one. What have you been eating on your

"Caplets," Doc answered, digging one from his pocket and handing it to

"Caplets, huh? Can't say I've ever seen these things in person. Heh, Bob! Bob!" Marshall disappeared into the crowd. While Marshall was gone, Ally turned to Green.

"Your men may eat now, if they like." Green turned to the men behind him and nodded. The men walked to the table and examined the cuisine. "That was our president. He's a bit of a were crowded around the table, windbag, but you get used to him. Tonight he's going to speak with King

"What, exactly, is he president of?" "We're the *other* political party.

We're opposed to King and all the sanctions and rules passed down from him. We don't officially have a name, just initials: F-O-T-B. I've been involved in this party for nearly eight

years and haven't heard what they stand for, so I assume they're just a collection of letters. Maybe they meant something in your time.'

"In my time?" Ally's eyes widened and her jaw loosened.

She seemed to struggle for an answer, but was interrupted by the return of Marshall. He appeared from the crowd as a whale from the ocean. Behind him he pulled a man exactly his opposite.

"This here is Bob Kirkpatrick. Bob, Green, Green, Bob. Say, Green, whatis your real name?"

"His name is Paul Frakes," Ally replied quickly.

Green turned to her and stared. It was the first time he had heard his real name for years. It was also the first time he had remembered his name in

"Fine, fine. Paul, then, meet Bob Kirkpatrick."

Paul and Bob shook hands normally, rather than Marshall's bloated version of a handshake.

"Bob here says this is from.... Hell, I suppose I should let Bob here tell it." Not once since meeting him did Marshall's smile fade. He was a man who seemed to find intense joy in

"Well, Paul," Bob began, "This caplet looks quite old.'

The man was much shorter than Paul and built like a twig when compared to Marshall. His glasses slipped down his pointy nose several times as he spoke and each time, Bob would push them back up. The move looked like second nature for the man, a reflex years in the making.

"Where did you get this, if I may

"I can't recall."

"It looks to be from the war, but the war was some time ago. I believe they fed these to some of the soldiers in place of a meal. The caplet was lighter than a meal, which allowed the soldiers to march longer and faster. And a meal makes men drowsy whereas this caplet, if my facts are correct, made the men more alert."

Paul looked down at the man with absolutely no interest in the man's

"I'm sorry, it's just that I study the war and various war relics and this caplet is...well, nothing less than remarkable." Paul nodded his head and turned back to Ally.

"Do you have a place for us to

"I've managed to rent a place in town for you to sleep. Would you like

"I'm sorry, Robert, but these men have come a long way. I'm sure that in the days to come you will have much more time to discuss the war."

"Oh, yes, by all means, sleep. I hope to talk with you later, Paul?"

Bob held out his hand to Paul, who ignored the gesture. He was scanning the room for his men.

"If you'll excuse me...."

Paul walked away from Ally and Bob. His destination was the table that consisted of several mugs. All his men whispering to each other. "What seems to be the trouble," he asked them when he arrived.

"The water is flat," Doc answered,

Paul picked up a mug and swallowed some of the clear liquid. He replaced the mug and smiled to his

"It's water, real water."

"Oh. Is there a bar?"

"Doc, we're leaving. If you are thirsty, drink the water."

And with that, Paul turned and followed Ally out of the building.

The building that Ally led them to was not unlike Doc's decrepit apartment building. There were holes in the walls, floors, and ceilings, and oddcolored stains at nearly every turn.

"There are four beds in the basement, so one of you will have to sleep with another or sleep on the floor. I'll be back later tonight if you would like to watch King and Marshall speak."

"Thank you," Paul replied, insin-

"What's wrong, Green?" Cleric

looked to be a toy.

The debate that the two men partook in was far over Paul's head and the heads of the others in Paul's group. The only thing that held Paul's interest was the way that King worked the crowd. He wore a black suit and his slicked-back hair matched. Everything was black save for his skin. His gestures seemed to work with, or rather control, the ebb and flow of the crowd and his tone controlled the tone of his supporters.

Marshall, on the other hand, was in a complete state of disarray. His skin appeared to be melting off of his face. Sweat poured from his body, making him look more like a whale than ever

"F-O-T-B. I know I heard of that before. And this King and Kingsman...the empty streets...the underground rooms and tunnels. Something is seriously wrong in this place and I can't do anything about it."

stood beside Paul as they stared out of a window to an empty street. "They told me my name."

The others had heard Paul's statement and ran to him to hear the

"It's Paul Frakes. I am Paul "Paul? That will take some getting

"Yes it will. Also, I don't trust these

people. They seem to be hiding "Yeah, and they didn't have a bar at

their little party," Doc added. "F-Q-T-B. I know I heard of that before. And this King and

Kingsman...the empty streets...the underground rooms and tunnels. Something is seriously wrong in this place and I can't do anything about it." "Get some sleep, Gre-Paul."

As everyone else slept in the basement, Paul looked out the window on the ground floor. He had been seeing more and more people walking by, undoubtedly on their way to hear King speak.

"Paul Frakes, I presume?" At the sound of the voice, Paul spun

around and drew his knife from the sheath on his belt. "Calm down. I'm here to take you

to the speech. I woke the others and they're on their way up."

"What's your name?" "My name is Frank Morland, I'm

from F-O-T-B." The men followed Frank through

the streets until they reached what appeared to be a square. In the center sat a large stage with a white background and two podiums. A massive crowd of people swarmed around the front of the stage.

"Well, this is it. I don't care to listen to the man, so I'm going to leave you now." Frank walked off without as much as a "goodbye."

"I suppose we wait," Paul remarked me." just as the crowd began to scream.

The wait was not long. A man climbed onto the stage and took his place behind the left podium. Half of the crowd cheered "King," while the other half jeered. Then the obese Marshall Steersman hobbled onto the stage and took his place behind the podium. Before Marshall, the podium

before. His gestures were erratic, with his pudgy hands in control of nothing. Marshall's lone saving grace was his spirit. In Marshall's eyes, one could see determination and a purpose. In King's dark eyes, one could see nothing: no emotion, no caring, no passion. King treated the debate like it was a game. And he clearly enjoyed beating his opponent.

When Paul was weary of watching King embarrass Marshall, he turned to find his group had vanished. He fought through the crowd, back to the empty street. Outside of the crowd there was nothing: no people, no sound, no movement. Paul ran to their tenement and found Ally sitting on the front steps, holding her head in her hands.

"What happened to them?" Paul

"King must have sent someone. I saw some sort of problem over on Marshall's side of the crowd and the next thing I knew they were taking them away. I couldn't stop them."

"Why didn't you get me?" "No one can stop King's forces." Ally looked up at Paul. "No one can stop them."

"Where are they?"

"No one knows where King keeps his prisoners." Paul shook his head at the woman and ran back towards the crowd. Ally stood up and walked calmly in the other direction.

Paul fought back through the crowd, which had begun to disperse, pushing against the flow. Then he saw who he was looking for. Paul pushed aside a woman in a light blue outfit and came within 10 feet of King before guns were drawn. Paul found himself in the middle of a circle of five women, all pointing their guns at him.

"I need to speak with King." "What's all this?" King asked,

turning around. Just then, a broad smile spread across his face. "Paul Frakes? You may let him go, he's with

He waved off the armed guards and beckoned Paul to follow him. The two said not a word until they reached the tallest building in The City.

"This is my building, I own it, live in it, work in it. But, I'm sure they've already filled you in on me. I presume they did get you first, am I right?"

Continued on page 40.

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Insight, cont.

where people put their hands on my eyes and shoulders and prayed for a healing. I felt embarrassed at being the center of attention. There was so much commotion going on that I hardly knew what mournful tone, "Let him see, Lord."

David and others were saying these weird words, which sounded like, "hallelujah mahnahsee keyababalahara," or something along those lines.

The preacher said something like, "Spirit of blindness, come out of him in the name of Jesus

Again, I felt the ceremony was bizarre, almost like some Indian ritual because of the weird way that many of the people talked, but I wanted it to continue. I wondered what the strange words meant. Were they casting some spell on me? If my eyes didn't work after the praying, would I be accused of not believing hard enough? Would I be denied healing because I don't have the Holy Ghost in me?

The praying continued. I waited and waited. It was not much different from when Stephanie and I prayed all those years ago. It was just like when I prayed in the dining room. Despite all the help and support, nothing happened. I believed darkness and I would be permanent companions.

After everyone had prayed, I was led back to the padded pew, where I sat feeling disappointed and let down. A flood of bitterness surged through my inner being. 'Why did I come here,' I thought. 'Mom was right. These people are out of their minds. Either these people are phony, or God's promises are. God, why have you let me down once again?"

I was on the verge of tears, as I continued to silently rant and rave about my discontent: 'God, I asked for it, and I really believed. What more do you

"I'm sorry it didn't work out," David whispered into my left ear, interrupting my angry thoughts. Then the preacher made reference to receiving the

"Do you want to go up and get the Holy Ghost?"

"Uhh, sure," I said, hesitantly, expecting more disappointment. At that moment, I thought about how David talked about receiving that thing. He was always so happy about God and his power. I wanted to feel his power for myself. I was going with the

'David,' I thought, angrily, 'if nothing happens, I'll be angry with you and this God you talk about for the rest of my life.

A man, who could've been the preacher, but I'm not sure, who, I guess, was wearing a suit, because of the thick and rough feel of the garment on his shoulders, came up to where I stood. He placed my hands on his shoulders and put his hands on mine. He had me repeat a sinner's prayer after him. I thought of how I'd said that same prayer many times before without much ever happening. Nevertheless, I repeated it again.

"Now," said the man, after I admitted my sinful nature, "try to follow what I'm saying and see if you can say words like what I'm about to say. When you speak in this new language, you will know that you have been filled with the Holy Ghost."

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"Sabalaharbiadatiafaeir," he said.

"Sabala," I attempted to say.

"No," he said, gently, "just let any sound you can make flow from you."

He started rambling on in that weird manner. I timidly stood there and hesitated for a few seconds.

"Aeoeaeioua." I uttered, self-conciously. 'What am I doing here?' I asked myself.

But the man cried, "That's it! Keep on going!" 'Whatever,' I thought.

At this point, my memory of that evening becomes foggy because of the strange religious commotion around me. I do remember feeling lightheaded. I felt like I was about to lift off of the carpeted floor. It seemed like I would fly. "Eieaeieuoparaiupbieasioushairalabbaha," I said.

I felt myself dancing and waving my hands in the air. Suddenly, an unexplainable happiness came over me. For the first time since I entered that building, I

felt that special charge in the air go through my body. 'Now I know why David always seems so happy,'

"Now," the preacher said, after I paused a little,

"just keep thanking Jesus."

"Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Jesus! Hallelujah! Shabalarabajeufashajorlorla."

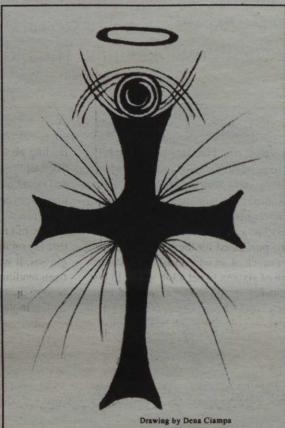
Rather quickly, I became like others in that church anybody was saying, other than David repeating, in a and the awkwardness I felt along with the bitterness, rapidly melted like a massive snow pack being destroyed by a torrential rain.

> "You know, David?" I said after the service, "this may sound weird, but I almost felt like that man standing over me was Jesus."

The sun had set a few hours before and the air had cooled. Inside, however, I felt warm. David's wife, Diane, and their baby daughter, Kayla, had joined us in the car. Although it was nearly midnight, we had decided to go out for a late dinner with members of the church. I was much too happy to be hungry, though. I felt like a brand new man.

"It was Jesus working through the man," David said to me, happily.

"Wow!" I continued, "Now I know what this weird talking was. I can't believe what was coming out of my mouth! I didn't know what would come out of my mouth next! Before it happened to me, I



ight you guys were talking Hebrew or some-

"We probably were," said David, laughing. "God knows what we're saying, because when you speak in tongues, it's the Holy Ghost that's speaking through you."

"I'm glad you have been blessed," said Diane, leaning back from the front passenger seat and looking at me; her voice transmitting in my direc-

"I never thought I could feel this good," I said. At that point, Kayla, sitting next to me, yawned and cried. Diane comforted her year-old daughter. "Man! You really got that Holy Ghost in you

fast!" David said. "Yeah, I'm amazed," I said, remembering the feeling of lightness and warmth that had enveloped

me. "How did I get that Holy Ghost so easily?" "You obviously had your heart open," Diane said,

after Kayla quieted down a little. "Well, Troy," David said. "You didn't get what you really wanted, but God gave you something that

will always help you. I guarantee it." "Yeah, I guess you're right," I said.

'After all,' I thought, 'I could see perfectly, but if I don't have God in me, it doesn't mean a thing. I now know what God feels like inside me! I feel like I'm at Heaven's gate.'

"You can go to school and work without eyesight," Diane said, "but you can't live without God."

"Thank you, Jesus, for saving my cousin!" David shouted. He then lowered his voice, as he said, "Hallelujah, manaseeolahaba."

Kayla wept.

"I know you're tired," Diane soothed.

I stayed the night at the Faith residence, not far from the church. I tossed and turned on the hard bed in the living room, not out of discomfort but out of

excitement. In my head, I kept hearing the sound of high-energy church music. I was not worried about a lack of sleep.

Bridge, cont. ...

The next morning, we went to church again. Little did I know my new life would get even better. Before the service began, David asked, "Do you want to get baptized?"

"I guess so," I answered.

I had been baptized more than 10 years before in a Methodist church, but I felt as though something or someone were telling me this baptism would mean a

Toward the end of the service, a man who might have been either the preacher or the man who prayed over me as I received the Spirit the previous evening, said in a loud voice from the pulpit, "Brother Troy wants to get baptized."

Other people shouted praises to God.

David guided me to a partitioned area of the sanctuary where a table stood. I stripped out of my shorts, short sleeve shirt, socks and shoes. I removed my watch, placed my belongings on the wooden table, and put on a baptismal robe. The robe felt heavy against my shoulders. David guided me out from behind the thick curtain and across the sanctuary. I walked down a few cold, wet metal steps and into the water. I shivered as I stood about chest deep in the water. Despite the singing and loud praising, I could hear the trickling sound the tank's filter made. People sang. I felt a strong sense of peace and

"Troy," David said, gently, "plug your nose." The man in charge of the baptism stood near me, his hands on my shoulders.

"Brother Troy," he said, "I baptize you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins." He gently pushed me under water for a split

According to what Diane later said, I came out of the water speaking in tongues. I might have been. What I do know is I came out of the water shivering

with cold and trembling with excitement. After that service, I had to go home. I hated to see the fun end because I knew that weekend was even more special than I had imagined.

When I got home, I told my mother how it had gone. We were in the living room, sitting on the couch as the TV belted out some show.

"So you're not disappointed?" she asked. "No," I said. "I know I got something better than

what I asked for." "As long as you're happy," said Mom. "I'm just worried about you, though."

"Why?" I asked. "You believe everything you hear," she explained. "I don't want to see you get involved with a Jim

Jones or David Koresch type thing." "Don't worry, Mom," I said. "There was no cyanide-laced Kool Aid there and no man said he was Jesus. We Apostolic Pentecostals aren't like

those people who play with snakes to see if they have faith. David even told me that if he saw a snake, he'd head for the door." Each day, I thank the Lord for that wonderful

experience. Sure, every once in a while, I feel cheated out of eyesight, but I know I now have something that lasts forever: God's Spirit in me. I still make mistakes and have to repent for them. I still have problems because all people have troubles in life. However, I know I have become a stronger person, not because of something I did, but because the Lord has opened a door and led me through. By his grace, I was saved.

Nowadays, I don't see God as a vending machine as I used to. I still ask him for things, but I am learning that, to paraphrase the song, even if I don't get what I want, I will always get what I need. God knows what will help me, and I am thankful that he doesn't always give people what they really want. Sometimes, answered prayers can be more harmful than unanswered ones. I received my spiritual sight that special weekend.

Physically, I was born on November 1, 1976, in Frankfurt, Germany, two and a half months early, blind, and not expected to live. Spiritually, I was born on August 18, 1996 in Greensburg, Pa., blessed with new sight and guaranteed to live forever. That new birth didn't come soon enough.

-Flipside

Bridge, cont. ...

about antiques and certainly didn't have the money to buy any, Albert had spent many pleasant afternoons browsing in the cluttered shop, looking around at all of the old furniture. Surrounded by polished woods of every kind and color, Albert enjoyed thinking of the stories that every chair, every table, and every dresser could probably tell.

Turning away from the antique shop, Albert caught sight of his reflection in its window and stopped suddenly.

Albert shivered in his thin coat as the dark eyes staring back at him in the glass seemed to reveal the face of a stranger. White, thinning hair and bushy white eyebrows shielded a pale, drawn face heavily lined by age and years of struggle. Albert sighed, pushed open the heavy metal door of the building, and stepped inside.

Turning his key in the lock of his own apartment, Albert saw Mrs. Dailey, his next-door neighbor, setting up her garbage cans outside her apartment

She was too preoccupied with her trash to notice that anyone else was there, but even if she had

graph of him and his wife taken six years earlier. He paused in front of the photograph and stared at his wife, something that he did many times in the course

She was exquisite, Albert thought proudly. Mabel was wearing a white dress that was scattered with pink rosebuds and pink trim danced along the edges of the neck and sleeves. Pink roses were her favorite flower and Albert wished that he had been able to buy her truckloads of them.

Beautiful green eyes, a delicate pink mouth, and a small, perfectly shaped nose looked lovingly at Albert who was standing next to her in the photograph, one arm draped protectively around her

The department store down the street had a big sale on portrait photography that day and Mabel had pushed Albert to have their picture taken. At the time he had balked at the expense, but Mabel had eventually gotten her way. Albert was very glad that she had, and now the photograph was his most prized

Albert slowly eased himself into a tired-looking

usually too exhausted to attend.

Albert never wanted Mabel to work, preferring that she stay home with Jonathan instead. His wife tried her best to fill Albert's shoes, but Albert knew that his absences were strongly felt by both Jonathan and Mabel.

Mabel never complained about the lack of money. She even managed to save a few dollars in later years for an occasional dinner or movie with

He relished their movie dates the most, relaxing in the dark with his wife, looking up at that big, colorful screen, her hand resting gently on his knee. They walked home together, hand-in-hand, and the neighbors always smiled and commented on what a lovely couple they made and how they were obviously so much in love.

Albert walked into the kitchen—the tiniest room in the apartment. The once-lively blue-and-white checked gingham curtains hanging at the room's only window were now faded and limp from years of washing. Albert took a frozen dinner from the refrigerator, put it in the oven, and turned the oven

When Jonathan was 17, he won a scholarship to college, but it only covered his tuition. Albert still had to come up with money for his son's books, clothing, and other expenses that always seemed to come up at the worst possible times. The old man worked grueling extra hours to pay for it all.

noticed him, she would have probably pretended

Although there were only five other apartments in Albert's building, most of the families kept to themselves and barely gave him a "hello" or even a nod in passing. One younger couple in their early forties befriended him and Mabel several years ago and would always extend dinner invitations every Thanksgiving and Christmas when they were in

The last couple of years, however, Albert had declined. The food was always delicious and the people there were nice enough but, as nice as they were, Albert always felt forlorn and out of place

The door groaned loudly as Albert let himself into a room that had seen better days. Faded green-andyellow wallpaper in a diamond pattern adorned the walls of the little room and almost its entire space was dominated by a large, worn green-and-white sofa and a pair of armchairs covered in the same flowered chintz as the couch. A television set and a small coffee table completed the simple decor.

Albert and Mabel had lived in a larger apartment on the third floor but when Jonathan moved out, they had taken this apartment. Although it was smaller than the apartment they had upstairs, it was less expensive and, since it was on the first floor, more practical given their advancing ages.

Albert walked into the bedroom and carefully placed the garment bag on his neatly made bed. Taking off his coat, he reached into an inside pocket and took out a letter addressed to his son. He meant to mail it today, but was so busy that it had completely supped his mind.

Albert put the letter carefully on a chest of drawers beside the bed and made a mental note to himself to mail it the next day. He had become very forgetful lately, sometimes forgetting where the post office or drug store were— the same places he had been going to for years.

Trudging across the worn linoleum to his favorite armchair, Albert passed the television set in the living room, on top of which sat a framed photo-

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armchair and reached into his pants pocket withdrawing a black velvet ring box. He opened the box, reached in, and took out a one-carat pear-shaped diamond engagement ring with a white gold band. Mabel always wanted an engagement ring just like this one but he never had enough money to get one for her. He barely had enough money for the simple gold band that he purchased for the ceremony.

Albert hadn't much of an education. He gave up school at the age of sixteen to get a job and help his struggling parents pay the bills. Mabel married him knowing that they would be surviving on a meager salary from whatever blue-collar job he could find. He worked a string of manual labor jobs-everything from loading stock in a department store to loading freight on and off ships at the piers. The last job he had was working in a factory putting wheels on little plastic toy cars. That particular job lasted

Albert and Mabel struggled financially, especially in the early years of their marriage when Jonathan was a child. There was always a toy or a new pair of shoes to buy, or an occasional cracked football helmet that needed replacing.

When Jonathan was 17 he won a scholarship to college, but it only covered his tuition. Albert still had to come up with money for his son's books, clothing, and other expenses that always seemed to come up at the worst possible times. The old man worked grueling extra hours to pay for it all.

Many nights Albert came home from work long after his son had gone to sleep. Whenever he returned from work, he stopped in Jonathan's room and looked in on his son, kissed him tenderly on his nead, and placed a small gift on his night stand for the boy to find when he awoke.

Sometimes it was a little plastic toy from one of his factory jobs, sometimes just a piece of candy from the vending machine at work—but he always left something.

It was his small way of trying to make up for all the football games that he missed, the gruesome algebra problems that he wasn't there to help solve, and the parent-teacher conferences that he was

on. On top of the kitchen counter were Mabel's reading glasses in a pretty pink and blue leather case. She had become forgetful the last few years as well, and could never remember where she left her glasses, even though she always left them in the same place.

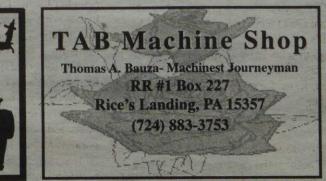
The old man walked over to the morning paper that lay on the kitchen counter next to Mabel's glasses. It was opened to the story that Albert had been reading that morning about the young teenager who jumped to his death off the Brooklyn Bridge earlier in the week.

Albert's eyes focused on the teen's photograph that accompanied the article. He found it hard to pull his eyes away from the handsome high-schooler, clad in a football jersey and smiling from ear to ear. The article mentioned that the teen had been despondent over breaking up with his girlfriend a few weeks earlier, but Albert couldn't understand how a young man with so much ahead of him could ever take his

Shaking his head, the old man reached out and turned the paper over so that the article was facedown on the kitchen counter.

Albert slowing lowered himself into a chair at the kitchen table to wait for his meal. Tonight's dinner was lasagna with green beans and cherry cobbler for dessert. He thought hungrily of the many delicious meals Mabel cooked for him over the years. Mabel loved to cook and always enjoyed trying out new recipes for her husband and son. French cuisine, Italian, Mexican—she had tried them all, and even on a tight budget. Albert smiled and licked his lips at the memory.

dinner at Luigi's, an Italian restaurant he and Mabel dined at several times over the years. Money would be no object tomorrow. Albert already knew what he would order—a bottle of their finest red wine, stuffed mushrooms as an appetizer, chicken sorrentino as an entree with spaghetti marinara on the side, and tira misu for dessert. Albert's mouth watered as he thought of his impending feast. Maybe he would even have two desserts.



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piping hot against his face. He chewed his food slowly, lost in

The walls of the apartment were paper-thin, and he could easily make out the sounds of voices coming from the apartment next door-children shrieking and calling to one another and parents unsuccessfully trying to quiet them down.

The sounds seemed to be echoing his own thoughts as he sat there lost in time, remembering.

Albert recalled when their own apartment was filled with noise and aughter. Those days had come and gone much too quickly. Swallowing a mouthful of lasagna, Albert looked down at the formica table.

There were little nicks and grooves on the once-smooth tabletop where Jonathan had spent many nights doing his homework and had pressed too heavily on his paper with his pen. Albert was angry when he spied those marks years ago, but now he was glad they were there. In a strange way, he felt comforted by them.

Popping the last bit of cobbler into his mouth, Albert threw the empty foil tray away and placed his knife and fork in the kitchen sink.

He went over to the radio sitting on the windowsill and flipped it on for

The news programs he listened to were often the only signs of life coming from the small apartment.

Sitting back down in his chair he let his gaze fall on a stack of photo albums that were resting on top of the kitchen table. Leafing through the yellowed pages with trembling fingers he shook his head in disbelief. Were those photographs really taken more than forty years ago? It seemed like

Albert came to a photograph of Jonathan standing in front of a colorfully decorated Christmas tree, clutching the handlebars of a shiny red bicycle with chubby little hands. A big red bow was perched gaily over the bicycle's front wheel. He had taken Jonathan to Sunset Park, only a few blocks from their apartment, to teach him to ride his first two-wheeler.

There he ran alongside his little boy, holding up the weight of his son and the new bicycle, while Jonathan pedaled furiously, trying to keep his balance, his chubby cheeks as read as

"Don't let go, Daddy!" Jonathan had squealed. "Don't ever let go!"

And Albert promised his young son that he would never, ever let go. But, of course, he lied. As soon as the little boy managed to stay upright for a few moments, Albert unobtrusively removed his hands from the back of the bike, leaving Jonathan to sail forward on his own.

"Whee! I did it, Daddy! I did it!" Jonathan shrieked proudly, his soft blond curls blowing gently away from his face, the hair at the nape of his pink neck wet from his exertion.

Albert felt a surge of pride at his son's new-found skill but his happiness little softer now. "-did you get the was bittersweet. This was his son's first step toward independence and Albert knew that soon there would

come a day when Jonathan would not need his father.

Albert picked up a back-and-white photograph enclosed in its own protective cardboard case and lifted its cover slowly. It was his wedding picture and he sat there for a very long time just staring at the two young faces. They looked so innocent, so

A door slammed shut just then from somewhere in the building, bringing him back to reality, and he went over to the radio again, turning the volume knob as high as it would go. He stood there for a moment with the news blaring, feeling with the loudness a small sense of relief.

Finally lowering it, he went over to the stove, picked up the tea kettle, filled it with water from the sink and placed it on one of the front burners. Albert turned up the flame and walked over to the phone that was hanging on the wall next to the kitchen table.

What was his son's home phone number again? Albert thought for a moment and sighed. He just couldn't remember. The old man dialed the numbers slowly after reading them at arm's length from a little black book that was kept on a shelf under the

Albert sat at the table and listed to the phone ring on the other end of the line. He felt oddly nervous and was unsure of what he would say. The old man shifted uneasily in his char as he remembered their last phone conversa-

It had not gone well. The only man mentioned that they had not seen each other in almost four years, and Jonathan became very defensive. The talk quickly turned to Jonathan's childhood and how Albert had never

Mabel always understood his absences and late nights, but Jonathan grew more bitter with every passing

Jonathan's voice was very faint and tinged, as always, with impatience.

"Hello, son. How are you?" "Oh, hi, Dad, I'm fine."

Albert could hear static on the phone and his son's voice seemed very

"I just wanted to call you ... it's been a few weeks since we've talked, hasn't it?" Albert could hear a lot of static on the other end of the line.

"Yeah ... I guess so. We've been so busy here, you know? Allison and I just got back form Paris and now we're packing to go to Japan the day after tomorrow. Our firm is handling that big airplane crash over there."

well, you certainly get around, son. I'm very proud of you. You mom

"Dad, I think we've got a really weak connection here."

Tapping, clicking noises had joined

Albert ignored Jonathan's last comment, intent on telling his son about his special day.

"Do you know what tomorrow is

There was a pause and Albert, despite the heavy static, could make

"No, Dad. What?"

"Fifty years ago tomorrow your mother and I were married. It seems like only yesterday —"

"Dad —" Jonathan's voice was a check we sent you?"

"Oh, yes, son. Thank you very much. You and Allison are very

generous ... very generous."

There was an awkward silence which Albert rushed to fill.

"You were always a good son to your mother and me ... always a good

"Dad, listen ... I'll phone you in a few weeks, okay? We'll get together." Albert went on, seeming not to hear

"Never gave us any trouble ... no trouble at all ..."

his son's last comment.

"Listen, Dad, this static is driving me nuts. Let me phone you in a few weeks. ... when Allison and I get back from our trip ... okay?"

Albert sighed. Jonathan's idea of a few weeks was often closer to a few

"Sure, son. Just one thing, though. I letter. need directions for tomorrow. I have to go to the -"

Albert heard a sharp click and Jonathan spoke hurriedly.

"Dad, someone's trying to get through. I've gotta go." "I don't remember what train I

should get on ... I've become so forgetful lately ...' "Dad. I've got to go." Jonathan's

tone was firm. "All right, son. All right. Have a good trip. Say hello to Allison for me."

"I will. Bye." "I love you, son," Albert added quickly, realizing as soon as it spoke

that Jonathan had already hung up. Albert put the phone down slowly. The radio announcer was talking about funeral services and the old man strained to catch what he was saying. The young man who committed suicide earlier in the week had been

buried that morning. The old man walked back over to the windowsill and looked down at a plant that, obviously, had died a long

Mabel had brought home a ceramic blue-and-white flower pot filled with pink roses from the farmer's market near their apartment.

The once fragrant blooms were now brown and lifeless but Albert could not bring himself to throw them away. He gazed out over the rooftops at the bleak winter sky. It was growing increasingly dark.

Albert filled a brown mug with hot water form the teapot, dropped a tea bag into it and carried it into the living

He sank into his favorite flowered armchair, his mind running over the events of the past few days.

The new suit ... the engagement ring ... the dinner reservation ... the

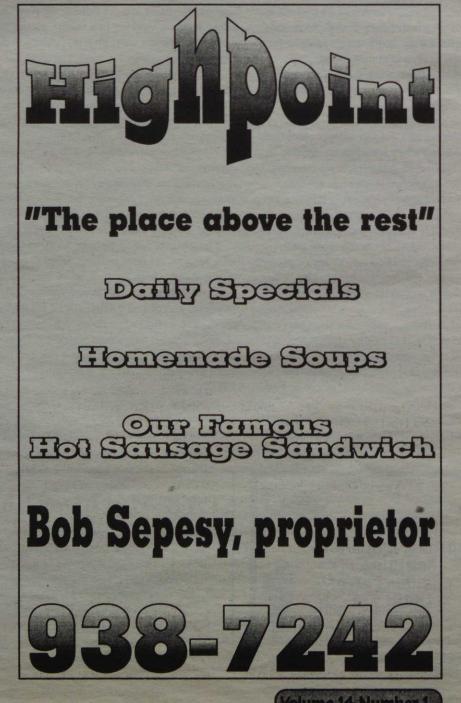
Albert once again found himself staring at the photograph of Mabel in her pink-and-white rosebud-covered dress. It was her very favorite dress and she wore it an many special occasions. With her petite build and fair complexion she always looked perfect in it.

The old man's eyes filled with tears as he remembered sadly the last time he saw her in that dress. She looked beautiful, as always. Everyone at the funeral, including Jonathan, complimented Albert on his choice.

"Tomorrow night, my love," Albert said just then, lifting his cup to tea to Mabel is a half-salute. He had a vague, unsettled feeling in the pit of his stomach because he still did not have the directions that he needed.

Not to worry, Albert told himself, taking a sip of the already lukewarm

Tomorrow, he would go next door and call on his neighbor, Mrs. Dailey. Surely she would give him directions to the Brooklyn Bridge.



Outward Bound

by Dena Ciampi

he wing of the tiny com muter plane was shaking steadily, like my hands. I never minded flying but the wing I had the pleasure of sitting next to was making the sound of metal rubbing violently against metal and I was sure at any minute it would rip off and send us plummeting into the Minnesota wilderness. I peered out of the tiny circular window down to a carpet of green scattered through intermittent glassy pools of water.

A man with a huge brown beard, cutoff overalls, a straw hat, and a pair of Birkenstocks was sitting across from me.

"I bet I can spit past that wing," he said, smiling. He had a lot of camera equipment and had been trying in vain to arrange it above and below his seat since takeoff.

"What are you doing with all that camera stuff?" I asked, trying to get my mind off the gyrating wing. "I'm disappearing into the forest,"

he said, the skin around his eyes wrinkling with his smile. "What are you doing on this

plane?" he asked, mischievously. "Disappearing into the forest," I said back.

"Do you play poker?" he asked, taking off his straw hat to reveal a sunbaked bald head. We played poker the remainder of the flight with 50 tic-tacs and 17 sticks of gum.

I was on my way to Voyageur Outward Bound School in Minnesota to do a 29-day course. Since then, a lot of people have asked me what Outward Bound is-a question I struggle with to this day.

Technically, Outward Bound is a nonprofit educational organization intended to help people pursue wilderness adventure. It has a rich history, beginning with a man named Kurt Hahn, a German-born Jew who began Outward Bound in 1934.

There are now 46 schools in over 30 countries around the world; however, this is not an accurate description and leaves people with a cold textbook feeling.

"One point about Outward Bound that I find very hard to impress upon others is that there is a large gap between telling and the actual thing." —Author Unknown **Voyageur Outward Bound School**

I had always wanted to try an Outward Bound course and find out what all the hype was about. I worked as a river guide and knew a few

Outward Bound instructors who could

Readings Book

By the time I was ready to fly to Minnesota, I was in the greatest shape of my life, working on the river during the days and rock climbing or hiking in

never praise it enough.

the evenings. I made sure I was physically ready for the month of Outward Bound.

The tiny plane touched down in Duluth, Minn., the home of Bob Dylan, and until I was on a bus being whisked away from the airport, my eyes were open for a glimpse of Mr. Tambourine Man. The course started out on an 80-

mile stretch of the Superior Hiking Trail. The trail ran along the North Shore of Lake Superior, from Duluth all the way to the Canadian border. The first week of backpacking was

tough. The 50 pounds on my back made every step feel like 10 and the mass of blisters that made themselves at home on my feet didn't help.

"Moleskin," a thick, felty material cut to go around a nasty blister offered some relief, though, and I quickly became a moleskin artist, creating moleskin masterpieces on everyone's blistered feet.

"I'm going to die," mumbled Arnie over his mangled feet. He was a characteristically moody guy and the blisters only added fuel to an already hot fire that burned behind his unavoidable stare.

He was from Chicago and one of the greatest cats I've ever met. He was a little rough around the edges; the kind of rough that grew on me and carried pieces of my heart away.

Patches of translucent skin were hanging off the sides of two swollen masses of flesh that might have once resembled his feet. Arnie's little toes seemed almost worn away to the color of tomatoes as blood pumped close to

"Come on, give me your dogs," I said, eyeing the atrocity. Arnie held his breath in agony as I cut pieces of mole skin, an artist at work.

"Didn't you break those in before you came?" asked Jim, an instructor. Jim liked to follow the book about things. He was a history teacher before "finding the light" and working for

"Once your feet are hurtin,' so is your soul," Jim mumbled, looking down at his well-broken-in boots, which must have endured years of hard-core backpacking.

"Yuck, that's really gross," said Katie, looking down at me patching up Arnie's feet. Katie was from Raleigh, N.C. and was the only other female in the group.

"What's that on your leg?" she asked one day while we were taking a break next to the trail. I could tell by the look in her eyes that I didn't want

My eyes lowered to see a bloodgorged tick sucked into my thigh. It was the first of many ticks I would have to deal with during my time on Outward Bound, and with each new parasitic experience, whether it be

leeches, ticks or other, unidentified insects, my reactions grew considerably calmer than the first.

For me, backpacking was a solitary endeavor. After the first mile or so, my mind would slip into a rhythm and my world would reduce itself to the ground underfoot and the subtle pull of the pack's weight on my hips. Sometimes, the pack seemed like a paperweight trying to keep me from blowing away, or two hands holding me firmly to the ground. Either way, it was a sensation I easily grew accustomed to and even learned to enjoy.

Peatris Johanus, or P.J. as we called him, would often rip me from my

"We have to do another four miles before stopping for the night," he'd say, poring over the topographic map

He had moved to America two years before, from South Africa, and put an exotic drag on every word and syllable he spoke. Listening to him sometimes reminded me of new age

"Tell me about the apartheid," I'd say curiously, wondering why his family left the magical garden he

described South Africa to be. "Later," was always his answer. The

apartheid was the reason his family left South Africa and the hunting ranch that had been P.J.'s home all his life. "When I was a kid, I sat on my

porch and watched a heard of elephants walk through my yard," he said one day during lunch. We were eating "flappers"—giant granola bars—as if they were a gourmet meal.

"Have you ever ate gazelle?" he asked me between bites.

"Nope," I answered. "That's what I miss the most about South Africa, I think," he said and grinned.

Although we hadn't known each other long, there is created a fastforming bond between people living together in the wilderness.

There was something so human about pitching a tent or cooking a meal that it pulled the group together like the opposite magnets that we were.

I don't know for sure what it is that melts away so completely the normal barriers found between complete strangers in situations like those. Maybe it's necessity or dependence, but I like to think its something more



By that time, I had learned the importance of drinking huge amounts of water.

Without water under these conditions, the body completely shuts down, and dehydration was the last thing any of us needed with weight on our backs and the hot sun overhead.

The seven drops of iodine needed to kill whatever horror might lurk in the water gave it a metallic taste that, like every other discomfort, I got used to.

"Pee often, pee clear," said Bret as we stopped to fill our bottles at a small stream. It was crucial advice to ward off dehydration and overall bad days.

Bret, our head instructor, fit the shaggy, bearded stereotype of Outward Bound instructors everywhere, and wore his only pair of boots with pride. All of Bret's material possessions fit neatly into his old Subaru.

"I don't like responsibilities! When I need a bigger car to keep my stuff in, I'll be in trouble," he said, pulling a tick from his shirt

Bret had a degree in math but swore . The weather took on a radical new only to use it when his body got too

I don't know for sure how many days it took to hike the distance of the Superior Trail; I had made a conscious effort to ignore time, and since days were part of time (apparently), I didn't

We were picked up early the last day on the trail and driven to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, where the canoeing part of the course would begin. I was looking forward to being on the water and sleeping on the islands where the Ojibway Indians lived. My feet were tired, too, and I thought that sitting in a canoe for a few weeks was just what I needed to recuperate, but that wasn't what the Boundary Waters had in

The Boundary Waters span approximately one million acres of nothing but lakes, rivers and islands. The previous days of hiking seemed just a warm-up before setting us loose with a topographic map, a compass or two and 1200 miles of canoe trails to pick our way through.

Getting our feet wet for the first time took either a will of steel or a push in the back.

With our heads full of the horrors of "foot rot" (when the skin becomes so waterlogged it literally begins to rot), we courageously stepped put into the water like tightrope walkers taking their first stroll without a net. The water crept into my boots like a thousand thieving fingers and enveloped my feet in a wet vacuum, a sensation I would quickly become accustomed to and forget about.

Tim, the only person in the group who hated whole heartedly the breathtaking surroundings fate had graciously put him in, at first refused to step into the lake, which shot a white reflection into our squinting

"No way. I'm not getting my feet wet," he said.

Tim was one of those people severely disconnected from dirt; a situation he would reluctantly remedy by the end of the course.

We got into pairs, loaded our canoes with Duluth packs full of gear, and shoved off the gravely shore. The canoes felt like, and appeared to be, a natural element of the Boundary Waters like the loons and archaic pine

I was a bird and the canoe my wing that glided me almost effortlessly and silently over the surface of the water.

We were entering the land of the Ojibway Indians, and my eyes scanned the lake for a glimpse of a ghost canoe carving its silent path between the

Beneath the surface of the water, wild rice called "menomin" reached its green, sinuous fingers up to us, pointing and swaying as if sharing some private joke.

"Travel by canoe is not a necessity, and will nevermore be the most efficient way to get from one region to another, or even from one lake to anther-anywhere. A canoe trip has become simply a rite of oneness with certain terrain, a diversion of the field, and an act performed not because it is necessary, but because there is value in the act itself."

The Survival of the Bark Canoe stranger to oneself then one is es-**Voyageur Outward Bound School** Readings Book

edge, giving any and all predictions and opinions a laugh and a slap in the face. A clear sunny day would often in seconds become black. Rain, sleet, and sometimes hail would fall from an unsuspecting sky, pound against the bottom of the canoes, and jump like in a frying pan causing some to tuck their faces down into Gore-Tex shells, others to lift them higher than before to one of the smaller lakes. It was so remember the freakish nature of the

"I know now as men accept the time clock of the wilderness, their lives become entirely different. It is one of great compensations and primitive experience, and when one finally reaches the point where days are governed by daylight and dark, rather than by schedules, where one eats when hungry and sleeps when tired, and becomes completely immersed in the ancient rhythms, then one begins to

Sigurd Olson hours-I was dead wrong. **Voyageur Outward Bound School Readings Book**

The Boundary Waters measured out time by lakes and portages, how long the mosquitoes would swarm, or how long it took a sleeping bag to dry. True perspective was easy to come by and true understanding of oneself became second nature because there were no distractions, only beauty and reward.

The pressure of an 80-pound canoe bearing down on my shoulders would break the tranquility of the scene. Portaging was as much a part of the Boundary Waters as canoeing, and it seemed to present the balance between pleasure and pain-yin and yang.

Three of us would heave the 80pound monster up and onto the shoulders of the ox-like person in the

With portage pads perfectly positioned and the canoe balanced, we would begin a hike between lakes that could last for hours, sometimes all day. Most of the portage trails had not been used in years, maybe decades, and the term "bushwhack" became a tiring

With one person carrying the canoe, another would clear a rugged path (for lack of a better word) if the trail was

"This sucks," Jon would pant from under the aluminum craft, like a turtle sticking his head from under his shell

Jon was from Brazil and the smallest of the group. He had a considerable hard time carrying the canoes, but in the end, it came down to technique, not strength, that got the job

Carrying a canoe is like riding a bike or learning how to swim. It's awful at first, but once mastered, it stays and only gets easier.

Portages were measured in rods, or 16.5 feet. On average, a 300-rod portage could take up to four hours to

"It is not physical solitude that actually separated one from other men, not physical isolation, but spiritual isolation. It is not the desert island not the stony wilderness that cuts you from the people you love. It is the wilderness in the mind, the desert wastes in the heart through which one wanders John McPhee lost and a stranger. When one is a tranged from others too. Only when one is connected to one's own core is one connected to others."

> Anne Marrow Lindbergh Gift from the Sea **Voyageur Outward Bound School** Readings Book

"Solo" was three days of solitude and offered a perfect time to reflect on the past, contemplate the future or sleep-I opted for sleep.

My solo site was tucked back on perfect and pristine that I thought I was severely interfering with the order of life there, or at least the scenery.

The Ojibway Indians believed that the wild flower columbine, when crushed and rubbed into the palm, worked as a love charm and captured A suitor's spirit when shaking hands. I wanted to sleep in the columbine, but couldn't find any near the lake.

With a piece of plastic ground cover and a full-body mosquito net, I made something that vaguely resembled a shelter and went to sleep thinking I wouldn't wake up for the next 72

If it wasn't thunderstorms or angry beavers slapping their tails, it was rodents of some kind getting stuck inside my mosquito net with me.

After it became apparent that sleep wouldn't play as great a role in solo as

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I had hoped, I watched the days run together like blue and gray paint.

I sat for hours next to the tanniccolored lake wondering if I sat very still, like a tree, would lichens grow on me? And I wondered about the boys on the Vision Quests and what the pictographs in the Boundary Waters were saying.

At night the loons echoed their ghostly cries through the white pine trees of the islands and across the black water of the lakes. Sometimes, they sounded more human than human, and I was sure these spiritbirds were shape-shifting into Ojibway Indians when no one was looking. The air smelled of earth, water and pine. The smell sank into my hair and became part of my skin. At dusk the sky would take on an electric blue quality and thunder-like rumblings would fill the atmosphere with energy, even if no lightning or rain followed. As the sun went down, the rocks along the lake held onto the day's heat and I would press my body against them like a lizard trying to keep warm.

"It is easy in the world to follow the world's opinions

It is easy in solitude to follow our

But, the great man is he who in the

Keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."

-R.W. Emerson **Voyageur Outward Bound School Readings Book**

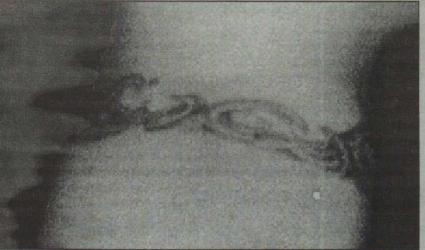
When solo was over, we regrouped and made a huge dinner of macaroni and cheese, lentil stew, cuscus, and grapenuts-two days worth of food eaten in one night. I had chosen not to eat over the past three days of solo and found it hard to eat much of anything; however, the rest of the group didn't seem to feel that way.

Gabe called the senseless consumption/party "food stressing," I called it stupid and predicted the moans and groans of hungry bellies in the two days that followed.

Gabe was from Nashville, and hated country music and everything that came with it. We both knew we never wanted "office jobs" and Outward Bound suited us just fine.

Continued on page 43.

Tatoo, cont. ...



designs. The earliest tattooed mummy is an Egyptian female with the god Bes essential part of a person that travels tattooed on her arm. Bes, in Egyptian mythology, is the god of parties. In addition to his job as the master of all ceremonies and orgies, Bes also served the host's appearance after death and as the god of dancing girls and musicians. So it seems fitting that

Aztecs believed that the soul was the through the centuries and until it is returned to earth, is purified.

They believed that the soul took on that included the tattoos the person bore. Other Aztecs believed that a

female dancers and musicians should bare a tattoo of him on their thighs.

Tattoos found on Aztecs were also for religious purposes. It was their belief that the body was the tomb of the soul. As in most other religions, the

person's appearance changed so much after death that their tattoo was the only way to identify them. Those who didn't have tattoo would be unrecognizable to their ancestors and, therefore, their souls would forever be

doomed to wander in the afterworld.

Native Americans also had strong beliefs concerning tattoos. The Lakota Tribe teaches its members that after death, they make their journey to the other world via the Milky Way. Along the way, the person will pass an owl woman, who will search his or her wrist for a tattoo, and if none is found, that person will be thrown into the bleak, dark universe.

"I have three tattoos right now. I have one of an orca, one of a dragon and another of a shamrock. I'd get another one if I could afford it," said Rachel Baldwin, a 23-year-old senior. The tattoos are located on her ankles (side and front) and her back.

In Libya, both male and female mummies have been found with tattoos on their bodies. Some males bore tattoos relating to sun worshiping while others, like one discovered in the tomb of Seti I dating back to 1300 BC, bore tattoos with gods and goddess on them. In 1920, archaeologists in Peru came across Inca mummies wearing tattoos that dated as far back as the 11th Century . Although the Inca people didn't have written records, their art demonstrates the importance of such designs.

A few years ago, an Iceman who had been frozen in a glacier for over 5,300 years turned up . He also had tattoos on his body. On his spine were blue parallel lines, on his left knee was a cross and on his ankle were stripes. The anthropologists concluded that the marks were definitely personal rather then used for identification. His tattoo was made by a bone needle that punctured the skin and was then filled with animal fat and soot.

Although there is no way to find out exactly what each tattoo signified, it is evident that they were a very popular trend in ancient times. Today things aren't much different.

Tattooing is still popular and millions of people get them done every day. The gap between the present and the past isn't as big as we'd like to believe it is. Take the technology away and we're basically our ancestors, only a little smarter. Maybe someday in the generations to come, people will be able to decipher what we were like through our tattoos? Soon, the body art industry will boom and people will continue a tradition that has made it through the centuries. -Flipside would peer back.

... Soulless Eyes cont.

the steps three at a time. He ran through the hall and to his son's room.

Debra came in behind him and said, "What's going on?"

She screamed when she saw the two red, soulless eyes of the gray winged demon perched on the window ledge with their son cupped in its enormous

Mikey, still asleep from a rough day of play, began to stir in the creature's

Hobbs watched helplessly as his son fell through the brisk night air.

Mikey began to rub his eyes and soon realized he wasn't cradled in his mother's arms. Tears ran down his

Mikey began to whimper for his mother. He extended his arms toward his parents and continued to say, "Daddy. I want my Daddy."

Hobbs slowly moved toward the winged creature, pleading, "Please, he's all we have. I beg you, take me

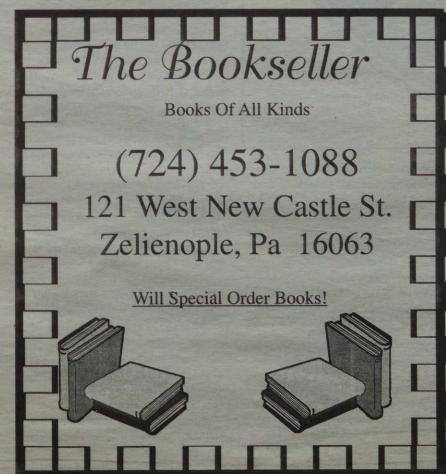
The beast looked at Hobbs and hissed through its yellow fangs. Then it turned and faced the quiet darkness. The beast sprung from the ledge and took flight.

Hobbs dashed toward the window and watched the demon glide through the night. In a few moments the creature and Hobbs' son were silhouetted against the full moon.

The demon screeched and released the boy. Hobbs watched helplessly as his son fell through the brisk night air. His boy's echoing screams burrowed deep into his ears.

The sound and the little body vanished far beneath the full moon as the winged demon continued to fly toward it.

Hobbs felt the thud of his boy's body in his heart, and knew from that moment on every time he looked in the mirror, two red, soulless eyes



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Flipside

Rainbow, cont. ...

happy emotions. In three months we moved into an apartment, became engaged and planned to marry. After a while, though, I began to have difficulty working. A carpenter's job requires climbing ladders, carrying heavy plywood and roof joists and using power saws.

I felt myself becoming gradually weaker. I began to trip on ladders, and hammer and nails would fall from my hands. My coworkers noticed but said nothing. They probably didn't know

After a rough day, I would come, shower and sit on the couch. Whenever I relaxed, however position, the muscles in my thighs and biceps would involuntarily ripple, as if something were moving underneath my flesh.

I became increasingly alarmed and so did Helen.

She kept saying, "Marco go to the

I knew she was right, but I could not accept that something could be seriously wrong with me. I had been healthy all my 31 years, never confined to a hospital for any reason. Three months went by, and my coworkers could no longer cover for me. Helen, without my knowing,

inserted into the base of my spine and fluid was drained from the spine to be evaluated. I underwent an E.M.G. test, during which needles were inserted at various points into my body and an electric surge was sent through the sites to determine nerve responses.

That test took two hours, and it began to seem as if I were becoming even weaker. The staff apologized each time an electric

Although the gesture was sincere, it did little to relieve the discomfort. The tests took five days.

Five days after being discharged I walked into Dr. Smith's office and faced those defeated green eyes and his diagnosis.

Now, in January of 1988, I lay motionless in my bed at home. People outside the door talked in whispers. The gun in the night stand drawer

The physical therapist had me work on strengthening exercises, using fivepound weights, lifting and pushing, doing range of motion exercises with my legs and arms and the whole time coaxing me on. The occupational

regress. I want you to see a doctor I know and trust."

In August of 1989, 1 was in another doctor's office. My faith in the medical profession was nearly spent; however, I agreed to go through more testing. Another five days of rigorous tests.

> five-day wait for the after the

began, the phone rang. The doctor was trying to sound level in his tone, but his excitement was hard to contain.

He said, "Mr. West, I see no sign of A.L.S. The symptoms are similar, but I believe you have Axonal Neuropathy.' "Elation" is hardly enough to

therapist taught me how to exercise my describe how I felt. He went on, "The nerve fibers I repeated each syllable—vowel and extending from your spine into the legs

and hands are damaged."

The nerves in our bodies have a protective covering around them called the myelin sheath. Portions of this had eroded, and the nerves were sending patchy signals to the afflicted areas of my body. He alluded to my "work history" in the steel mills and exposure to an unknown chemical there, which somehow got into my immune system causing the nerve damage.

He recommended that I attend Harmarville Rehabilitation Center. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. I would be there on an outpatient basis, three days per week. A surge of energy engulfed me. I knew I had a chance to rebuild

Hamarville is an absolutely amazing facility. The staff of doctors and therapists who worked with me will always have my gratitude and respect. They had me swimming, lifting weights in the gym, doing extensive hand exercises and learning how to walk again. The time I spent there was tedious and physically draining.

After each session, I would come home completely fatigued. I learned that what is worth attaining takes a commitment to hard work. I came to understand that setting small goals and achieving those goals would help me reach the ultimate goal.

I had been wheeled into Harmarville, and on my last day, I would walk out. I worked extremely hard. I would not be denied the payoff. In July of 1990, 1 did walk for the first ime in two years. The eyes of all the people who looked at me over the last two years with such pity and sadness, now had the look of astonishment and

I did, however, feel a certain sadness. Helen never saw my recovery. She had been gone for over a year, and I heard she had married. She never knew that her love had inspired me to fight this illness and to overcome. She

chair to get around, but I do have limited walking ability and my hands are recovered to about 85 percent. Most important, I learned that we cannot put a level on the human spirit, that what really counts is what is in each and everyone of us, is the barometer we should be measured by. And that God, or whatever we perceive

-Flipside

I learned that we cannot put a level on the human spirit.

therapist showed me devices that

would enable me to brush my teeth,

use eating utensils and bathe myself.

These devices were tied to my hands

and secured, because the lack of motor

skills in my hands prevented me from

consonant-in sets of 10, as if I were

properly gripping them. A speech

mouth and pronounce words.

lifting weights. My chewing and I thought, 'I must reach inside swallowing improved. Finally, the myself and find courage to battle this mental health therapist and I discussed disease. Prove to my family that I will each aspect of my impending death. not give up, and this will give them Her main objective was to help me hope no matter what may happen, but I accept death, and talking with her



scheduled an appointment for me with must do this for myself as well.' a neurologist, at St. Francis Hospital in Pittsburgh. He diagnosed me with Polymyositis, a neuromuscular illness.

The remedy was a steroid treatment called Prednisone and resting for three months; however, I only became worse. I started to lose balance and fall. Rising from a supine position was impossible unless I had help. I slept sitting up in a chair. I called the doctor numerous times, and he said, "Continue with the treatment, give it more time." I was running out of time, and so was Helen. I decided to seek a second opinion, and U.P.M.C. was the best neurological facility in Pittsburgh.

They put me through a series of tests; spinal taps where I was placed in a fetal position, a long needle was

My thoughts turned to Helen; I remembered all the wonderful times we had together, the dreams we shared and what we aspired to be. At that moment her love made me stronger, but I realized love can be the greatest joy and also the greatest sorrow. 'This will be my hardest battle,' I thought, but I was determined to win the war. I

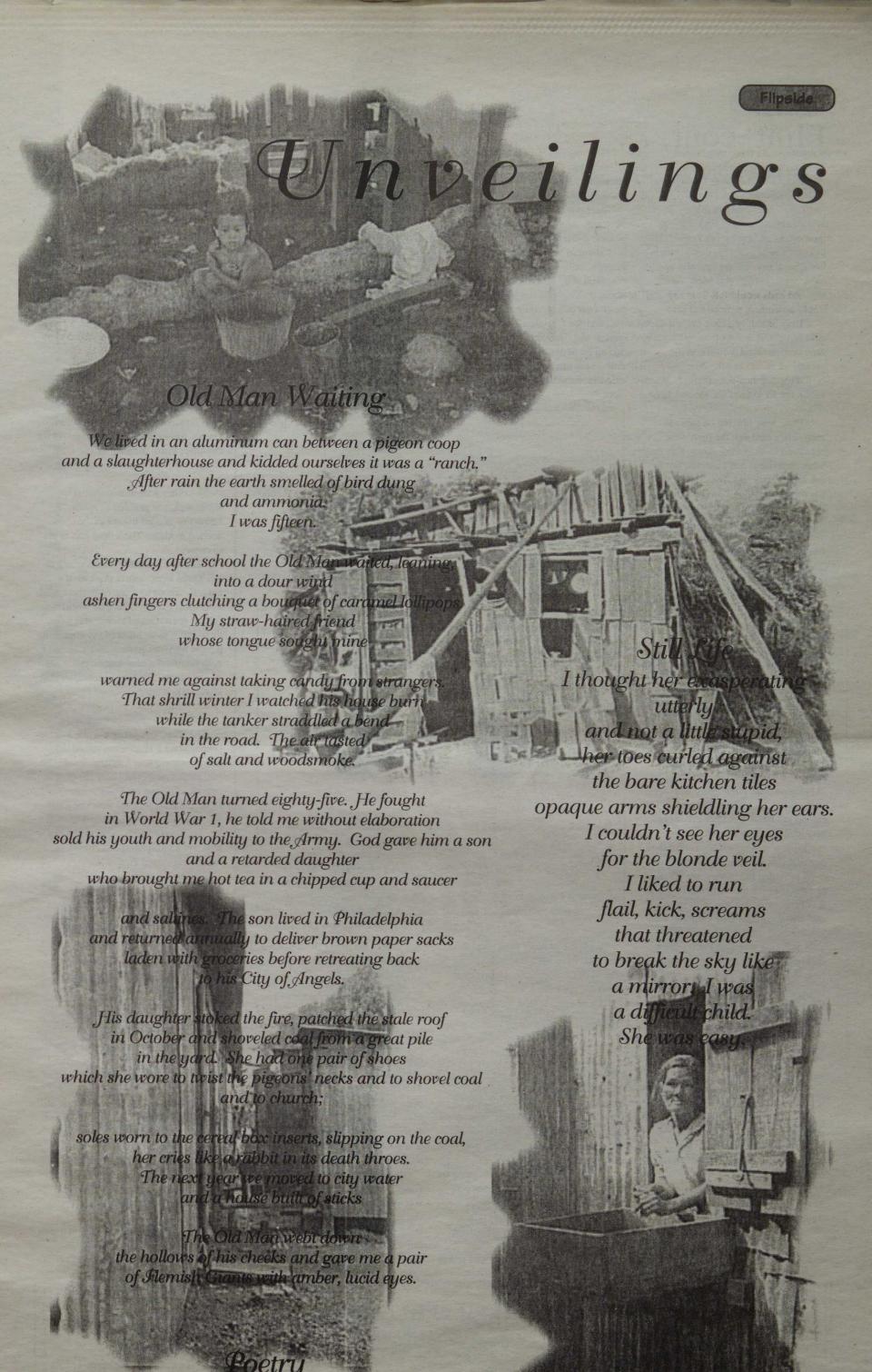
made the phone call that would change my life. I requested that the medical society send physical, occupational, speech, and mental health therapists to help me fight the disease. If I was going to die, I would do so with dignity and courage. In February of 1988, my recovery program began. I was told there was not much hope. I had a terminal

helped me understand that I was not afraid to die. I needed to learn how to prepare for it. Preparation and acceptance are two different perspectives; I would prepare for death, but accepting it would be an admission of defeat.

For 18 months, I worked diligently, and to everyone's amazement, I started to improve. I could do more repetitions with the weights, brush my own teeth and chew and eat food normally. Those successes only increased my confi-

There were setbacks, but also tremendous strides. I learned to focus on the positive, to change poison into medicine. A home care nurse oversaw my progress. Astounded at my development, she said, "Marco, people him or her to be, is in all of us. with A.L.S. do not progress, they

Now, in 1999, I still need a wheel-



by Laura H. Tepe,

Flint, cont, ...

"Someone brought us through the lobby of this building, yes."

"That's not what I'm asking, Paul. What I am asking is if F-O-T-B got their hands on you before I could. But, of course, you probably don't remember what I just said ten seconds ago let King." alone who brought you here." With that, the man entered the building and Paul followed.

Cleric, Ward, and Doc sat in a dark cell. In the cell across from them sat a man who constantly stared at the

"What did they get you for?" Ward spoke up, looking at the ground as he

"They were beating on two old men. They said that the men were supposed to be staring down, that they were underlings and deserved not to see King. They just wanted to watch the debate and they were beaten. We tried to stop them and they arrested

"It was a trap, you know," Aavoice from the next cell said.

The group took interest. "How so?" asked Cleric.

He stood and leaned against the bars. Soon all the men were beside him, trying to get a closer look at the man speaking.

The man in the other cell wore a light blue outfit, just as the women in the debate crowd had wron. His hair was very short and blonde and weekold stubble shaded the bottom half of his face. The man looked to be average in height, size, and strength. There was nothing criminal about him.

"I'm assuming that you are newcomers to The City," he said, smiling. "My name is Stephen Aday, but everyone here calls me Kingsman. I'd extend my hand, but I believe these bars wouldn't allow it."

"So you're Kingsman? You're the one that financed the Outlands?"

"I provided the money, the supplies, and the men for the Outlands to work. It is I that provided you with the books that you were educated with, the food you ate, and the water you drank. I also provided you with Paul. I knew that he was safest out there helping people. In here his presence would have led to great danger."

"He's out there now." The man sprang to his feet.

"Where?"

"Somewhere," answered Cleric. "When we were taken, Paul was watching the debate."

That, my friends, is why I said that it was a trap. King wants you separated." Kingsman sat for a moment and floor of the building. There were many done so. No one of your kind knows appeared to be thinking about something, then he stood back up and approached the bars. "Where were you office. staying?"

an old apartment building that Ally led to kill us?"

"Who?" Kingsman was visibly caught off-guard by that answer. "A woman named Ally met us and showed us around. She took us to a party in the...well, she said not to tell."

"I...I don't understand. This makes no sense. Ally works for King. Why would she help you?"

"She told us that you worked for

"Well, I do...or did. I wasn't happy about it. King jailed everyone. When he started jailing children, that's when I started the Outlands. I had put Paul in hiding and figured that everyone would be better off out there than in a cell. I sent Paul out, sneaked the jailed children outside and the Outlands were questions?" born."

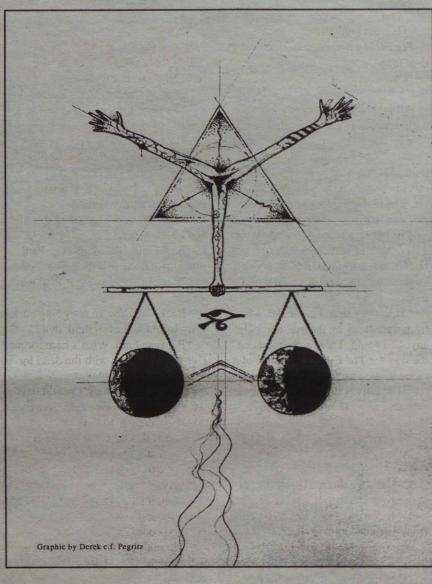
"The Outlands are illegal. Kingsman built a community of was highly illegal. Anyone I would jail, he would send out there. Now, I jailed him, but he will soon pay. You...well, you're a special case."

"Why am I a special case?" have no idea why your name is so

famous around here?" "I don't remember."

"How sad. Is there any other

"About my name...."



"Wait, we're older than you. How could we have been children when you sent us out?" Kingsman sighed and faced the ground.

"There are a few of us who look much younger than we are."

talk."

King walked to a bar and poured himself a drink. They were in the top rooms on the upper floor and together they operated as King's home and

"And what, exactly, are we going to "I'm not sure where it was. It was talk about? About why you sent people Kingsman began, "When there was a

"You aren't one for small talk, are you, Paul? Okay, we may start there. Would you like to begin?"

"Why were there women sent to kill war. You don't have to look any further

"Where not going there just yet, I was kind of hoping you debate me tomorrow afternoon."

"Sounds fair."

"Such the gentleman. Fine, it's a deal then, I'll see you tomorrow. I'll have some of my people...

"Speaking of your people, why "Now that we have privacy, we may have my men been arrested and where have they been taken?"

They are supposed to be imprisoned and I'm sure my forces have where the cells are and that is the way it is going to stay. Now, be gone or I shall have to remove you myself."

"It all began several years ago," war. An exact date was never given to the start of the war, but it was around 2002. It was a horrible war, a devastating war, and, worst of all, a nuclear

than the sky to see that. I'm sure none of you even are aware of what the sun actually looks like. For around degenerates right under my nose and it seventy-five years the sun and the sky has been under red cloud cover."

"Well, six soldiers were taken aside by the government. It was some sort of top-secret experiment. During this experiment, two soldiers were killed "You don't remember, do you? You instantly, which left four men. These six men were meant to be supersoldiers. They could not be harmed by any chemical warfare, healed from wounds quicker than every other soldier, and could withstand any

> "Among these four men, one was lost. To this day there is no one that knows where this man has gone. As for the other three, they are in The City. King, Paul, and I are the only three

The other four men stared at Kingsman, too stunned to speak. "I know this is a lot to take in, but you needed to know. The worse part is yet

"The war was not a popular one at all. There were riots at the nation's capital...come to think of it, there were riots most everywhere. The world was falling apart. Once the war was over, everything split. Most of the remaining people took the government's option to help populate a new space-station set on the moon. The people left after that started The City."

The stage was set again, the podiums were erected on either side, and the crowd was forming. Inside the jail, Paul's men could hear the people outside cheering for King to arrive. Behind the stage, Paul watched King prepare. King splashed cold water on his face then had a servant towel-dry him. He looked calm and confident, which frightened Paul.

The crowd went wild when King took the stage, but only a few acknowledged Paul's appearance. Both walked to their respective podiums and looked out over the people before them. The crowd was much larger than the day before. Everyone wanted to see Paul Frakes and what he had to say, as well as what King had to say about Paul Frakes.

"Ladies and gentleman, in case you don't know, this is Paul Frakes."

There was a large applause from the members of F-O-T-B. Ally, Marshall, Bob, Frank, and others stood together and looked on.

"Now, for those of you who are still in the dark about this man, Paul has a deep dark secret. He doesn't remember what it is, but he has one. You see, Paul was the man who dropped the bomb on our very own country. The very bomb that destroyed this great nation and turned it into what it is

In the crowd, a few men held a sign that read: Friends of the Bomb.

"Now, is there any reason to

"Well, Paul, anything to say for yourself?" "It was a mistake."

continue this debate?"

Suddenly, a rush of memories

flooded into Paul's mind and right

back out. He saw a doctor injecting

him with something, something that

made him forget things too often, but

he had a feeling that forgetting was not

the original intention of the drug. He

saw himself in a plane, flying over the

countryside. There was screaming over

the radio, there were lights blinking

pictured an explosion. The sound of

the explosion was deafening and the

sight resembled a meteor crashing to

birthday parties, friends, relatives all

memory to fly in and out was of a

woman beside a tree, holding some-

earth. Memories of Christmases,

shot through his mind. The last

rapidly in the cockpit. Then he

It was the only thing that he could muster after the onslaught of memo-

or did you not drop that bomb on our country to save yourself?"

"I can't remember anything about

The crowd was shouting by now. It was hard to tell who they were shouting at, but the tone of the people was an obviously bad one.

"Of course you can remember. You just don't want to."

No sooner did King finish his crowd. Someone had thrown something at the stage.

An object sailed through the air, heading for King, after leaving the hand of a young boy in the audience. King was struck in the temple and the object clattered to the stage floor. There was silence for a second before everything turned loose. King's guards began firing into the crowd, members of F-O-T-B began fighting with King's supporters in the streets. Explosions rang through The City as King clambered to his feet with a mark on his temple the size of a large seed.

As explosions rang from outside, someone entered the small jail. Cleric, Ward, Doc, and Kingsman stood, waiting to see the figure. The man walked slowly to where the men stood, then he smiled.

"I've been waiting for years...I knew something like this would happen."

He opened the cells with keys from around his neck and motioned for the men to escape. The man was very short and very old. His skin hung on him just as his clothing: loose and soiled. He spoke with a normal voice, but looked as if he should be over 100 years old.

"Who are you?" Kingsman asked. "I'm the trash man. I take the trash out of The City and to the burning grounds."

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"How are you involved in this?"

"I'll explain that later. Right now, you must run to where Ally met you."

name, and there's a line of women getting your face tattooed on their bodies, where else would you be?"

They seem to think you're the greatest thing since" "The Beatles?" Paul asked with a smirk. "Who?"

"Jesus?" "Well, maybe bigger than Jesus," Stephen answered honestly.

"Boy, what are you doing?" Paul ran to where Boy stood, in the middle of the rioting crowd.

"A man told me to take you to the tunnel."

"Who?"

"He's the trash man." Something flickered in Paul's mind, then faded.

"Okay, come on."

All eight men stood at the tunnel within minutes. Suddenly, Boy began to run toward the tunnel.

"No," the trash man called after "It was a mistake, he says. Did you, him. "It's this way." He pointed to a raft floating on King's River. "That takes us to the burning grounds and our way home."

The burning grounds were just that: a large area of burned trash heaps and bodies. But sticking out from under a large mountain of trash was the nose of a ship.

"That's my ship. I came down here from the colony on the moon to help anyone I could. There's problems on sentence than a shout rang out from the the way for The City, in the form of a cloud of gas that will surely leave no one. The only way I knew to get Paul here was to write Flint Steel on a

"But what is it?" Doc asked.

"It's the name of the bomb that I dropped. It was to be the bomb that ended the war, and it did just that, but in our own country. It was an accident that it happened, but I was an outcast from then on," Paul said.

The others stood, watching the man whose memory had begun to clear." "Come on now, it's over for this

planet."

To the right of the throng of Paul's fans and supporters loomed a large hill. A few people sat on the side of this hill: families on blankets eating picnic lunches, teenagers looking for privacy without completely leaving the festivities, and near the peak sat Paul.

Paul Frakes looked over the people approvingly, wondering how many would care enough to attend his funeral, if he ever had one. He could hear someone walking toward him from behind and did not even have to turn to know who it was.

"How did you find me?" Paul asked those hugs." Both men smiled. Kingsman, who started going by his real name upon arrival in the new colony.

"It was pretty easy. The president's down there to pin a medal on you. Thousands of people are cheering your depressing. The town was madden-

Paul smiled and nodded in agreement. "They love you, Paul. I think you have a shot at the presidency if you wanted to run. They seem to think you're the greatest thing since"

"The Beatles?" Paul asked with a smirk.

"Who?"

"Jesus?"

"Well, maybe bigger than Jesus," Stephen answered honestly.

"Exactly, The Beatles." Paul looked up at Stephen for the first time and

"I don't think this is a party you want to miss. Your fans are waiting."

"I'm leaving tonight, Steve." "Going to find yourself a wife and

settle down somewhere?" "Well, I'm certainly going to settle down somewhere. I'm going back." Stephen's smile faded quickly. Paul stood up and the two men were eye-toeye. Stephen could see that Paul was serious.

"Back? No. You're not going back. Why would you even think that?"

"Because I am. What's here for me? I've been working with the dead for years. Now it's time to join them. I asked NASA how long I would have once I landed and they said I'd have about 20 minutes to live." Paul laughed at this thought. "Can you believe that? Twenty minutes to live? Kind of ironic after living for about 100 years."

"Well, it sure is something. I'm not going to stop you." "You couldn't."

"I'm not going to try. I don't know if I'd do the same, but I respect your decision."

"That's all I can ask for." Paul stuck so beautiful out his hand, but Stephen hugged him instead.

"Can you remember something for me?"

"Steve, you know-"

"I'm not taking 'no' for an answer here, Paul, this is for real."

"I'll remember."

"Just remember third and 43, two, and ten." Paul gave Stephen an inquisitive look, then smiled. "I'll remember." "Good." This time, Stephen offered

his hand to Paul. "Actually, I'll take another one of

Paul left the ship and entered the ghost town. He originally thought it would be peaceful being in the town alone, but he quickly found it to be

ingly quiet and physically and literally dead. Dead bodies covered the streets. They didn't even know their death was coming. They just breathed and died where they fell. Everything looked void of color: every building, tree, and street looked the same drab dust color.

He walked down the center of the main street, pausing at the intersection where King had held his debate not long ago. Something caught his eye. In the dead center of the intersection, already accumulating dust, sat the buckeye.

Paul scooped up the buckeye and placed it in his breast pocket. He was wearing a green shirt. The color was a blissful change. He looked at his left wrist and there was the gold watch given to him by Stephen Aday as a going-away present. The watch told him he had only 10 minutes to spare. Time, for once, was running out.

He walked along, humming an unknown tune and tapping an unknown beat against the side of his leg. Then he stopped so suddenly that a cloud of dust arose around his feet.

A sign had jumped out at him for no reason, but as he looked at it a memory came back to him. The sign read: 3rd

He veered down this street with no idea of what lay ahead. When he saw it, he knew. He walked quickly to its entrance and threw open the gate.

Two and ten, he remembered. He looked left, then right, then left

again. He chose to go left, always left. When he reached the second row of grave markers he started counting each stone. Finally, he reached the tenth

Kristen Stewart

June 4, 1980 - November 22, 2017 He read the name twice, three, four times before the memories began flooding back. He saw a woman: a young woman, shorter than he, but only slightly so, her brown hair long for her (chest-length), and her eyes. The eyes came to him with incredible detail. So much of this women came through her eyes. Her big brown eyes,

He remembered collecting the buckeyes with her. They would peel away the outer layer to get to the equally useless inside. The reason for this ritual escaped him, but he remembered it was tradition. And he remembered it was a joyous time.

He knelt down to touch the marker and the buckeye he was carrying slipped from his pocket and fell to the ground. Paul did not pick it back up and replace it in his pocket. No, he decided that it was meant to be that he find the seed again. He dug a small hole for the seed and dropped it inside. Seeing the brown buckeye inside the dark hole reminded him of Kristen's eyes. So dark, so large, so That was the image with which Paul Frakes

He died remembering.

-Flipside



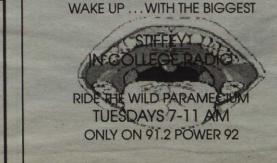
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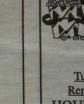
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olume 14 Number 1





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This is what seizes my attention as I turn the dancer in the sunlight: when the piece is seen in profile, the head is tilted downward, the eyes are half-closed, the left hand touches the cheek in a gesture of modesty or perhaps even self-abasement.

her plate. She lit another cigarette and let ashes fall on her food.

That night Phoebe and Peter, her husband, met Fredrick and me at a French restaurant up the street from the theater where we were going to see Lunt and Fontanne in The Visit. As they threaded their way through the tables, heads turned. She wore a raw silk shift the color of her hair and a matching jacket.

"Are you sure you come from some little town in Ohio?" I asked Phoebe.

a half-turn before she sat down. "I went to Jay Thorpe after I left you this noon."

Once more, Phoebe gulped her double martini while we sipped Scotch old-fashioneds.

Peter and Fredrick began reminiscing about college days. They had been roommates, and then later, Fredrick was best man at Peter's wedding. They kept referring to outrageous youthful pranks.

Phoebe said, "Look, you two, I've heard these stories before. Let's not bore the bride, huh?"

"Are we boring you?" Peter asked me, looking up

"Do you want an honest answer? Yes." I smiled. Phoebe laughed, longer and louder than the exchange warranted so loud that other diners turned

When dinner came she ordered yet another

Peter leaned across the table. "Hey, take it easy with the martinis. I don't want you nodding off in the first act. I'd like to see this one through to the end. For a change."

Phoebe began cutting her food, which she then pushed around on her plate, as she had done at noon. I learn to read and appreciate it, too. Whatever

"I can tell you how it ends," she said. "For money, knowledge I have of the moderns, I attribute to they murder the guy. Because Durrenmatt knew

people are inherently evil and easily bought." "Thanks," Peter said, It for spoiling the play for the rest of us."

"It's obvious from the start. You'll see," she said. As we walked up the street, Phoebe, unsteady on her feet, gripped Peter's arm with both hands. She tripped on the little step in front of the theater.

At intermission they left.

When, in June of that year, they returned to the city, we invited Phoebe and Peter to our apartment for dinner. I spent the afternoon slicing tenderloin and onions and mushrooms for beef Stroganoff, and steaming wild rice according to directions on the box. Because cooking was still new to me, I worked

Phoebe nibbled the mushrooms and one or two pieces of meat. That was all.

After dinner, over coffee in the living room, Peter

said, "We saw Miss Heitcamp, Phoebe's old high school Latin teacher, off to Paris last night." "She comes to dinner once or twice a year,"

Phoebe said.

"The last time she came she said she wasn't an envious person but there were two things she envied Phoebe." Peter grinned.

"Your wonderful husband, Phoebe imitated the

Latin teacher's twang, "land your world travels." "Phoebe told her she couldn't have me but she

could have a month in Europe. Before she left, Phoebe handed her a check.'

Fredrick had been listening to all this in silence. "You're the ultimate giver of gifts, aren't you,

Peter, who was the president of Phoebe's family's business —I think it was foundries — used to call on customers in New York and New Jersey. Phoebe "Like the outfit?" She stopped, lifted her chin, did came along and roamed museums and scouted art galleries and took me with her on weekends, teaching me whatever it is I know about the art of

> "Anything to escape North Stark for a week or two," Phoebe said. "It's a stultifying place to have to waste a lifetime. But when Daddy died, neither Pete nor I could resist the temptation of having Pete take over the company.'

> Their trips made it possible for us to get together often enough to become close friends. Fredrick and I never visited them in North Stark because Phoebe, saying we'd be bored, never invited us.

But we did go to their house in Jamaica for a long weekend every winter. And when, in the seventies, they rented a villa in Juan-Les-Pins, we flew over for

Although Phoebe's penchant for showering friends with present was unparalleled, her faculty for receiving was impaired. I found it impossible to find anything to please her, but I kept trying. Before we flew to France, I spent days searching for the perfect

I knew she loved modern poetry. She had insisted Phoebe. She would quote not just passages, but page after page of Eliot and Frost. (She wrote poems, too, but never allowed me to read anything she had written I got the names of appropriate bookstores from the Antiquarian Booksellers Association and started out on lower Fifth Avenue going fruitlessly through the shelves of a store that looked like something out of Dickens.

Next, a shop on Fifty-ninth Street, with tables of books and bins of antique maps out front, miles of books on the ground floor and rare books in second story stacks, turned up nothing I considered unique. Finally, I got into an elevator in a Madison Avenue office building and stepped out to find myself in what appeared to be more private library than

The elderly proprietor, who presented each book as if she were showing off a much-loved pet, handed me the treasure I was hunting

The little book was covered with what appeared to be stretched silk. Vertical streaks of yellow and beige and blue bled into each other, as if deftly brushed once, horizontally, before the dye was quite dry. The pages were not of uniform size; some of the edges were rough. Initial letters, a T, an O, and an S, were printed from wood blocks and hand painted. The book was one of an edition of fifty-two copies, the title, Three Academic Pieces. The last page was

signed in ink by Wallace Stevens. The price was nine hundred dollars. I took a deep breath and wrote a

Fredrick and I rented a car at the airport in Nice and arrived at Juan-Les-Pins before dinner.

We sat on the patio with Phoebe and Peter, looking down at the magnificent sheltered gulf. Beside the villa a pine grove ran all the way down to

I handed Phoebe the book.

She opened it to the title page. "Oh. Wallace Stevens. Thank you. I've never heard of this title." She turned a few pages. "No wonder I've never heard of it. It's prose. I'm really not interested in his prose." She closed the book. "Thank you, anyhow. I'm touched. You must have gone through a lot of trouble searching out this little book."

"There are poems, too. The last two are poems," I

The dinner was announced. When we stood to leave the terrace, she kissed my cheek. "It was kind of you. But unnecessary."

Peter used to tick off with mixed pride and concern Phoebe's list of spontaneously written checks and impulsively given gifts. What he saw as her reckless disregard for money prompted nim to ask me, shortly after the week in the south of France, to draft a new will, putting the bulk of his estate in trust, out of Phoebe's direct control, to protect her from impoverishment if he should die first. I suggested he go to an Ohio lawyer. He tried to persuade me to do it. He disliked the idea of a local lawyer knowing he questioned Phoebe's judgment. I

Years later, after Peter died, I learned, in a letter from Phoebe's sister, about Phoebe's fury at being forced to get approval from a banker and a lawyer for every expenditure that exceeded a stated amount. I drew a sigh of relief, thankful I had not been the lawyer to draw up that trust agreement.

I go to my room and I put the bronze dancer on the dresser. I open the closet door and I see myself in the mirror that lines it. Even this robe is one of

The card she enclosed when she sent it years ago informed me it was a replacement for the frayed and faded robe she had noticed on a bathroom hook when she and Peter came to dinner. It was her habit to do that; to search for any lack and to fill whatever she deemed a need with a gift.

On a shelf in my closet there is a blue leather jewelry box. I open the box, take out the citrine ring and force the clear golden oval over my gnarled finger. I stare down through the citrine to the miniature scene engraved at the base. What I see is a seated Grecian-gowned goddess-like figure. A second woman kneels subserviently before her and offers a gift.

The carving is the antithesis of Phoebe's giftgiving. Phoebe was never subservient. I remember her air of condescension toward her recipients. Toward the near-sighted hairdresser and the highschool Latin teacher. Toward me?



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Volume 14 Number 1

She gave me the ring after Fredrick died. During the time I was so depressed I could hardly force myself to get out of bed, let alone go to the office every day, Phoebe insisted I visit her and Peter at that house in Jamaica, the house with the cool tile floors and the stairway that curved from the terrace to the lapping waves of the Carribean.

On my second night in Ocho Rios, they invited their American and British neighbors, whom I had met on past visits

I had told Phoebe I was in no mood for parties, but she thought she knew better.

A five-piece combo played on the terrace. In what I interpreted as a be-kind-to-the-widow gesture, the neighbors held me unpleasantly close when we danced. So did Peter.

After the last guest had left, Phoebe asked me to come to their bedroom to see the jewelry she had recently inherited from her mother.

At the back of the closet, behind the rack of vividly patterned caftans—loose-fitting garments she had taken to wearing in an attempt to hide her deteriorating body—the hollow chest, the bloated abdomen-was a wall safe. She spun the combination lock, opened the safe, and pulled out a rectangular metal box.

Phoebe put the box on the bed between us and lifted the hinged lid. One by one, she drew out her mother's jewels: a brooch with a large ruby flanked by diamond baguettes, a bangle bracelet, channel-set with sapphires, a diamond ring, its stone the size of Phoebe's thumbnail, a mabe pearl bracelet with a clasp that snapped open to reveal what must have been the world's tiniest watch.

"Very nice," I said, as Phoebe displayed each piece, or, "very pretty."

When I saw the ring with the big yellow stone, I said, "Gorgeous. What do you call that stone?"

At breakfast the following morning I took my usual place across the table from Peter. Phoebe almost always skipped breakfast. After Peter and I ate, we would walk the beach

until she awakened. Under the napkin that morning I found a small

tissue-wrapped package. "What's this?" I asked Peter. He smiled. "Open

The citrine ring was accompanied by a touching, even sentimental, note about how much my friendship meant to her. The profusely affectionate words surprised me as much as the lavishness of the gift. "I'm embarrassed, Peter."

"Don't be," he said. "You reacted to the only semi-precious stone Phoebe's mother owned."

"Still," I said, "I know how Phoebe likes to give things away. I should have kept my mouth shut."

"With Phoebe, no one must ever reject a gift," Peter said. "Well, okay. I'll keep it." Peter picked up his spoon, then put it down.

"Good. The act of giving seems to validate Phoebe in Nor from Peter, ever. her own eyes. For whatever reasons, she's not a very secure person."

The maid brought us grapefruit and coffee and bread still smelling of the pimento wood that had

But Peter hadn't finished. When the maid was gone he reached across the table and grasped my

"Listen to me. You must never say no when Phoebe gives you a gift. It would be the end of your friendship. I warn you."

I laughed at the gravity of his admonition.

"What are you two nattering about?" It was Phoebe, who had come to the dining room in her coral caftan, graying hair streaming over her shoulders. Her skin, without makeup, looked blotchy. She had aged suddenly, although she was no more than a few years older than I. I jumped up and hugged her. "How can I ever thank you?"

"Forget it."

She waved me off.

"I'm just surprised you prefer citrine to a ruby or arrogant frontal view? The meek, self-effacing a diamond. But, to each her own."

Phoebe sat beside Peter. "I'm taking the car this morning," she announced. ItIlm driving to Montego Bay to do some shopping."

"I'll come with you," I said.

"No. I don't want any company today." She rang the little silver bell on the table. "You can make the bed now," she told the maid. "Don't you want her to bring you some break-

fast," Peter asked, "as long as you're up?"

"I'll help myself." She walked to the kitchen and returned minutes later, carrying a tall glass of orange

I suspected the juice was laced with gin from the bottle I'd seen stashed away among bottles of cleaning materials one day when I went to the kitchen in search of a glass for a drink of water.

Phoebe took a sip of the juice. 'Pete, you go ahead, take your beach walk now. Let us have some time alone. For girl talk.

"Right," Peter said.

When he had left, Phoebe lit a cigarette, sat back and squinted toward the sea.

"Pete and I have a very special relationship." "I know you have."

"No, you don't," she snapped at me. "You don't know anything about it."

I remained silent 'We love each other," she continued. "We understand each other. There's nothing we wouldn't

do for each other. Absolutely nothing, She watched a small sailboat, just visible over the top of the low wall of the terrace.

I watched her watching the sailboat until it had passed out of sight

"You're still a very attractive woman." Unsmiling, she picked up her glass and finished her drink. Then she gave me one of her eyeball-to-eyeball

"Our relationship, Pete's and mine, isn't sexual, hasn't been for years.'

"Look, Phoebe," I said, "I don't know what you're driving at, but I don't want to hear this."

She reached across the table and took my hand. I drew it away.

"I'm trying to tell you something. While I'm in Montego, you and Pete...'

"Jesus! Thanks, but no, thanks. What's this supposed to represent? Your idea of the ultimate

Somehow, when I stood, I accidentally overturned the chair I'd been sitting on. There was a crack, as mahogany hit tile. I looked down. One Chippendale leg had splintered and come loose from the rest of the chair.

I didn't leave Ocho Rios as I had intended to do when I stormed out of the dining room, leaving Phoebe with the shattered chair. Nor did I carry out my intention of returning the citrine ring, although today is the first time it's been on my finger since that morning in Ocho Rios. I have no memory of how Phoebe and Peter and I managed to struggle through the next couple of days, until it was time for

I wrote a polite thank-you note. I never heard from Phoebe again, until the dancer arrived today.

When I learned Peter had died, I did try to phone Phoebe. She refused to take my calls. I wrote letters. But Peter had been right. A gift refused ended the friendship.

Now I soap my finger to remove the ring. I rinse and dry it and return it to the leather box.

I perch the dancing girl on the window sill and I pull up a chair. As the sun slants in on the bronze planes of the sculpture, the patina glows.

This is what seizes my attention as I turn the dancer in the sunlight: when the piece is seen in profile, the head is tilted downward, the eyes are half-closed, the left hand touches the cheek in a gesture of modesty or perhaps even self-abasement. On the table at the Plaza thirty years ago, and again this morning, when I looked at the dancer head-on, the other hand, the one on the hip, projected boldness, defiance, control.

Which was the view that drew Phoebe Warner to this particular work of art? Did she identify with the profile? Who was Phoebe?

Her posthumous gift, Lipchitz's dancing girl, Phoebels, now mine, ensconced on my window sill, takes dominion over this room.

Phoebe, just as she always insisted, has the last

Gabe was the peacemaker and the glue of the group. If a leader had to labeled, Gabe played the part with flying colors.

The last night on trail together was bittersweet. A full moon hung low in the Minnesota sky, casting a milky white light that filtered down to us through the trees and danced like spirit snakes across the black water. It gave our skin a silvery reptilian shine and we shoved off the tiny island in our canoes to converse with this "man in the moon" one last time in the Boundary Waters together.

"And there at camp we had around us the elemental world of water and light and earth and air. We felt the presence of the wild creatures, the river, the tree, the stars. Though we had our troubles, we had them in true perspective. The universe, as we could see any night, is unimaginable large, and almost dark. We knew we needed to be together more than we needed to be apart."

Voyageur Outward Bound School Readings

I tried to force the last day of canoeing to go by slowly. I detested the thought of seeing power lines, hearing cars or telephones, or running across other people; however, a lone power line draped like a noose from one side of the lake to the other shattered my dream of social isolation. I knew we were out of the Boundary Waters.

During the bus ride back to the Duluth Airport, from whence I would plummet back into a so-called normal life (phones, cars, electricity, work, school, etc.)—a task that then seemed impossible—I fought a lump in my throat that I was sure would choke the life out of me before I made it on the plane.

Arnie (whose feet had healed nicely thanks to my knack with mole skin) sat next to me looking out the window, knowing it would be better not to talk., his long blond hair bleached even whiter than from the sun's rays.

I was leaving these people who I looked after, ate with, slept next to, fought and laughed with for only a month, but it seemed so much more. Everything I experienced on Outward Bound from the physical and emotional strain, the blisters and the parasitesthrough all this, leaving these people was the hardest part of the course.

I was the last of my group to leave Minnesota, with a seven-hour delay. I sat in the airport restaurant with a plate of french fries (food I dreamed about over lunches of gorp), but couldn't bring myself to

The neon Budweiser sign buzzed unnaturally over the bar and I could smell fabric softener in the clothes of the people around me.

A TV perched in the corner proclaimed events going on in other parts of the world, and I realized I hadn't shaved my legs or armpits yet (and probably never would again).

"The old Lakota Sioux was wise. He knew that man's heart away from nature becomes hard; he knew that lack of respect for growing, living things soon leads to lack of respect for humans, too. So he kept his youth close to nature's softening influence."

> Touch the Earth **Voyageur Outward Bound School Readings**

Outward Bound proved to be an experience of a lifetime, and anyone interested should choose a global destination and commit.

I hear so many people say they "have always wanted to try that," and all I can say is there is absolutely nothing to lose and everything to gain—a lifetime of friendship, a mind-expanding experience, and so much more.

"Zorba came upon an old man planting an apricot seedling and asked why he, an old man, was planting

"I live as though I will never die," was his reply. "And me, I live as though I might die tomorrow," said Zorba, "which one of us is right?"

> Nikos Kazantzakis Zorba the Greek Voyageur Outward School Readings Book -Flipside

-Flipside

Ode to Saint Joan

I wonder where
the Lord's angel
with bee's-honey smiles and decalogue
came to you at the end of the day, voice of
the Red Seas whispering,
to proffer France your little bones,
a milk maid;

to make a deal in heaven's brightness your ordinary eyes.

I wonder who
the Holy Ghost thought he was
that day, to dapple the sun's yellow hand
upon your young temple,
to engender you pious
with war's cross, implacable
with a prayer.

Probably the cows
were munching in a hazy field,
laborious, holy, immune; and His voice fell
inside of you with the mystery
of blood's baby.

In faith's armor he sent you forth. Seventeen years old.

Joan, can you hear me?
I see the crown of a king
dropped in years of puddled mud and battle;
the desperate fathers fighting us.
I see poverty and I flicker
like the hungry oriflamme
of smoke's engine, disgorged;

the boot of cannons bashing out our metallic ranks and horses in half.

I am the felony of dismemberment; the shriek of mothers. I am the iron ball that splits the friend's heart with sulphur, disembowels the generations for vivid slough. I am the rapture of swiftness; the marshalled men of ash who follow you.

I dream of love and dream of failing. I am the belief. And am betrayal.

Joan, let heresy be our vinegar of thanks. I captured the shield, but heard no seraphic voice. I provided the instrumental peril of devils in you, yet was offered no possible recant.

I even lit the blaze as your breasts heaved white lillies in Rouen that day. Joan.

I am the people.

I love a warrior saint delivered into burning grace.

—Anthony Cañez



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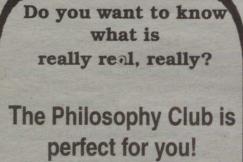
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FROM OUT THE MOUTH OF JOHN POPPER

BY MILLIE BARLEY

bout 10 o'clock of a warm Saturday morning in August, my phone rang. My good friend Steve told me to wake up James, our mutual friend, because Steve was planning to pick us up within the hour for an outdoor concert at an amphitheater near Pittsburgh. I quickly dressed, throwing on my bikini under my shorts, knowing I could catch a few rays while tailgating in the parking lot. It was only a 10-minute walk up to James's fraternity house. When I got there, I woke him. He climbed out of bed, rubbed his head and threw on a Dead shirt, a pair of cutoffs and, of course, his sun glasses. The sun was shining, the birds were singing, it was a beautiful day and we were ready for a party.

Steve showed up at exactly 11 o'clock Steve arrived. We made sure we all had our tickets and hopped in the car. Barreling down Interstate 70, windows down, music blaring, wind blowing our hair, smiling from ear to ear, we sang as we headed for Starlake

Although, I thought the bands that were playing were okay, my real reason for going was simply to party. The act that was headlining the HORDE, a traveling annual tour of bands, was Blues Traveler. They were the only band that I really was interested in seeing. It was 1996, and the group was becoming very big. Every time I turned on the radio that summer I heard their hit song "Run-around."

I also thought that they were rather funny looking. The lead singer, John Popper, was about 300 pounds and always wore a kind of cowboy hat. Whenever I saw them on TV, I wondered how someone who heavy had enough energy to blow into a harmonica throughout a long performance.

At the front entrance of Starlake, the line of cars seemed never ending, but we had VIP parking—courtesy of friends who worked there—and were able to bypass the traffic. It was about 89 degrees that day, but the breeze wafting through the parking lot kept the temperature perfect. We tapped the keg and

After hanging out for about three hours, everyone began to grow antsy. We could hear Lenny Kravitz starting to perform. We knew the HORDE fest was finally under way. None of us was very excited about Lenny Kravitz. We were really only interested in Blues Traveler, the reason we bought the tickets in the first place. We decided to stay in the parking lot for most of Kravitz's show. Finally, we put everything back into the van, checked to make sure that we had our tickets and headed for the gate.

As we stood in a long line waiting to get in, I hid my camera in the pocket of my wind breaker and tied it around my waist so the pocket was facing the back of my legs. Security guards checked bags, purses, pockets and any other place a person might hide a camera, but somehow, I made it through. I hoped to get some great pictures, but I never thought I would end up with the picture I did.

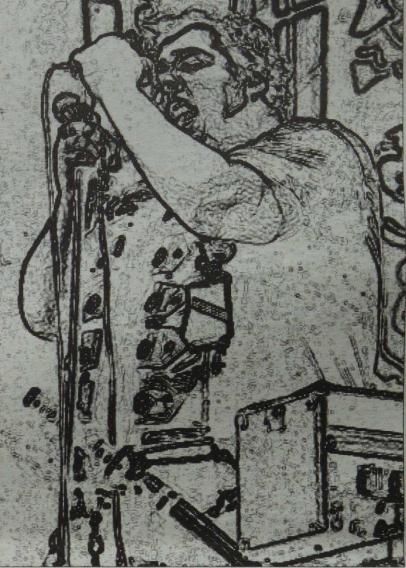
We walked up the grassy hill around the stage, trying to find a spot on the lawn as close to the pavilion as we could and center stage. We laid our blankets down and marked our territory. People danced all around us.

We decided to go to one of the concessions. Everywhere we went the lines were outrageous. We chose the one that looked the shortest, purchased our drinks, and started to walk back to our spot on the grass. We overheard a band playing on a side stage and decided to go check them out. It was a Jamaican band playing reggae. Their outfits were a vivid combination of reds, yellows, greens and oranges. The band was pretty good, but I wondered why the crowd was so

I looked up at the stage, but a huge black speaker blocked my view. I decided to try to get to the center of the crowd so I could see beyond the speaker. I worked my way through the people, looked up and understood why the crowd was so excited. It was John Popper, the lead singer of Blues Traveler.

Popper wore black from head to toe and was as big as I remembered him from TV. He wore a vest on that had dozens of small compartments on both sides in which to store his harmonicas. He was wearing a pair of black sun glasses so we couldn't see where he was looking. I wanted to get as close to him as I could. I weaseled my way to the front, so close that my body was touching the stage. The whole time that he played, I stared at him, unable to believe that he was standing right in front of me.

I heard a rumor that he gave two harmonicas away at every concert and I wanted one. They played on and on. Popper seemed oblivious to the time. I heard Rusted Root announced in the background and didn't even care. I couldn't wait to tell my brother Bruce that I had stood two feet away from the lead singer of Blues Traveler.



The Jamaican band finished up and thanked John Popper for playing with them. Suddenly, John approached the front of the stage. He started at the end farthest from me and worked his way down, shaking people's hands along the way. I was trembling. Finally, he got to me. I noticed something different. He reached into his pocket and put something into his hand. He reached out to shake my hand and, instead, placed a harmonica in it. My knees buckled and people crowded around me. Everyone wanted to touch the harmonica. My friends were freaking. They helped me break free of the crowed. I finally was able to breathe

I never wanted that moment to end. Nothing at the rest of the concert seemed like a big deal. I had a harmonica, and John Popper had given it to me.

We went back to the grass to catch the end of Rusted Root's show. All I wanted to do was dance and sing and enjoy the rest of the concert. Rusted Root announced that they were playing their last song, so I decided to hit the rest rooms before my new favorite band started to play. I went into the stall and put my harmonica on the toilet paper dispenser. I walked out of the bathroom and headed back to our spot in the grass. I looked down and realized I didn't have the harmonica. I panicked. Thanks to my own stupidity, the coolest day of my life was turning into the worst.

I ran back to the bathroom and lunged toward the stall. It was occupied. I knocked on the door, not caring if I made someone mad. I just wanted my harmonica back. A girl walked out, scowled and kept going. The harmonica was still there. I was the luckiest girl in the world-twice in one day. I went back and told my friends the stupid thing I had done. My friend Bob was more excited than everyone else about my finding the harmonica. He was in a band, and one of the instruments he played was the harmonica. I let him fool ar rest of the concert.

Blues Traveler sounded amazing. I sang and danced with my friends and couldn't imagine any other place that I would rather be. It was dark now, and every star in the sky seemed to shine brighter than ever. I listened and hung on every word that John Popper sang. He announced that he was playing his last song. He played the beetles song "Imagine." At that moment I thought anything in the world was possible.

A couple of months later, it was Bob's birthday. Every time I had seen him since the concert, he had asked to play Popper's harmonica. On Bob's birthday, I looked at the harmonica. I certainly couldn't play it, and no special markings identified it as John Popper's. I decided that Bob would get more use out of it than I. When I saw him that night, I asked him if I could talk to him alone. As we walked outside, I slipped the harmonica in his pocket. I never saw anyone so happy. He started jumping around and wouldn't stop hugging me.

Most of my friends called my crazy for giving away such a prize. For me, it was a way to share the most memorable day of my life. I have priceless memories, and that's all I need.

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"My karma just ran over your dogma."—seen on a bumper sticker



Seventh Side

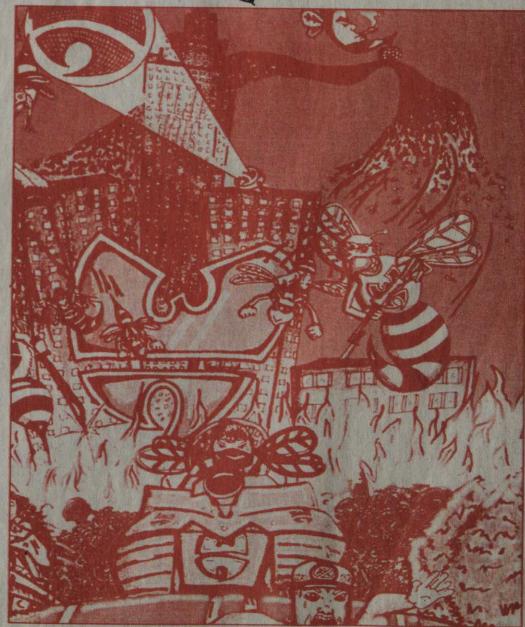
in the upside of my inside every seventh side of me 3 groups of 3 lights grow on a new tree Below on the outside with the inside so free turns pruny over blochip shloza trunx wrimp shaze

Illustration and poem by Dylan Stone-Briggs

The Issue That Would Not Die Issue

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Spring 1999 Free



Cover art by Kenny Musko

In this Issue:

Troy Bowers learns that, sometimes, unanswered prayers are the best ones
Jodi Valo catches and dissects the 'religious bug'
Daniel J. Pacella explains what he has learned in college thus far
Ivette Garcia and friends journey to Europe and turn into 'cargo donkeys'

Dena Ciampi finds more than she bargained for on Volume 14, Number 1

Outward Bound adventure

The end of the world as one man knows it: Flint/Steel

Tara Majoros faces her personal witching hour and comes away with a new perspective

Millie Barley takes a handout from John Popper

Poetry by Laura Tepe, Robert Giesen, Keith Alexander, Jack Jaqua

And not much more ...