

Eastern Illinois University

The Keep

The Post Amerikan (1972-2004)

The Post Amerikan Project

4-1-2003

Volume 32, Number 2

Post Amerikan

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Recommended Citation

Post Amerikan, "Volume 32, Number 2" (2003). *The Post Amerikan (1972-2004)*. 264.
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Lessons of The Furry Buddhas

Interview with Michael Dubina & Thursday Gervais

SC Lofton's 1st day out of prison



POST AMERIKAN

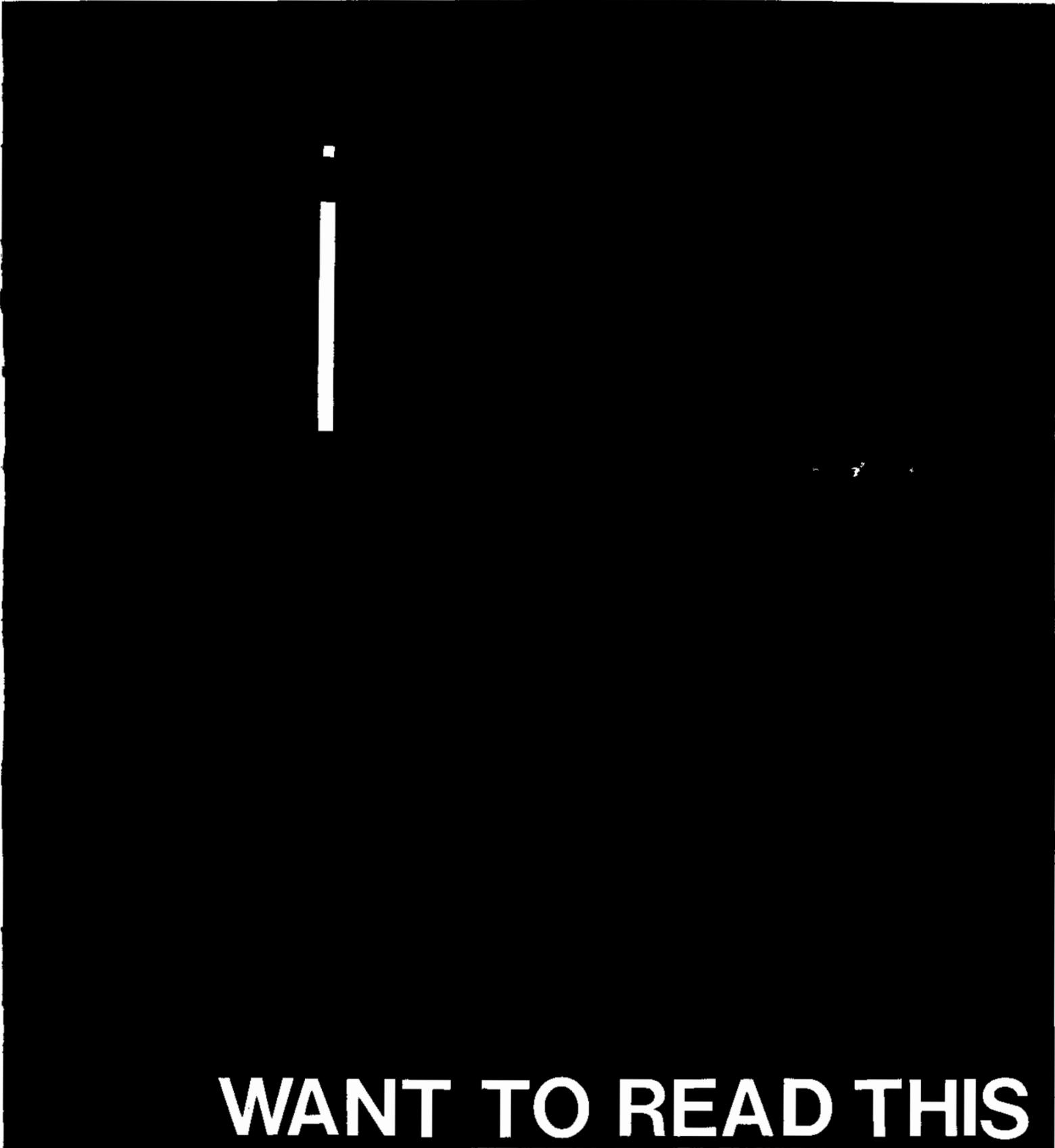


BLOOMINGTON/NORMAL VOLUME 32

FREE

NUMBER TWO

JUNE/JULY 2003



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PAGE 2



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About us

The *Post Amerikan* is an independent community newspaper providing information and analysis that is screened out of or down played by establishment news sources. We are a non-profit, worker-run collective that exists as an alternative to the corporate media.

We put out six issues a year. Staff members take turns as "coordinator." All writing, typing, editing, graphics, photography, pasteup, and distribution are done on a volunteer basis. You are invited to volunteer your talents.

Most of our material and inspiration for material comes from the community. The *Post Amerikan* welcomes stories, graphics, photos, letters, and new tips from our readers. If you'd like to join us, call 828-4473 and leave a message on our answering machine. We will get back to you as soon as we can. Don't worry if it takes a while--we don't meet every week.

An alternative newspaper depends directly on a community of concerned people for existence. We believe it is very important keep a newspaper like this around. If you think so too, then please support us by telling your friends about the paper, donating money to the printing of the paper, and telling our advertisers you saw their ad in *Post Amerikan*.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions to the *Post Amerikan* are available for the low price of \$6.00 per year for six complete issues. Please send a check (made payable to the *Post Amerikan*) to: Post Amerikan, P.O. Box 3452 Bloomington, IL 61702.

This issue of *Post Amerikan* is brought to you by...

David, Matt, Peter & Sherrin

Good numbers

Advocacy Council for Human Rights.830-2521
 AIDS Hotlines
 National.....1-800-AID-AIDS
 Illinois.....1-800-243-2437
 Local.....827-AIDS
 Alcoholics Anonymous.....828-7092
 Amnesty International-ISU...Miomi@ilstu.edu
 Animal Protection League.....828-5371
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 Dept. of Children/Family Services....828-0022
 Gay, Lesbian & Bi teen drop in center.828-3998
 Gay & Lesbian Resource Phonenumber...438-2429
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 Headstart.....662-4880
 Home Sweet Home Mission.....828-7356
 IL Dept. of Public Aid.....827-4621
 IL Lawyer Referral.....1-217-525-5297
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 LIFE-CIL.....663-5433
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 McLean Co. Health Dept.....888-5450
 McLean Co. Housing Authority.....829-3360
 McLean Co. Humane Society.....664-7387
 McLean Co. Peace Coalition.....828-7070
 Mid Central Community Action.....829-0691
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 Narcotics Anonymous.....827-4005
 National Health Care Services/
 abortion assistance.....1-800-322-1622
 Occupational Development Center....452-7324
 Parents Anonymous.....827-4005
 PATH (Personal Assistance Telephone Help).827-4005
 Phone Friends.....827-4005
 PFLAG(Parents, Families & Friends
 of Lesbians & Gays).....862-1844
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 (bus/couns/edu).....827-4368
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 Safe Harbor Mission.....829-7399
 TeleCare (senior citizens).....828-8301
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 Voice for Choice.....827-4005
 Western Avenue Community Center....829-4807
 Youth Build.....827-7507

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July 15th



Community News



Advocacy Council retooling website

The Advocacy Council in Bloomington-Normal is renovating its web site and making a number of improvements designed to make the site more user friendly.

New features will include an updated calendar of local activities and access to the current and past issues of The Rainbow Connection, the group's monthly newsletter.

Also on tap is a new domain name and new security features that will eliminate all pop-up advertisements. Look in future issues of the Prairie Flame for the new web address and information on the formal unveiling of the site.

--The Rainbow Connection

Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones is a new organization in McLean County providing support services to sexual assault survivors. Volunteers offer 24 hour, free and confidential help through PATH.

The next two 40-hour volunteer trainings are scheduled the week of June 16 (all day) or starting September 9 in the evening and continuing every Tuesday and Thursday evening for six weeks.

You can reach Stepping Stones Sexual Assault Services by calling PATH at 827-4005.

Family Reunion Picnic

The Advocacy Council for Human Rights continues to firm up plans for another "Family Reunion" picnic from noon to 4 PM on Sunday, July 13 at Normal's Underwood Park.

The afternoon will be filled with food and activities. The Advocacy Council will once again supply brats, hot dogs, veggie burgers and buns for the event. Those attending are asked to bring a dish to share. Table service will be provided.

A short presentation after the meal will include the awarding of special certificates of appreciation to two members of the Bloomington/Normal community who have helped strengthen the glbt community in B/N and have provided valuable support in the effort to gain equal rights in the Twin Cities.

There will be games such as volleyball, horse-shoes and soft ball. Raffle tickets for prizes donated by local business also will be sold.

All glbt and glbt-supportive people from Central Illinois and beyond are invited to attend. For more information contact achr@mailcity.com.

Response to "Gun paranoia" in last issue

The left in the U.S. is in decline, and one reason is the gun control issue.

I know a number of factory workers in Central Illinois and they tell me that the gun control issue is a key reason why many working people have become disillusioned with the Democratic Party -- and also with liberalism in general.

After all, if so many liberals don't trust weaponry in the hands of workers, why should anyone believe that those liberals support, or have any respect for, those same workers.

Ever more stringent gun control laws not only are bad politics, but are wrong and dangerous for the country.

Liberals should heed the words of the late and great Hubert Humphrey.

Considered a liberal icon by many people, Humphrey a number of years ago wrote the following:

"The right of citizens to bear arms is just one more guarantee against arbitrary government and one more safeguard against a tyranny which now appears remote in America, but which historically has proved to be always possible."

Yes, I know there are serious civil liberties problems today in spite of gun ownership by American citizens.

But, as Humphrey's remarks suggest, we can anticipate that with evermore stringent and onerous gun control laws the situation will become much, much worse.

--Allan H. Keith

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Cuba says 'no'

The old saying has it that if you throw enough mud, some of it is bound to stick.

No hope for the truth—or the future—there. We might all just as well give up and surrender to the Big Lie.

But what if the mud only stuck on the hands of the mudslingers? Now there would be a heartening development.

No surprise that that's just what's been happening with Washington's eternal campaign to demonize Cuba. After all, there's the one place in the world where workers, farmers, and young people have successfully turned everything upside down.

Of course anyone who's read a U.S. newspaper or watched TV is used to the propaganda engines regularly pumping mud at the revolutionary island.

We've had ludicrous stories about Cuba buying a freighterful of Chinese weapons, Cuba planning to bring down the internet, and Cuba producing bio-weapons—to mention just a few of the Big Lies. All discredited so quickly and completely that only the slingers had mud on them. Cuba—and the truth—stayed clean.

Not that the mudslingers didn't just wash off and reach for another batch. After all, if there's one thing you can credit Washington's decades-long campaign against Cuba with, it's relentlessness.

Lately, with blood in its mouth after its easy seizure of Iraq, the government of the U.S. ruling class began to wonder if—thinking *this time for-real* (for about the fiftieth time)—the moment had come for it to get Cuba back into its hands.

Washington had been assembling its forces. It had several score well-paid agents who its media empire had spent years polishing as 'selfless human rights activists'.

The Bush-appointed chief U.S. representative in Havana had publicly declared his mission to be the "overthrow" of Cuba's government. And he'd traveled over 6000 miles in Cuba organizing and funding people looking to enjoy the personal fruits of "regime change."

Meanwhile Washington had essentially closed off legal immigration from the island, granting only 504 permissions to enter in the past five months while its agreement with Cuba required a *minimum* of nearly 9,000.

And the U.S. had next greeted the subsequent hijackers of Cuban boats and planes with open arms.

And, lest its flagrant violation of its accords with Cuba on air and naval piracy not be clear enough, Washington had underlined it by not only refusing to return the hijacked vessels, but by selling them and turning over the monies to Miami counter-revolutionaries.

It had another 29 hijacking were in the works.

Meanwhile the propaganda engines thrummed the messages: "Cuba is an aberration that will not last" (Colin Powell); "Iraq is a lesson for Cuba" (U.S. Ambassador to the Dominican Republic); and "Why not at least consider having a little Iraq-style war to liberate Cuba?" (Wall Street Journal).

And the kicker from the Pentagon: "Any mass exodus from Cuba will be regarded as a threat to U.S. national security" --to be dealt with, of course, by "all means at our disposal."

Seemed like everything was in place. At last Washington's intransigent opponent and damning counter-example would fall in a "little Iraq-style war."

Except for the small problem of reality—may we call it Truth? Cuba's government was built by and belongs to the Cuban people, who do not tolerate even statues to any living leader.

Bango! After issuing repeated warnings -- ignored by the Northern Colossus—they rolled up its paid agents, put them on trial with scrupulous regard to their legal rights, presented overwhelming and incontrovertible evidence against them, and made it all available via TV, books, and the internet (see www.granma.cu).

Next they took the three ringleaders of the last group of armed hijackers, provided them full and open legal trials, gave them two appeals, then finally carried out their courts' ruling of execution.

End of Washington's Fifth Column and hijacking operations against Cuba.

Of course Washington squealed to high Heaven and cranked up its engines to hurl more mud than ever before. Cuba was "repressive!" (no matter that the only place on the island where defendants are held in cages without charges or access to lawyers is on the U.S. military base on Guantánamo).

The executions of hijackers were "savage!" (no matter that the U.S. executes more people than the rest of the world, including children, the mentally retarded, and the innocent).

Just how much the mud of these charges stuck was shown by the subsequent unanimous election of Cuba to the UN Human Rights Commission—a position the U.S. government failed to be elected to.

And so our story ends—though no doubt it will be continued.

Its preeminent message is the same as that voted by acclamation of millions of demonstrating Cubans in 1962 in their Second Declaration of Havana: "The lesson of the Cuban Revolution is that revolution is possible."

Just stick together, build a competent and accountable leadership, and—most importantly—have no fear, no matter the odds.

Do that, and even 11 million people on a small island can defeat the greatest military power in world history for decade upon decade.

If you doubt a word of all this—and you should always question what you read—go get the facts for yourself (which has to include a visit to www.granma.cu).

Best of all, accept the generous invitation from Cuba's youth groups to join the third U.S./Cuba Youth Exchange visit to the island—during the 50th anniversary celebrations of the beginning of their revolution, no less.

It's a rare legal trip (contact YouthExchange2003@yahoo.com).

Go to Cuba and make up your own mind.

And see where the mud sticks.

--Steve Eckardt

Steve Eckardt welcomes comments and criticisms at Seckardt@aol.com

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Alderman ~ Ward 6

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Representing citizens' ideas, interests, issues & concerns to Bloomington city government.

Ward 6 is roughly downtown Bloomington and all parts of its surrounding neighborhoods. You need not live in my ward to call me.



The people united

There's never been a shortage of volunteers in Cuba—no surprise since they have, by their own efforts, established universal free health care and education, while eliminating homelessness and illiteracy—and wish the same for the rest of the world. Some 500,000 of them signed up for military duty in Africa after the Angolan government asked for help repelling the troops of apartheid South Africa (over 2000 giving their lives in the fight).

When three Cuban literacy teachers were killed by contras in Nicaragua in an area so dangerous the Nicaraguan government wouldn't send people into, some 100,000 Cubans volunteered to replace them the next day.

And people willingly take on other, more repugnant tasks.

Take the people who infiltrated Washington's nest of paid "dissidents," "independent journalists," and "human rights activists." There was the "dean of Cuba's independent journalist"—a dignified old man never without his trademark cane and black beret, often profiled in the U.S. media. And there was the "heroic" secretary for Maria Beatriz Roque, vaunted leader of the "dissidents" (and well-compensated agent of the U.S. government).

The 'dean' and the secretary were reviled and ostracized as traitorous scabs by their neighbors—and even their own families.

When they testified at the trials of the agents—and were later interviewed on Cuban TV—both delivered vital and incontrovertible evidence—and both revealed themselves to be volunteers for Cuban security services.

And both came home to tumultuous welcomes in their neighborhoods, carried through the streets as their names were chanted, while their families wept tears of joy.

The hardest duty to volunteer for, but the sweetest payback in the end.

Immigrant organizing book's challenge

The Maya of Morganton—Work & Community in the Nuevo New South by Leon Fink. University of North Carolina Press, ISBN: 0-8078-5447-6

"Organize" is the labor movement's lifeblood, a continual imperative to reach out to new workers.

Immigrant workers are a recent focus, but organizing immigrant workers has its own particular promises and pitfalls. These are thoroughly explored through anew volume by Leon Fink, entitled *The Maya of Morganton*.

North Carolina's western mountains are the last place one would expect to find a strong union drive, let alone a colony of Guatemalan poultry workers.

In this detailed volume, Fink goes beyond the usual analysis of a stymied union campaign, and thoroughly probes these workers, their Guatemalan roots and their impact on their homeland.

In 1989 Case Farms in Morganton, N.C., began recruiting Guatemala workers for its poultry production plant. Within five years the majority of the plant's workers were Guatemalan.

Although praised as good workers, these immigrants reacted quickly to poor conditions, low pay and basic needs like bathroom breaks through spontaneous strikes. In May 1995 a wildcat walk-out caught the attention of the Laborers International Union (LIUNA), actively organizing other poultry workers in the South.

The Laborers were going through their own internal struggle at the time, as their new president Arthur A. Coia, attempted to shed past corruption allegations through a federally approved housecleaning.

Local volunteers

LIUNA sent Spanish-speaking organizers to Morganton, including a contingent of volunteers from Laborers Local 362 in Bloomington. Buoyed by these signs of outward support, the case Farms workers voted "Union Si" that July.

Case Farms used traditional delay tactics, including legal challenges, to break the union drive. Despite court orders to negotiate, the union effort dwindled. LIUNA linked with the new Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice and tried to build a corporate campaign against Case Farms. After two federally-mandated negotiating periods faltered, in 2001 LIUNA helped finance a workers' center in Morganton, but dropped its formal claims on the bargaining unit.

Besides a thorough analysis of corporate union-busting tactics, this book's real richness is the Guatemalan workers' stories.

For these workers, Spanish was a second language. Immersed in a world of local Indian dialects, they first had to overcome their mutual and historic mistrust before they could build an effective union. This internal struggle was not always obvious to outsiders who would simply view them together as "Hispanics."

Guatemala's transformation

Meanwhile, village life in Guatemala is being thoroughly transformed through remitted dollars, earned at minimum wages in North Carolina.

Organizing remains imperative for labor's survival. This cautionary tale is required reading for anyone probing not only the fault lines of the new world order, but also trying to understand the diverse workers who form U.S. labor's forgotten bottom tier.

--Mike Matejka, *Grand Prairie Union News*



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Lessons of The Furry Buddhas

In the two decades that I've taught here in this enchanted New Mexico canyon, I've often been asked "which teachings" I follow, or what "mentors" influenced my rather eclectic way of sharing the secrets of the living world. Truth is I follow my instincts and intuition more than any known practice, though I've discovered truths common to them all. And frankly, few of the significant teachers in my life have been human.

Instead, much of who I am and most of what I've authored has grown out of the immediate lessons of Nature and direct interaction with the inspired Earth. Like many others I've been transformed by the examples set by faint or swelling river, the behavior of the beasts, the rootedness of plants, the parable of a fallen swallow.... or the awareness and playfulness of the North American bobcat.

Perhaps no creature makes a better role model than these spotted "furry Buddhas," licentiously advertising their lust and hunger in wild howls and mad scratchings. Their tracks constitute a veritable bible of awareness, full of passages describing warrens and rat holes, concealment and honesty, frivolity and fight, feathers and flight! They are like four legged alchemists, converting life into death, and death into life: avatars of perfect cyclic being-ness!

I've recently had the pleasure of getting to know one particularly long-legged female. She is but the latest in a long line of backwoods cats to call this wildlife sanctuary home, her personal habits and transferable lessons each dutifully recorded by the man-who-writes. Like those other venerable citizens of the wilder realms, she embodies a holy joy we'd do well to emulate, and an ageless wisdom we too can share.

I believe the time is ripe for enlightenment! The portals of canyon and forest swing wide at our approach, and every magic star aligns. Go ahead, don't be shy! Approach the set of fresh imprints made by the Master's fuzzy feet, and press your forehead to the giving ground. Her instructions for a satisfying and honorable life are simple, and I feel privileged to translate as follows:

- To be wild is to be "willed": true to our authentic needs and nature. Never pretend to be anything but what you are.
- Risk discomfort for the sake of adventure.
- Live as if there's no such thing as the future, because there really isn't.
- Inject into the present conscious moment only the most precious of memories, and those essential to your survival.
- Direction is important. Whenever you're not making moves to avoid something, make sure that you're moving with a destination or result in mind.
- When you want to be seen, make a grand show of it! Otherwise, lay low and observe the world unfolding around you.

- All the world is a book. Take time to read it.
- All things in the world fall into two categories: benefits and threats- and sometimes they can be both. Survival depends on knowing which is which. Wisdom is a matter of acting accordingly.
- You can hear best when you are still.
- The quietest among us invariably stalk barefoot.
- The nose knows.
- When smelling for trouble, don't forget to smell the flowers too.
- The tamed are at a distinct disadvantage. "Domesticated" means "with deadened senses."
- The longer the hunt, the stronger the legs. The more difficult the trail, the stronger the will.
- Just because it isn't easy, doesn't mean it's not the right thing to do. We have to chance getting stickers in our tongue, if we want to get the burrs out of our feet.
- For every single step that you take, look around twice.
- Self respect is prerequisite to earning the respect of others.
- Anytime you're not actively being pursued, don't bother being afraid.
- When outnumbered, retreat. When outnumbered and cornered, go down fighting.
- Better to chew your own foot off, than get trapped in an unhealthy situation.
- Know that Hell is confinement, no matter how benign, and that Heaven is the knowledge of oneness that comes without words on a full moon night.
- Automobiles are far more dangerous than guns.
- Avoid road-kills: an easy meal often comes at a high price, and "convenient" is another way of saying "in close proximity to a substantial threat."
- When possible, pick dens and situations with more than one exit.
- Foresight is the application of past experience, ancient instinct, and the immediate enlivened senses.
- Once you know what you want, pursue it.
- Happiness is purpose. Purpose is a clear goal and a hot trail.
- There's no doubt a lure can attract game, but the best hunters have no use for deceit.
- Shed all extra clothing in the Summer, then bundle up for the Winter's cold.
- Don't waste your time thinking, when you couldn't be deeply feeling instead.

- Real satisfaction comes from living close to the land, close to the ground.
- Finding a mate depends as much on where you are, as who you are.
- Sexual attraction is more sense of smell than common sense.
- The best sex isn't always the most gentle.
- The best way to get your mate to lick you, is to start licking and preening your mate.
- Be extra wary among strangers, and extra cuddly with family and friends.
- Never fake affection.
- If your friends won't rub your back, then rub your back on them.
- Make sweet noises whenever something feels good. Purr to indicate you're happy. Always play with your food.
- There are many more mice caught than turkeys. Accomplishing something big is reason to feel proud, but it's our many little accomplishments that sustain us.
- Life is a meal to be enjoyed. Gorge yourself whenever possible, and store what you can. When between feasts, don't whine about it.
- Make up for eating so much by running up and down trees.
- Explore the ordinary, as though it were infinitely fascinating.... because it is!
- Don't let a single butterfly go by unnoticed.
- Maintain your dignity, even when acting as silly as you feel.
- And whenever not busy playing with your food, running up and down trees or rubbing your back on your friends.... curl up in a safe place and sleep.
- When death finally overtakes you, make sure it finds you fully, wholly alive.

While seemingly unattached to outcome, the Master wishes us well.

--Jesse Wolf Hardin

Jesse Wolf Hardin is an acclaimed activist and teacher of Earth-centered spirituality, as well as the author of Kindred Spirits: Sacred Earth Wisdom (Swan•Raven, 800-366-0264). Wolf and Loba share a riverside sanctuary where Wolf offers men's quests and intuitive counsel, and Loba hosts women for quests, wildfoods gathering and preparation, and special resident internships. Contact: The Earthen Spirituality Project & Sweet Medicine Women's Center, Box 509, Reserve, NM 87830 <www.concentric.net/~earthway>.



Beatings by bullies under the big top

Last summer, an animal handler with Sterling & Reid Circus was arrested after striking a frightened elephant with a sharp bullhook, and witnesses alerted police here in PETA's hometown of Norfolk, Virginia. Finding still-bleeding lacerations on the elephant, officers arrested the handler, David Creech. He was later convicted of three counts of cruelty to animals.

How can this circus still be in business? Sterling & Reid has been cited for failure to comply with federal animal welfare requirements more than 70 times in the last four years alone. In 1998, officials in California seized eight starving ponies from a filthy trailer. Yet the circus still forces animals into chains and cages and carts them around.

Animals in circuses don't "perform" because they like to. They can't understand why they must stand on their heads, carry people on their backs or live most of their lives in chains. They perform because trainers beat them into submission. They know what happens if they don't obey.

Circus handlers are seen kissing elephants for the camera and scratching tigers' backs on television, but their bullhooks and shock prods are never out of reach. Once in a while, they get caught:

--A secretly shot video tape shows Carson & Barnes Circus elephant trainer Tim Frisco attacking terrified elephants with a bullhook and bellowing at novice trainers to rip the hook through the elephants' flesh until they cry out in pain. "Make 'em scream!" he yells. He also tells them that they must never hit them in front of the public. Frisco learned the tricks of the trade from his father, a former elephant trainer for Ringling Bros.

--Ringling animal trainer Gunther Gebel-Williams beat and whipped elephants and gouged their tender skin with bullhooks.

--Last year, Gebel-Williams' son, Mark Gebel, was arrested for inflicting wounds on an elephant.

--Ringling was slapped with a warning after causing painful injuries to two terrified baby elephants when they were torn from their mothers for training.

--An undercover investigation revealed that stage and circus entertainer Bobby Berosini was beating orangutans before every performance. Offstage, Berosini kept the orangutans in individual coffin-like metal boxes in which they couldn't even stretch their arms.

--Mary Chipperfield of Chipperfield Circus was convicted in Britain on 12 counts of cruelty after being videotaped beating a chimpanzee, hitting a camel and making a sick elephant perform. Her husband was found guilty of causing unnecessary suffering to an elephant after he had whipped the animal to see "how sick it really was."

Abuse, imprisonment, separation from family, constant threat of punishment—these are the circus' stock tools. You may never see a raised whip or club because you are not meant to. But you can be certain that there are no happy animals in circuses.

Please don't buy into the hype and the ads. Stay away from animal circuses and educate others.

--PETA's Animal Times

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HAIR DYES- SHOES



Inside the downtown

As a new feature, I will be interviewing downtown artists in order to bring about better understanding & communication between us and all the owners and workers in the wonderful downtown area. It is my goal to give you pure honesty, a further interest in who we are, what & why we create, and a greater sense of community between us.

I greatly welcome letters about how much you like or dislike what we'll be sharing with you. Also any questions you would like to see answered should be sent to the Post or to my e-mail at vision714@hotmail.com.

For our first installment I sat down with Michael Dubina and Thursday Gervais in their 2nd & 5th floor studios at 115 E. Monroe St., above Flatlander Industries. Armed with two bottles of wine we hung out and talked art for six hours, so to do my best at relaying what transcribed; my writing style will be that of direct quotes, run-on sentences, and a general hodge-podge collection of their answers. What I'm saying is don't expect too much professionalism, after all this is art we're talking about.

Here's a little pre-downtown studio info of each artist:

Thursday- at 9 years old studied under Ozzie Rometo, Degree in Advertising, Design & Illustration at College of DuPage in computer art movement, Chicagoland region muralist, moved to Bloomington in 2000.

Mike- BFA at ISU in 1986

Me- How many years have you occupied a studio in downtown Bloom, and Why?

MD- My first studio was in 1984-1985 on the corner of Main & Monroe next to The Back Porch and I sometimes traded a painting for rent to Fred Wollrab's father. "First off let me say that Fred Wollrab is the patron saint of artists in downtown Bloomington."

TG- I was looking for a studio in Chicago in 2000 where a space a third the size of what I have here goes for about \$2500. Michael (who I was dating at the time) said I should move to Bloomington and get one for cheap, so Fred hooked me up immediately.

Me- What do you think are the best/worst changes to the downtown area in your time here?

MD- The best would have to be the audience for us has grown larger, quality of taste has increased, in particular the Mulberry School Auction has educated people on the variety of artists here in the community. The worst is that "the price of real estate has gone up drastically."

TG- Only being here a short time "I feel I'm a part of the community, really supported, "there's a great sense of connection with the people.

Me- Does it ever come to mind that some people think you're living this vacation-like life most consider a non-real world lifestyle in a commercial/business environment?

TG- "This is a 9-5 job just like everyone else, we're here everyday, we make our product & hope it sells, it's not glamorous." We have to handle criticism of our exposed selves, we have to be scientists, mathematicians, and we get no weekly paycheck.

MD- "There's this stereotype of an artist that barely eats, is always drunk, & the reality of it is not only do you have to be constantly creative, you need good business skills and meet deadlines." You have to be very, very good and very, very lucky. It's a lot like religion, having faith in something.

Me- Tell people how you budget your money with art sales being such a gamble. Everyone I know is a master at stretching money and getting things for free.

TG- Yea exactly, "I used to make brushes out of my hair." One day a store had 90% off brushes and we bought a whole grocery cart full, now we'll never have to buy another.

MD- You have to set most of it aside. "I don't live an extravagant life style, everything is business oriented, when I bought the Toyota I thought 'can I pull a trailer of paintings with this?'"

Me- "I think we have also kept the bartering system alive, and make use of what most people waste."

MD- "Artists find a way." There's a few services I trade paintings for and everyone benefits, being an artist forces you to think smart.

TG- "Money can dictate where you go (with your style) but that can also stifle your creativity."

Me- At what point did you say to yourself "this is what I must do for my life?"

MD- Growing up speaking Ukrainian in my house and then going to American schools I really didn't speak the language so I always felt years behind everyone else. At 7 years old I heard about how Picasso signed his name on napkins to pay for meals and thought that's incredible. I did excel visually since I drew a lot "that's where I got all my positive feedback, in art class."

TG- "I was born knowing." My grandmother was an artist, went all over Europe painting, she was my first big influence, really enforced it in me." Then at about 9 years. Old I started studying under Ozzie & not a day goes by I don't reflect on what he taught me.

Me- What materials/ mediums do you use most frequently?

MD- Oil, watercolor, pastel, charcoal, canvas, watercolor paper.

TG- I use everything, I'm all over the map, kinda schizo, going through phases, right now oils and watercolor, oh I'm also building a robot.

Me- Do you do much sketching or writing notes for your final pieces or are they more spontaneous?

TG- Not every time, "I think each one is a prep for the next, it's pretty hard to be spontaneous with a landscape. I do write a lot out on the canvas, in the grass or whatever but I paint over it."

MD- I used to sketch more & sit & reflect on it to see what I might need to add. Lately for the large canvases I use a digital camera, bring it up on screen and manipulate, make notes. "I think it helps to do one 3-4 times before the final piece."

Me- How do you keep yourself fresh piece after piece? What do you do if you get stale?

TG- I haven't seen myself becoming stale, when I need to do something else I just do it, "now that's out of me!" I have hundreds of paintings within these several hanging on the wall, if I'm even almost done w/ one but it starts to get old, I paint over it. "All artists are perfectionists."

MD- "There's so much to know, I'll never feel finished." I don't feel I get stale because of all the levels yet to be reached, all the mediums teach me to the oils. "I used to do 500 watercolors a year & it taught me so much about color."

Me- Mike- Any contemporary landscapes I see, I always compare the skies to yours. How do you communicate that harmony so well?

MD- "The power for me is the transcendental quality of the light", spirituality; like a stained glass window; "I'm intensifying the color."

Me- Please talk about how your work shows your choice of, or hope of reality.

TG- "I don't, I think artwork is up to the viewer." I miss the old growth trees so when I see that one tree, I paint it.

MD- "I wanted to heighten peoples senses from that 'the midwest is so flat and boring' attitude."

Me- Why the landscape as your work in relation to other "categories" of expression?

MD- I see them as self portraits, they're as much about the inner vision as the outer vision; "The most interesting scenes to me are staged by the lighting & the most dramatic lighting is dusk & dawn" to me it's a life cycle "if you can induce that drama into your painting then you got something greater than the ordinary."

TG- "It's like painting the faceless figure." "Landscapes express my self, W. Whitman did it w/ words, I do it w/ landscapes." As a kid I did 'em, now I'm coming back to it-"what I love about Mike is that we have the same vision but we paint it differently; I've been introduced to a whole new pallet of colors."; plus I do paint with a female touch.



artist's studio

Me- Thursday- Do you feel your paintings establish a 'proper place for itself' & for you by either searching out what it wants or letting it become what it wants?

TG- "Both" & that relates to being such a personal thing; when it's finished it says "that's the place; I'm a person that has a point to prove."

Me- Thursday-In your artists' statement you say 'as a social service to myself, I try to establish truth & reality', Do you feel this translates to the viewer? And do you ever find a non-truth winning out?

TG- "Yes, that's why I paint over them."; And when someone says they understand you connect also on this unspoken bond, "it confirms to me that this is working."

Me- When you are creating, do you feel that sense of freedom not only from clock-time, but also historical & psychological time as well?

MD- "I do feel most alive when I lose track of world time- that's the high." That's the most pleasing part of being an artist; "I think about that a lot (historical time) as a legacy aspect. If the picture can suggest a questioning rather than an answer, it can be more timeless."

TG- "I feel like I got alotta shit to get done before I die."; Yes, the freedom comes from all the female artists who came before me, they went through what I don't have to- I owe them, to honor them; but also imprisoned because it chose me, I'm under its control; I look at staying alive for my family.

Me- What do you think of that old saying 'you have to suffer to create good art!'?

TG- I would rather not suffer and not be an artist.

MD- I think you have to a little bit; gotta have the bitter to enjoy the sweet; you can make an argument for both.

Me- Thursday- You say at an early age you learned to surrender your artistic & psychological fear to the medium you use; What advice do you have for someone who is still struggling to do that?

TG- "Don't be afraid!" "Don't be afraid to take steps."

Me- What do you require most out of your work as a whole & in the end?

TG- "Of course I have this vision in my head, I love that struggle, the frustration, if I can get it close...that accomplishment is worth more than anything in the world."

MD- "I still haven't hit that level I want to be at. The painting is never as good as the vision in my head; the best piece is always the one I haven't done yet, that keeps it exciting."; still, "when someone really deeply appreciates it, it makes you go 'whoosh'."

Me- Last section. Here's 5?'s I'll be asking everyone. TV. in studio?

MD- No

TG- No

Do you gotta die to become a famous artist?

MD-No, Andy Warhol proved that.

TG- NO

Barn paintings on saw blades?

MD & TG- We were actually out in a farmers field when his friend asked us to do one for him,

TG- I just held back my laughter.

MD- I told him you couldn't afford it.

Biggest hardships as an artist?

MD-dishonest art dealers

TG- selfish time away from family & friends

Who is an artist?

MD-Anyone who does what they want & gives a 100% of themselves.

TG- It's as easy as that.

--matt erickson

How to reach the artists:

Studio & Home : 827-7270

Emails:
THURSDAYGERVAIS@MSN.com

MikeDubina@AOL.com

Website:
www.Dubina-ART-STUDIO.com

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The Poetry Page

Divinity

Stargazing on a cool summer night
a searching soul staring at the starlight
a wish is made alone under the moon
maybe a prayer will be answered soon

Hand of God pouring heavenly wine
can this kind of dream really be mine
vivid image of divinity
bridging this infinity

Crescent moon with its tips pointed up
looking like a holy grail-ish cup
a cosmic goblet for the Lord to fill
until the elixir begins to spill

Splashing in a rain upon the earth
bringing with it religion and rebirth
revealing now a sacred mystic sign
a modern miracle transcending time

The hours are gone
The power is on
The world is standing still
and I am spinning

The hours are gone
The power is on
My life is left behind
and I am flying

I am touched by glory
transformed with the taste
of this blood from up above
a storm of human grace

I can reach eternity
in fact I'm almost there
Scoff at me if you will
them follow me if you dare. . .

--Peter Elvidge

Bread Belly

sea of farmland
pre-emergent walls of corn
what were you before
rolling dark chundered soil
no wild brown tall grasses
white oak and black cherrythorn
beyond the great dividing highways
we are into change
yet I still pray for rain
and a belly full

--Chris Tuma

Poet's Light And Sound

Sitting alone on a lily pad
Firefly lights
Frog watches with wonderment in her eyes
Firefly amazed at the sight
Of Frog. . . un-predacious
with surprise

And this moment sparks a conversation
Frog lets out a sound
Echoes through the pond
the penetration
Of poetry
all around

And Firefly responds
Verse of his own
lights the night sky
In that moment
a bond
Is formed
side by side

On a Lily Pad
Floating with the rhythm
of words
That the Poets had
Recited
A sound is heard

Throughout the waters of harmony
Laughter mixed with
inspirational thoughts
Soon tenants of the pond gather
so many
Listening to unusual
moments being taught
Of peace
where spirits find
A place of unity
in the rhythm of voices
Though different
both remind
Of Life, Laughter
and the choices

We make
and where they lead
Two Poets took a moment
To wait for the common seed
To plant
. . . and a beautiful friendship is sent.

--Lin Frog Simmons

Wake Up

I need a make over
maybe a little make up
Like a Lemonade shakeup
you've heard of the city that never sleeps
I'm in the town that never wakes up
I need African intellectuals
I need Lesbians and homosexuals
I need a little color, these walls are bare and white
I need a few more doors that lead into the night
I need somethin' to go down, somethin' to go down on
somethin' to go down on me
somethin' to go down in history
I need somethin' sour
like a vodka lemonade shakeup
to make it through another hour
in the town that never wakes up

--Cody "Chicago Farmer"

Faves

The Things that Keep My Boat Afloat

Being imbued in the experience of God; NINTCHKAS
The smell of rich soil; the infinite eight
The fruition of plant raised from seed
The purr of a tigress; the chirp of a cricket
The song of the cicada
When an enemy says good morning back
Hearing an old friend's voice
Building castles in the air
The perfect mix with three turn tables
Being okay with being alone
Baking apple pies; candy apples
Engulfing my being in research projects
Hand feeding Koi; Kant; Jimmy Carter
The architectonic wonder of a nautilus
The swirl of my stove spinning figure eights
Pa-kua; Tai-chi; H'sing-I; Nei-kung; friendly dragons
The rush that comes from delivering babies and saving lives
The Christian work ethic; sighing when the job is done
Swimming in love; swimming in the rain; summer rain
Tender embraces; kisses that curl your toes; hugs
The blast of color when the sun hits a black beetle's back
Kissing someone and knowing it's forever—at least for today
Talks till dawn with your intellectual doppelganger
The burst of poetry via a strong cup of jo; sautéed mushrooms
Smiling at days end because of an accomplishment
Knowing someone "gets" your obscure posey
The universality of quantum spirituality
The interconnectivity of nature; spring colts
The white noise of waterfalls; freshly cut grass
Working in perfect unison with a teammate
Shaking hundreds of hands in one short blast
Friendship of a dog ya raised from a puppy
Magenta, all ya can eat buffets; candied ginger
Ginger beer; moxie; stuffed bacon cheeseburgers; hibiscus
Babka; French toast; cannas; black locusts; caragana; violets
Artification; metatecture; metaculture; domes; solar
The darkest pumpernickel; lap desks; 1st drafts
Mirror shades; Futon Islands; 501 Black Jeans, caftans
kaleidoscopes; curry; chutney; tahini; mangos
praying mantis; lady bugs; butterflies; college radio
turtles basking in the sun; N.P.R.; P.B.S.; G.P.S.
Sting; India Aire; Deep Forest; Enigma; Hiroshima; Poe
Black sneakers; Swiss Army Knives; beets; agate; sapphires
slipping into fresh sheets, power naps; cuddling; holding hands
The muffled silence of snow; mist in the forest
The Coen Brothers; Kubrick; Wells; Fellini; Lynch; Kafka; Cumus; Gandhi
Brunch; Volvos; daily popsicles; sweet corn on the cob
Lounging under a nut tree at high noon with a great book
Birthday parties; Christmas trees; enfleshing dreams
Knowing when to pass your buddy a kleenex during a mushy movie
Buttery lobster; clams on the halfshell for breakfast;
Clam chowder & tuna melts for lunch; jamoca almond fudge
Being young enough to jump into a pile of leaves
Being mature enough to still jump into that pile
The Tao of Jesus
YOU, if ya "got" this stream of thought

--Nikolai Alexanderovich Zarick

I Believe

I filled out a credit card application today
and one of the percentage signs on the paper bit me.
I bled enough to cross the T at the end of my name.
My blood was real,
and when it dripped out, I actually lost something.
There was no grace period.
My pain was the finance charge.
My blood was real.
Credit ain't.

--Robert D. Day

If You Suckle The Breast Emitting Hydrogen

it'll give out longer light years "mileage"
than Lenin got.
Angered that his main life-influence flagcable
clanging against the pole
stained the snow scarlet.
Whereby unveiling instead a fresh new humanity
could have altered
the future horizon's alchemy. . .
But no. Big Plans only sank lowly as
some smartish French amour
with political fingers too gluey
to catch a falling star and devour it.
So consider, his prognosticating provocations
could have gnawed thru glass.
Emerging to lay out
the intricate pathway to some
Mayan-like breakaway calender
re-defining a more humane mankind.

--Jim Dewitt

~~YOUR POEM
HERE.~~

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Book of Nuns

I'll tell you about the Nuns, not of the habits that are holy and long, black and white. The Nuns are brokenpeople, busted, wasted, rundown people who try to find shelter in American cities, big and small. These are the Nuns, the nulls, the nothings I speak of today. I am a Nun; sad, but true.

How did I name us rejects Nuns? If I'm lucky, I'll tell you later.

There isn't much privacy left in overweight decadent America. The wealthier a person is, the more privacy can be had for the dollar. Although if a Giant Eye turns on you, rich or poor, good or ill, then sometimes even big fat bank accounts and thick green wads will not help keep your secrets. The Giant Eye will find your pain and exploit it.

What are Giant Eyes? America has three Giant Eyes: government, corporate, and mass media. Beware if any one turns its awesome, naked glare on you. Heat from its unblinking lens might, if you're fate is such, warm you as the fire does the shivering or that heat might blast your existence to ash. Privacy is the new luxury in wired, plugged in USA. Guard yours well, be you rich or poor.

So it's with dread---no, with heavy, dripping dread---which I write in the Book of Nuns. Anyone might use my words, my clay for self-expression, to shape an edged, sharp tool to stab my heart so that it bleed me to death. Because the Giant Eyes are blazing, fiery eyes doesn't mean smaller predatory eyes that number in the millions cannot also stab me with their agendas.

It's the Tiny Eyes that I fear the most! The Giant Eyes might even be my friends. Some Tiny Eyes would certainly follow behind the teeth of vicious beast. Fuck' em! I defy the Tiny eyes. The Giant ones, too. Why so brazen? I will not live in fear!

So even if it---the Book O' Nuns----leads to my early demise by grave or prison or suffering, I will stand before the Maker (should He or She or It exist) tall, head high, chin up, proud to have lived fearless. Therefore all that is in the book is true. Do me with good will or with ill, whatever, but hide your green eye that you should have lived as true and as free as I. Let it be written; let it be done!

The layover

I arrived in Champaign, Illinois about 5:30 p.m. or so. Fresh from prison release, a seven-year bit that aged my skinny white bones ten years, I stepped off the bus. Hair past my shoulders, an unkempt gray-streaked beard, black clothes, yellow teeth--yeah, normal people gave me the Tiny Eyes questions: who's this freak?, what's his story?, who's this wild ass?

Can't blame 'em. IDOC dressed me out in a black coat two sizes too large; black pants six inches too long; and, a white dress shirt that wore well on MC Hammer back-in-the-day. Yeah, it's "Get hammered time!" Fuck the Tiny Eyes.

The bar was Murphy's: College geared, busy, sports and mixers. Saw a few Heads, weed-n-bongs. Cool crowd, more or less. No one said to me, "Get outta here wanna be Jesus!" I knew they wouldn't; college bars are a forgiving breed of brew folk. I was polite; I paid in cash; I started with Beck's Dark in a bottle.

The first one tasted so fine! Going down, the silky brew washed away seven years of black self doubt, sorrow, and twenty reasons why I shouldn't lay down on the railroad track and wait for a locomotive to cut my body into neat pieces for shipment to oblivion. I had cold beer in one hand and roll-your-own cigarette in the other--damn near mini-heaven to me.

Once in awhile I could check out a woman's chest or butt or politely look into a face that wasn't hard or harsh or damning. A pretty women's face made my night stellar. Flesh art for my Tiny Eyes; yes, most of us have the Tiny Eyes. Those that see are dared not to judge what they view in their day-to-days.

Sure, the animal thoughts reproduced in my mind that night, some secret glances turned lust. Those thoughts lasted less than a beast sniffing the wind for carrion or meat or weakness.

Even more powerful than greedy lust is touch. Rather than sex I would have enjoyed rubbing my hands all over a woman's body. Long minutes of it. Just kisses, a hundred moist kisses all over her body. If you're heterosexual, prison will rob you completely from any hope of falling in love (real love, not the US mail kind). Prison will crush that intimate need for simple touch, contact and a moment spent spooning with someone you care about, if only a few hours.

I didn't chug that first Beck. I held it in my hand, letting the cold surface spread to my fingers. Then I filled my jaw with its dark bitter brew and held it a second. Ah yes. Sounds commercial, but true; it went down smooth. Peace for the first time in seven years. The night started well.

Besides the obvious lure to a bar, there was much more there than frosty beers: color and music, loud on both accounts. In prison cons are always being told to "turn it down or else!" The colors, too, inside the walls (black and gray, blue and white) are always the same drab shit stains. Prison is a stinky place, too, from your cellmates farts to crappie food to cons who don't enjoy frequent showers.

In Murphy's bar that night all the bland changed, an explosion of sensory input. Pink neon clock, lava lamps, and bottles of hard liquor in multicolored glass, beers signs galore, all stampeded into my eyeballs. Excellent! The customers, to my deprived sight, were peacocks on parade. All sorts of different colorful clothes from the basic U of I tee shirt to a girl in red leather pants.

In prison all I saw was blue, blue fucking khaki pants that sucked. Better than an orange jump suit, though. Cons called those banana suits, that's mostly county jail shit and the banana suits usually signify a con is on transfer or a fish (new con).

After a few beers or so, I relaxed. I knew my tolerance was low. I prepared myself. Before prison I could jam beer and not have too much trouble staying coherent. That night wouldn't be one of those.

A couple sat down next to me on the empty bar stools, maybe early twenties, husband and wife. I was in the mood for talking but didn't overlook an unwritten rule to bar behavior: don't barge into a person's bar time; true, one doesn't have to be a social wallflower. College bars aren't about that, be patient, watch, wait, and gauge a patron's mood before jumping in with the gabbing. Hell, I just kept drinking anyway, sticking to my plan.

The women had laid her cell phone on the bar. At the time, I thought it was a remote control for the bar TV, until I saw her use it. Wow! I had never touched a cell phone. I asked if I could check it out. She complied. Excellent. I'm not into the cell phone trend(back then). Yep, I've used one a couple times, although being in homeless shelter is a good idea to have one. Shelter phone numbers carry big scarlet letters.

Anyway, the wife, who was studying to be a corporate lawyer, and I started talking about why I had never seen a cell phone up close, blah, blah, blah. The husband was more laid back: he attended U of I, too, farm machinery mechanic I think. He would have made a better lawyer. I talked with the couple for an hour or so; I made a special effort to pay attention to each of them, lest the husband think I was trying to corner his girl.

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However my mouth or rather my heart got me in trouble. A nice dressed, mid-thirty's, suit woman approached the bar on the other side of us. On a lark, I asked her if God had a pet. She said she didn't know and appeared miffed that I would ask such a question (telling you, it was the beard; I did have my teeth in, though). Returning my tipsy attention to my married couple, the wife (I've forgotten her name) commented that suity woman probably thought I was trying to pick her up.

I said, "Eh, suit woman wouldn't have to worry about that, the only women I usually picked up were whores."

Ouch! The look on her face.

She stayed at the stool about five more minutes not saying anything, and then blurted out. "What about love?"

"What about it? Can't a guy just get some sex?"

The wife left to another table.

The husband stayed though; he talked with me for another beer. I don't think he minded my comment. He knew I was being honest and wasn't trying to Mac on his girl. Just another weird guy in a bar. He left to another table, too. That was okay.

As the night got busier, no matter what wild ass was at the bar, the spots besides me filled up with people wanting the brew. A dude from outa town sallied up beside me and we talked. He was an eco professor, a Swiss, and we talked about all things economic. A nice guy who didn't judge my beard and wild eyes. We bought each other beers. We smoked tobacco. I completely enjoyed the event.

Too soon, of course, the music (Janis Joplin, Sound Garden, an eclectic jute box) went low; the lights went up. Damn! Super Damn!! It was time to go. Last call! I slammed a half a Beck, and ordered another. I took my time; no one would gripe: I paid, I grinned, I did the barfly justice.

And I was fucking wasted. I left half a sawbuck tip. I picked up my smokes and headed out. I'd asked about local after-hours, but my heart wasn't in it. I knew I was wasted and would be guttin' hard. I needed to go some place more rowdy. No sense going to some place and risk yakking on the person I'd be setting next to, bad party manners.

Soon as I stepped out side, KA-BAM! The whole night skewered me: too much chain smoking, too much drinking. And it was fuckin' freezing. Booze does something to my system and its heat regulation. I can't keep body heat for some reason and it's double cold for me. I had to get some place warm. Champaign is a college town, so I knew exactly where to go: student housing.

Just started walking, if that's what you'd call it. I went toward the loud music, moth to light. A party was going on in an apartment building. I made it into the place but just couldn't make it two stairs upward. I went backside under the entrance landing and hurled liquid five feet like Godzilla spewing fire. Again! Again! When I recovered, I was leaning against the brick wall, facing it, using my forehead to hold my self up, my arms wrapped around my body in a self-hug to keep warm. I shivered. When I collected myself I thought I could go have another beer at the party upstairs...it was a long three flights of stairs.

Nope. I was done. My gut wasn't going to let go. I grabbed an empty case pack and used it to sit on by the stairs. I sat there a solid half hour violently puking in between heavens. Students were walking by me, to and from the party, from time to time. Most asked if I was okay. I didn't try answering verbally, simply flashed a thumbs-up

What's the point here? No one hassled me. No one got in my face. I had a wonderful evening. No one parties better than college towns USA. Thumbs up, motherfuckers.

I didn't pass out. I got it together, got a cab, and hotel room. I'd do it all over again.

Stay tuned for book 2 on Nuns. I'll tell you about blue ID cards and rape.

SC Lofton

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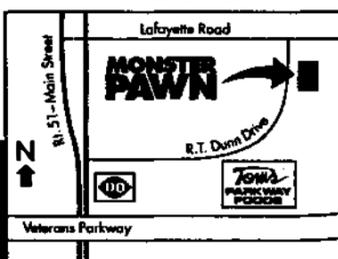
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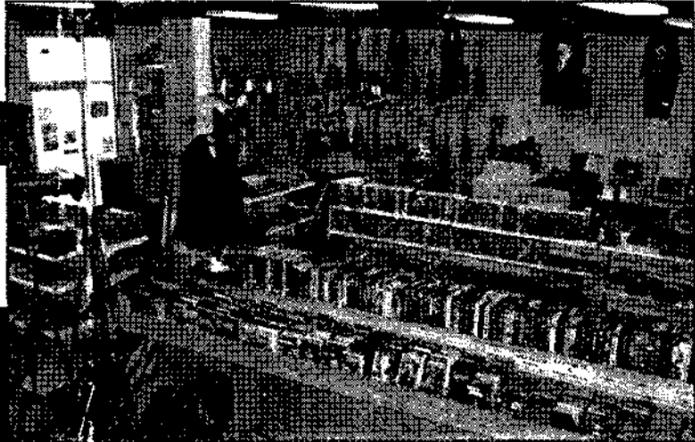
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Gun paranoia

The "Gun Paranoia" article that was printed last issue was incorrectly attributed to Philippe Orlando. It should have been credited to TM. This is Mr. Orlando's article.

The article "Guns and Liberals" written by Alan Keith in your last issue was so sad. Mr. Keith believes we need weapons in case the US government becomes a dictatorship. Anybody who believes that the US military could turn against the American population (a necessary move for anyone seeking to establish a dictatorship) is not in touch with the country and has been living under a rock for the last 100 years.

Military people have mothers, brothers, and sisters who are civilians. Like you and me they are shaped by the media, the same movies and news stories you watch, and they have been exposed to the same principles through mass and pop culture that tell us that anything short of freedom is bad.

Let's pretend we subscribe to Mr. Keith's fears for a moment. If the improbable instance arose where the military would turn against the people, do you really believe that you'd make a difference with your handguns and shotguns?

Let me remind you that the trained men and armies in countries like Afghanistan, Iraq and Panama, were defeated by the US military. Those people were trained and versed in the handling of weapons you won't have access to and they were defeated. Some of them had been soldiers all their lives.

Do you really want me to believe that the people I see shopping at Wal-Mart, barely able to push their carts in front of their oversized stomachs, the same people who can't stay in their parked car in 35 degree weather for 10 minutes without turning on the car for heat, would stand an assault from the marines using helicopters, night vision, tanks, jets and more? That is dreaming. When armored vehicles keep you from going to Kroger, what are you going to eat? Can you fight without beer?

To fight for freedom, a gun is not enough. Strong minds and strong bodies are needed, and I'm sorry to say I don't see too many of them across the fruited plains. I have no clue what happened to the descendants of the pioneers, but believe me, if I give you a gun and let you go out there, to Merwin Nature Preserve with chiseled, in shape nineteen-year-old marines on your butt, equipped with night vision, you won't go too far. Those kids are going to have the most fun of their lives. It will be a turkey shoot.

It seems to me that Americans are forgetting why this country has guns. First, if you correctly read English (but hey, having taught in high schools around the country, I know this is not something that should be taken for granted), I don't know where you can read in the American Constitution that you are allowed to keep guns. Sure, it is mentioned that an organized militia of armed citizens should be maintained for the protection of the country. But when was the last time you practiced with your local militia?

I don't know if you've noticed, but as far as food is concerned, some of us are not low maintenance. Maybe you could go hunt deer at Funks Grove. Right. And when your house is destroyed by a tank shell (remember your house is built with cheap particle board, so one shell will do - more would be needed for a mortar-cinder block Iraqi house), where will you go? I mean do you see tough people around you capable of enduring cold weather, extreme physical exertion, sleeping outside, suffering depravities of all sorts? That's right, no more potato chips. A civil war, now that would put America on a diet, wouldn't it?

Also, decency and intellectual honesty would demand that you agree to acknowledge the context in which that famous sentence was written. When that part of the Constitution was written, armed people from what was called the American colonies had just defeated the most powerful country in the world, England. That was in 1776, when guns and

equipment used by hunters or frontier men were as good, if not better, than the ones issued to regular soldiers. That's not the case anymore and you know that very well. Two hundred years ago the difference in fire power between armies and groups of armed men was not that huge.

The more you go back in time, the more obvious it is. When Jefferson and Washington and the other great men who wrote the Constitution realized that America had been created by the armed struggle of its local population, they deduced that an armed population was a necessity. They were right at that time. Since then, the National Guard has been created, and the US military, too. That famous passage of the Constitution is a relic from 1776 that is not applicable and is not justified anymore today.

On the contrary, it's plaguing the country with the highest homicide rate among developed nations. We can't blame the founding fathers for not having foreseen that an armed population would turn against itself. If you remember your social studies and history classes, they never really believe they could beat the British. They were more than surprised when they did, and they did it with no army, just commoners with guns.

If the Founding Fathers can't be blamed, the people and private interests who are today hiding behind a text that was written more than 200 years ago should be. I'm also wondering what you're waiting for to implement another revolution? Somebody is stealing your money. How come you're not doing anything? In case you don't know, the US army is taking a huge portion of the budget and your taxes. Billions and billions. Why is this, since we have armed citizens to protect us for free? Do something.

Tell Washington to follow the Constitution to the letter and that citizens organized in a militia is enough for our protection and that we don't need the US military. The funny thing is that you all agreed about that militia thing when it suits you and allows you to keep your



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guns, but you're all against the draft. I'm not blind. I know why so many people are for going to war with Iraq. Because they personally are not going. Their sons and daughters and nieces and nephews aren't either.

We're not sending the American people to Iraq, we're sending an army of mercenaries in majority composed of people issued from low income families. Some of us want to drive those big SUVs, but they're not ready to fight to get the oil themselves. Let's send there the poor kids from around the block. Great country. I wonder how many Pakistanis are in favor of going to war with India and vice versa. They're still drafted there you know, real patriots, not chubby hubbies having fun taking down defenseless deer on the weekends.

Would you mind finding a document, preferably not issued by the NRA, showing me, for each murder committed, how many other people were able to save their lives because they had a gun? We don't hear about such events too much. Oh, but wait, the media is in liberal hands, right? They're screening that information. Each day brave Americans are fighting crimes, killing criminals, but the nasty liberal media is cutting the information out, right?

The sad truth is that the number of people killed by concealed weapons is huge and obscene. And it is happening because certain private interests are flattering the baser instincts of a significant portion of the male population and have twisted a part of the Constitution, which, taken out of its 1776 context, is totally meaningless.

In 2000, 68 people were murdered in England which has a population of 60 million. The US has a population of 300 million, which is 5 times more. So we should expect to have roughly $68 \times 5 = 340$ people shot in 2000 in America. We had over 11,000, a sickening number of them children! So every five years we have roughly the same number of citizens killed with guns that we had soldiers during the Vietnam war, a war that went from 1960 to 1975.

Do we have a problem with guns in this country?

I do believe that the American Constitution is the most amazing document ever written as an attempt to implement freedom within the boundaries of a government. But it needs to be amended, or in 2343 some kids will still be able to bring concealed weapons to school and kill their classmates with high powered lasers because George Washington and some farmers beat the British army in 1776.

As far as our being "taken over" by the government and seeing a dictatorship implemented here, well, it's been done while you were snoring in front of your TV and nobody needed an army to push this on you.

Don't you work 8 or more hours a day in some mindless job? Don't you lose your health insurance when you lose your job? You're the

only one to whom this happens in western civilization, do you know that? When was the last time your boss let you take 2 months off, even unpaid, so you could take off to rest in the sun and feel that you're not on the planet just to work? Even if he'd let you do it, could you afford it?

Don't you stay in that crummy job because you're scared to lose health care? Don't you have the least amount of free time in the industrialized world, today working even more than the Japanese? Are you worried about your retirement in a way that no French, German or Swedish person is? Does it bother you that the US is ranked in 24th position for life expectancy by the World Health Organization? Why don't you check that? You're been taken over already.

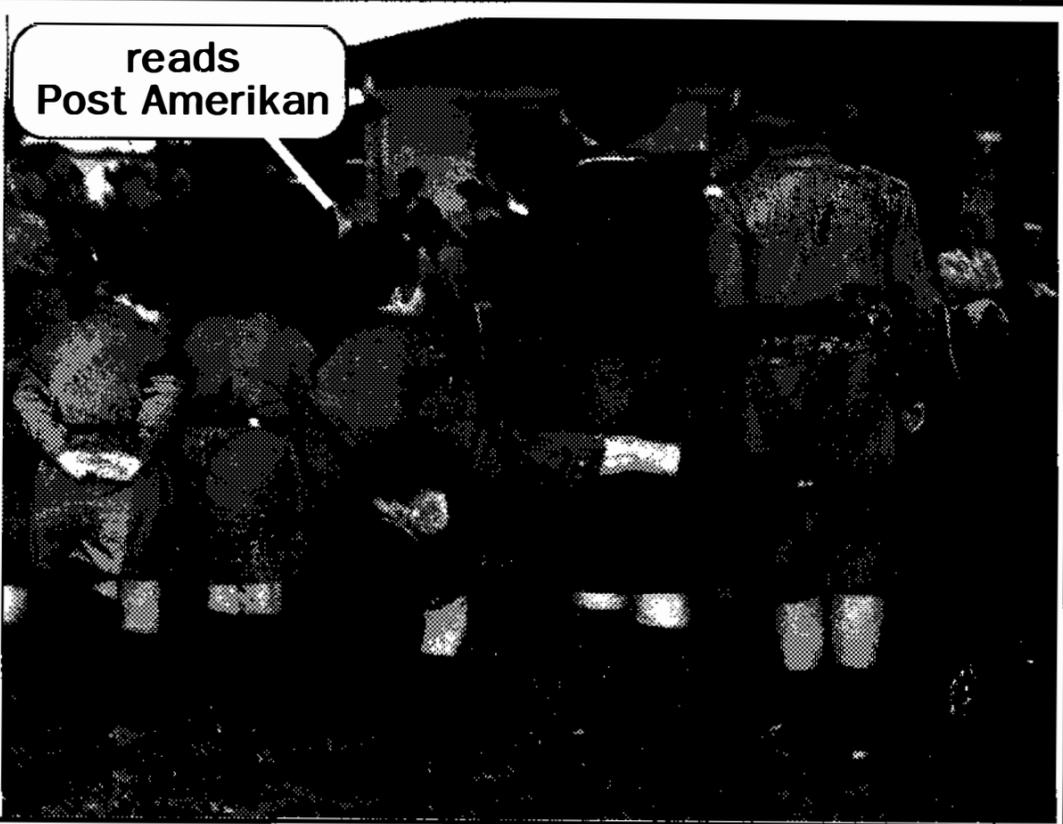
On to the other argument which states that removing guns will only leave the crooks with guns. Well, do you know how crooks get guns? They don't buy them in a gun shop, since most crooks don't want to be traced back through a weapon's purchase. So any idea how they get their guns? No? Well they break into your house while you're at work and steal yours. Yes sir, the crooks have guns because you've been irresponsible with them. The same way kids kill other kids because you've been irresponsible with guns.

Oh, and that other argument that says that we should not sell guns to criminals. Most people, when they kill, kill for the first time. Do you feel comfortable living in a society that gives the right to its citizens to kill once but not twice?

And the famous sentence "it's not guns but people who kill" is certainly one of the most dishonest statements ever heard. Picture this. You're driving, no gun in your car. Some driver cuts you off. You're furious. At the light you go see the other driver to beat the crap out of him. Bummer, it's Mike Tyson. Without even getting out of his car he gives you his best smile and the finger. You go back to your car, your tail between your legs, and it's over. Now, if you had a gun? I'll let you write that scenario. Really, how dishonest can you be?

So you want to have guns? Fine, have them. But don't insult our intelligence with arguments like you're here to protect the people or that it's people who kill not guns and all that crap. Have the decency in remembrance of the 11,000 citizens who will be killed by guns this year to shut the f. up and enjoy in silence that anachronistic paragraph in our Constitution that gives you whatever right you think you have.

--Philippe Orlando



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Off the beaten path

Hello! I'm Jane from The Movie Fan, an independently-owned video store in downtown Normal. Do you like artsy films that make you think as much as I do? Are you tired of your typical mainstream, mass produced, commercial movies crammed down your throat by the powers that be? At The Movie Fan, we prefer to support the films that aren't seen at your local cineplex. Come into the coolest video store in the Bloomington/Normal area to check out our selection of eclectic films.

And now for my picks of the ever-impressive moment

25th Hour

Spike Lee. I could leave it at that, but you deserve more. He's a genius. Edward Norton. Philip Seymour Hoffman. Genius. Genius. Together *25th Hour* shines like the twin beams of light at Ground Zero in this post-9/11 film set in New York City about the day before a convicted drug dealer goes to prison. It's a film about loose ends.

Wilco: I am Trying to Break Your Heart

Take a listen to this documentary based on the production of the album "I am Trying to Break Your Heart" and near destruction of the band Wilco.

One band member couldn't survive the ordeal filmed under the direction of Sam Jones. A frustrating look at the process involved in recording an album almost resulted in a piece of work not being published. The film will make you an instant fan of Wilco.

Secretary

Maggie Gyllenhall takes being a secretary to an entirely new sadistic level in this film also starring James Spader. *Secretary* treads water that most films wouldn't dare poke a toe into. The sadomasochistic relationship between the two lead roles is both refreshing and slightly disturbing (always a good combination).

Lee takes a secretarial job with lawyer Mr. Grey. What Lee doesn't realize is the lengths it will take to please her new boss. Episodes of spanking ensue in this tale of sexual enlightenment.

Talk to Her AKA Habla con Ella

Winner of numerous awards, *Talk to Her*, Pedro Almodovar's latest work, tells a tragic tale of longing. The characters lead you into a world of one-way communication making you wonder just how effective the human touch and voice can be to those in a coma.

Benigno, the lead character, is a nurse caring for a dancer in a coma. The care given makes you ache with heartbreak. You can feel the love in his hands and words. What is later revealed is the facade generated by the actions. A turn of events keeps you engrossed in this film well past the viewing.

Frida

Frida is a stunningly beautiful film about the prolific artist and activist from Mexico: Frida Kahlo. The famed unibrow is well represented on the face of Salma Hayek. The biopic examines Frida's relationship with Diego Rivera (Alfred Molina) and her involvement in the political scene in Mexico.

The costume and art design make this film a must-see, but the dance scene between Frida and Ashley Judd's character steal the show. Even if you're not familiar with Frida's works, you will surrender to the atmosphere created by filmmaker Julie Taymor.

Top 25

(Not necessarily in this order)

1. The Hours
2. About Schmidt
3. The Pianist
4. Family Guy: Season One
5. Adaptation
6. The Piano Teacher
7. Punch-Drunk Love
8. Bloody Sunday
9. The Believer
10. The Quiet American
11. Love, Liza
12. Personal Velocity
13. Sordid Lives
14. Far From Heaven
15. White Oleander
16. 8 Women
17. Bowling for Columbine
18. Lost in La Mancha
19. 101 Reykjavik
20. Six Feet Under: Season One
21. Spirited Away
22. Real Women Have Curves
23. Laurel Canyon
24. Rabbit-Proof Fence
25. Roger Dodger

Sex

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