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# Progressives had better wake up very quickly!

Many, many people on the political left support strong gun control measures. And it is no secret that many liberals want to move eventually toward the banning of ALL weapons from being owned by ordinary American citizens.

One example of liberal support of gun control is "Voice for Choice." In the October-November issue of the Post-American the group rated possible candidates on the basis of several issues, including gun control. "Voice for Choice" clearly supports gun control.

Groups such as this need to understand what they are doing—to themselves, to the progressive movement and to the future of any kind of freedom in this country.

I personally know of many liberals who want to move ever so slowly, but ever so surely toward the banning of ALL gun ownership by ordinary citizens. Incredibly, these same people usually say that "of course, the police and the military should be allowed to keep their weapons."

Just think about this: Liberals historically have been extremely wary of the power of the police and the military. With good reason, they have opposed excessive power in the hands of police and military forces.

## We're not making this up

An Atlantic City casino and resort has installed a high-tech system to see whether employees wash their hands after going to the bathroom.

The Clinton administration attempted to rename *fast track trade legislation* by calling it *Renewal of Traditional Trading Authority*. So far it hasn't worked.

Last May the White House put four "historical national documents" on its web site. The four were the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the North American Free Trade Agreement and the General Amendment on Tariffs and Trade. After the *Washington Post* took note of the curious assemblage, the White House removed the last two.

When then defense undersecretary John Deutch ran into the White House aide Harold Ickes, the former said to the latter, "I used to admire you at Sidwell," the Quaker school they both attended. "I don't have time to chat with people I knew at Sidwell," Ickes replied according to an account in *Vanity Fair*.

--The Progressive Review Oct.1997

But in recent years something mind boggling has happened. Today we have many liberals advocating positions which ultimately would lead to the confiscation of guns from the hands of ordinary working people, giving the police and military a weapons monopoly.

The police and military would have a monopoly on possession of weapons—with the exception, of course, of hard-core criminals who would certainly keep their guns no matter what the law says.

Naivete has been an historical peculiarity of the left, but naivete on this issue can lead to disaster—not just for the left, but for the hope of any semblance of freedom in this country.

## Details

Airline spending on meals has dropped from \$5.78 per passenger in 1992 to \$4.21 per passenger in 1996.

In the Contemporary English Version of the Bible, there has been a slight alteration in the phrase: Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin." It now reads: "Look how the wildflowers grow. They don't work hard to make their clothes."

Based on US Transportation Dept. data *Newsweek* projects that in 2000 90% of us will drive to work as opposed to 70% in 1960. Public transit usage will have dropped from 13% to 5% and walking from 10% to 3%.

Judicial Watch has deposed 39 persons in its investigation of Clinton administration scandals. It discovered in doing so that the Justice department had only deposed two of them.

A study of the Brennan Center for Justice has found that at the turn of the century, a new party could get on the ballot in every state as late as September or October of election year. Today the median deadline is July. Signature requirements for petitions are five times as severe in the average state as they were in 1920.

A basic human right is the right to self-defense. Let us understand that the police, hard as they might try, have never been in a position (or had sufficient numbers) to actually protect the public. Nearly always the police come on the scene after a crime has been committed. There will never be enough police to be able to actually prevent most crimes from occurring.

I have merely touched on a few of the reasons why progressives should oppose gun control—and support the right of gun ownership by citizens.

For progressives to do otherwise is irrational and a big mistake.

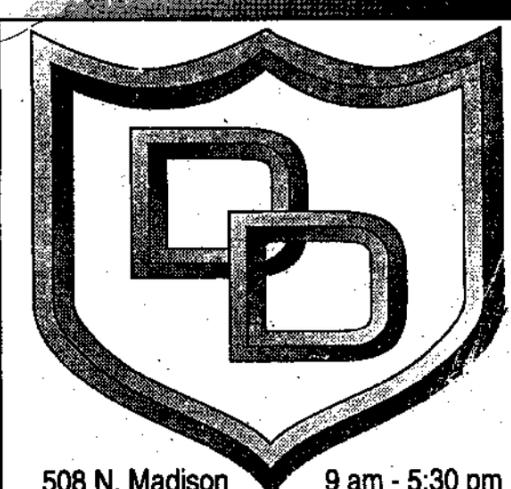
--Alan H. Keith

The number of hours the average person was delayed by traffic congestion increased 95% from 1982 to 1993 even though the number of trips people made increased by just 17%.

Doug Henwood of the *Left Business Observer* calls our attention to the fact that Bill Clinton, in writing the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1994 said, "For 100 years, the United Daughters of the Confederacy has maintained and built upon the wonderful legacy of your founders. The strength of your organization is a testament of the vision of your founders and to your commitment of your shared goals."

A prosecutor in Fairfax County VA has started using a secret panel of citizens to determine whether video stores should be prosecuted on obscenity charges. The panel, upheld by a local judge, is made up of volunteers, most of whom are retired county residents.

A poll last summer found that 70% of Americans thought the average citizen had less job security than 20 or 30 years ago. Fifty-nine percent thought you had to work harder to earn a decent living and 73% thought there was more stress.



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# News from Voice for Choice

## Anti RU 486 boycott backfires

Women worldwide will have greater access to RU 486. Hoechst AG, the German Company that owned the drug and which had refused to market it beyond three European countries, has transferred worldwide (excluding the U.S.) patent rights on Ru-486 without remuneration to Dr. Edouard Sakiz. Sakiz is the former CEO of Roussel Uclaf and a leader in the drug's development.

Feminist Majority Foundation president Eleanor Smeal praised the transfer of patent rights as good news for women and bad news for anti-abortion forces. "The transfer of RU 486 patent rights to Dr. Sakiz totally undercuts the anti-abortion boycott of Hoechst Marion Roussel products," said Smeal. "Now, with Dr. Sakiz in possession of RU 486 patent rights and at the helm of his own company, research finally will go forward on this medical breakthrough and women in more countries will be able to gain access to this safe, effective medical abortion method.

The Population Council will retain the patent rights in the United States for the development and distribution of mifepristone, which it received from Roussel Uclaf in May of 1994. The Population Council has faced many obstacles and delays in its efforts to bring RU 486 to the American market. Most recently, the Council acknowledged that the company, which had agreed to manufacture the bulk ingredients for mifepristone had terminated their contract, which may cause additional delays in the drug's final approval by the FDA.

In an effort to fill the void in U.S. availability of mifepristone, Larry Lader announced that his organization, the Abortion Rights Mobilization (ARM), with support from the John Merck Fund. ARM plans to expand clinical trials on their version of the drug to clinics in New York, Texas, Maryland, and Florida as part of ongoing clinical trials. Trials are already underway in Nebraska, Vermont, Montana, New York, San Francisco, and Seattle. Lader anticipates that as many as 10,000 women will have access to mifepristone through the trials.

Hoechst AG had halted marketing of RU 486 as a method of early abortion and was only grudgingly supplying the compound as a method of early abortion in France, Great Britain and Sweden. Moreover, the German pharmaceutical giant also had put a stop to research on all of the drug's non-abortion indications including breast cancer, endometriosis, and fibroid tumors. Under Dr. Sakiz's new company, Exelgyne, the profits from mifepristone sales will be used to further the compound's development.

Exelgyne will be able to assume distribution of mifepristone in the fall, according to Sakiz. Until that time, Roussel Uclaf will continue to provide the drug from preexisting supplies. The announcement of the transfer of patent rights to Dr. Sakiz came just a week after anti-abortion organizations had launched a boycott of Hoechst's new allergy medication, Allegra, although the agreement with Sakiz had been underway for more than a month. Hoechst relinquished the rights saying only that the patent transfer would enable Hoechst "to focus its research, development, and marketing efforts on those areas that represent the best opportunities to support the company's growth."

Source: *Feminist Majority Report*, Summer, 1997

## Congress backs abstinence (well at least for others)

Despite a lack of conclusive evidence that abstinence based education programs work, Congress is ready to pour \$250 million into just such a program. Last year's welfare reform law guaranteed the money for abstinence education grants. States must match every \$4 in federal money with \$3 in state cash, meaning nearly \$440 million could be spent by 2002.

The program is controversial and has many states worried about whether abstinence based programs will mesh with existing programs that offer birth control information. Still, despite internal debates from coast to coast, only Connecticut has decided to refuse the money. Wyoming and New Jersey are still undecided.

Under federal rules, the abstinence-based programs should teach that sex outside marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects. Other approved topics include how to reject sexual advances, why drugs and alcohol make that more difficult and the importance of becoming self-sufficient before having sex.

This contrasts with "abstinence plus" programs which discouraged sex but also talk about birth control and disease prevention for teens who might have sex anyway. In 1995, 66 percent of teens reported having sex by the time they graduated from high school. However, many politically conservative states like Arizona say they believe abstinence will work. "We really want to give the abstinence approach a really good try and see if we can make headway," said Arizona Governor Fife Symington. Arizona has the nation's fourth highest teen pregnancy rate.

Arizona plans to use its money - plus an extra \$2 million - for a "Sex Can Wait" media campaign. At least 13 states plan similar media campaigns, including one in Maryland where billboards proclaim: "Virgin: teach your kids it's not a dirty word."

Most states are targeting 9 - 14 year olds who have not yet had sex. And many are focusing on mentoring, self-esteem and the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Maryland, Louisiana and Florida are planning after school programs. Tennessee plans to tie the money to sports, scouting and tutoring. "Sometimes teens have a lack of alternatives and don't know where they're going in life, and a child seems to fill the void," said Bobby Jindal of the Louisiana health department.

After a heated debate, Colorado decided to take the money, but promised not to abandon family planning and HIV prevention efforts already underway. Barbara Ritchen of the Colorado health department stated that such an approach would be foolish "given that half of the kids in high school are sexually active." So despite the abstinence push, other programs will not disappear, even in Arizona. Private money will help print brochures telling teens in rural Southwestern Arizona where they can go to get birth control. Many towns have no place to fill prescriptions for birth control pills. Planned Parenthood of Phoenix has a traveling troupe of teens who act out skits, including one featuring Captain Condom who explains the virtues of safe sex. Such efforts are too late for some women. One woman, Diana, was afraid that birth control pills would make her gain weight or otherwise hurt her health, she didn't use them and go pregnant. Christina of Phoenix would like to turn the clock back to before she had three children and dropped out of high school. Christina got pregnant on purpose, wanting to escape her parent's house. That was before she knew how hard it was to raise a child. "A child is a huge responsibility," she said. "It's not just love have to give it. It's clothes. It's getting up in the middle of the night when they're sick. I struggled for words when a friend explained why she too wanted to have a baby. "I said, you don't know how hard it is," Christina said. "Then she calls me and says she's pregnant. I just cried."

Source: *Pantagraph*

## Abstinence only education likely to fail

A California researcher has concluded that a major abstinence only education effort there didn't work. The California course has been seen as a model for similar efforts elsewhere. Douglas Kirby, who conducted the research for the California Office of Family Planning, found that the state program called Education Now and Babies Later, had no effect on teen's sexual intentions or behavior 17 months after it started.



Kirby thinks the program didn't work because it was too brief, but others think the more serious difficulty is that it did not include contraceptive information. The debate over

what can be done about teen sex reflects concern about a high teen pregnancy rate. Each year, about 200,000 teens under 17 have children, most out of wedlock.

There has been a small decline in the teen pregnancy rate in recent years and advocates credit local education efforts for the drop. But there is disagreement over which kinds of education programs work best. The abstinence only philosophy advocated by conservatives is embodied in the federal welfare reform bill (see previous article). Congress said the programs should focus on sex within marriage as the standard of American sexual activity, and sex within marriage is the only healthy sexual activity.

Critics of the abstinence only based effort fear that without complementary family planning programs, the federal money may be wasted in some states because abstinence only programs haven't been proven effective at slowing the rate of teen pregnancy. "Seven out of 10 teenagers are already sexually active by the time they're 18 years old," said Joyce Walker Tyson, deputy director of communication and development for the Washington-based Advocates for Youth. "To teach abstinence only is ridiculous."

Abstinence only advocates argue that the program didn't work because it didn't emphasize abstinence until marriage, that sex is for procreation, and that childbearing is best within a marriage. "It's a very hard job to sell this message of abstinence," said Patrick Fagan-Fitzgerald, senior policy analyst for the Heritage Foundation. "You've got to give good reasons."

To Kirby, the California failure highlights an important need. "It's very important to conduct vigorous research to find out if a program works before implementing it broadly," he said. We agree.  
Source: *Pantagraph*

## Budget bill restricts abortion coverage for the uninsured

Over barely audible White House objections, the budget-balancing bills passed by the House and Senate include curbs on abortions as part of a proposed program of health care for uninsured children age 18 and under. Under the bill, federal funds would be denied for abortions under the program except in cases of rape or incest or when the life of the mother would be in danger. Douglas Johnson of the National Right to Life Committee was pleased with the provision, stating "its pretty much standard operating procedure for Congress to apply these things."

Kate Michelman of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League didn't disagree with Johnson. "It's just another example of how the right wing in Congress is using every vehicle they can, including the budget process to restrict women's access to abortion services and to make abortion more difficult for women in general to obtain."

Source: *Pantagraph*

## Christian Coalition agenda

Hoping to influence Congress' fall agenda, the Christian Coalition has urged lawmakers to cut taxes for American families and to fight religious persecution. Don Hodel, new president of the conservative lobbying group outlined his top legislative priorities for Congress. They are for Congress to:

Pass the Freedom from Religious Persecution Act, which would create a White House office for reporting religious persecution worldwide, impose sanctions on foreign governments that carry out religious persecution and improve asylum procedures.

Pass the American Community Renewal Act to create scholarships, charitable tax credits, empowerment zones for impoverished communities and support for faith based organizations that serve the inner city. This agenda item is crucial as the Christian Coalitions seeks to gain strength by recruiting from among minority communities. Amazing isn't it - they don't see any contradiction between this agenda item and their opposition to affirmative action.

Pass a religious freedom amendment to the Constitution in response to the Supreme Court ruling that struck down legislation intended to protect religious practices from undue government interference.

Eliminate the tax penalty for marriages and reduce individual tax rates across the board.

Create education savings accounts for kindergarten through 12th grade and provide more choices for public and private school students.

The push for a religious persecution law comes as President Clinton fends off criticism about his open trade policies with China. His own State Department has documented Beijing's efforts to suppress Catholic and Protestant movements through violence and threats - sounds a bit like the KKK. It does make one pause to wonder whether they have a problem with any of the other human rights violations occurring in China.

Hodel told reporters that "the United States" inaction on this subject is a disgrace. He said this country must "set aside single-minded pursuit of profits, reset our moral compass and lead the way for the rest of the world." Whether intended or not, the remarks



underscored a split within the Republican party between free traders who support open markets and social conservatives who don't want trade at any price. The education and tax initiatives are typical of Republican attempts to find so-called wedge issues that will draw distinctions between GOP and Democratic candidates in the 1998 midterm elections. David Curtin, director of the Illinois Christian Coalition said he is pleased with the national agenda. "As far as Illinois goes, we are on the same page as the national agenda. I don't think they bit off more than they can chew. These are things we need to do," Curtin said. He noted that some of the agenda items, including particularly the American Community Renewal Act relate to a broader project focusing on urban renewal. Curtin noted that in past years the organization was criticized for opposing abortion but not promoting child welfare. "You can't just be on one side of the abortion issue without helping to assist," he said. "We need to recognize what happens when you don't have an abortion. We're doing it in a very conservative way."

Curtin said that the country has gotten away from the original intent of the founding fathers. He noted that George Washington once commented that when religious principle no longer is considered when making public policy, the nation will cease to exist. Curtin didn't mention who's religious principles should be adhered to - we can only guess he was referring to his own religious beliefs. He also said that in the next year the Illinois Christian Coalition will focus on educating people about the candidates for public office and lobbying for the national agenda.

Source: *Pantagraph*, *In These Times*, with editorial comments here and there.



# Problem solving with death

There are probably ten questions about life that I'll never find answers to, but will not give up on until I die. One is why I chose prison as a lifestyle. Another is where do our murderers, American killers, come from in such abundance?

I've never killed anyone, robbed or strongarmed another person, raped or molested anyone. All my crimes have been against property. By moral and social standards, I'm not an evil person, just a bad one. I don't follow the rules. Yet murder and violence weren't viable options either. For many of my peers, although, murder and violence are not only solutions to everyday problems, they are preferred. My peers have good role models.

America, like it or not, uses death and violence as a problem solver on a regular basis. As an individual, a citizen, you're part of this death-as-solution mindset. You're also the only one, as part of a collective, who can change the mindset. Take a second, use your freedom, think for yourself; don't let the mass media or corporations or government do it for you. Does America need to bomb other countries, execute criminals, build a bigger war machine, etc.?

Most Americans are extremely privileged in that they have never had bombs dropped on their homes and heads. When another country, say, Saddam Hussein and Iraq, doesn't go along with American idealism, our military bombed that country. What is said country doing over there that justifies death from above? Is military policy any different from what Timothy McVeigh did? Overall, I was disappointed to see the USSR crumble just because the world in general needs another

power to stand up to the American government. Being part of a supernation worries me; our politicians tend to let that corrupt them. When it's all said, the military solves most problems with death. Well, its job is killing. My major concern is how often is it for the safety of American citizens or the result of hidden agenda?

Abortion isn't a grey area for me; I am pro-choice, but it's still solving a problem with death, by killing something that isn't a threat, a mortal one. It's violent, too. Now just hold on before you start throwing stones at me. Women, as any human ought to, should have total rights over their bodies. Pro-choice is not pro-military. Abortion is the lesser death, the lesser evil in my eyes. I'd rather see women exercise their right to abortion before bringing a child into the world that will neither be cared for nor loved by the mother. It's better for society. Neglected children have a way of becoming pissed-off adults.

And what's the solution for murdering another person? It's death in many cases. The death penalty has been an American favorite for decades. America is the last supernation to practice criminal execution. My phrase. "Well, you've murdered someone, so we are going to kill you. It's okay for us to use death as a solution." It's this hypocritical mentality that makes me suspicious of American government and culture.

Yeah, I'm confused. Is it okay to kill, or not?

How are we so outraged by serial killers, for example, yet do nothing when X car company knows a design flaw kills people and keeps the vehicle on the road? I see no difference in the serial killer's heart and the CEO's heart that chooses to bean count by paying off victims through law suits rather than recalling the death traps. It's not hard to find cases of corporate America continuing projects that result in the misfortune, and sometimes death, of another person. At times, more than not, we let big companies get away with murder. Death equals reward.

Our mass media is filled with violence and murder and destruction as solutions to problems. Our heroes do this, our leaders. Violence and death has become designer-classy these days. It seems like the only nonviolent community in America is Amish. Is it something natural, uncontrollable? In the genes?

Is death a rule in life, or rather, is killing other life the rule? In our ecosystem, life feeds off other life. The wolf kills the deer, the big fish eats the little one. Americans are a majority of meat eaters. Catch it and breed it, kill it and eat it. After all, America was founded on the concept of mass murder in the name of idealism. You know, a couple million slaves and Indians. Is America still the natural born killer? We like to think we're separate from other animals, but I can't tell.

So murder is okay? Right? Murder and violence are tools for prosperity, not survival.

No, no, no!

Okay, here's where I get sappy. Maybe humans are separate from other animals because of soul and spirit. Biologically, we are animals; undeniably part of its kingdom. But if... Maybe we don't need to kill or destroy or use violence as a tool for prosperity. I hope something separates us from the beast. Evidence that life is a series of chemical reactions and death is oblivion is strong. Yet, this so-called fact even makes life more, all the more, precious.

As Americans we have so much. Life could be a lot harder. Poor hard. Starving hard. Freedomless. The general public, you and me (although, more you than me), is the last line of defense between government and corporate America and what you teach your children. Get involved with your community and use your freedom while you can. Change can be as simple as an opinion, a single voice.

The point to all this is responsibility. We decide what society will become and how it's structured. As you watch the headlines, the drive-by shootings, the dealers, the rapes, the murders—the bloodlust—these events are not happening in a vacuum. If we glamorize violence, employ death to solve problems, through Hollywood media, government, and corporate sanctioning, these ideas will come back to haunt us. If you're cheering for the death penalty, clapping hands for falling bombs—kill 'em all 'n hang 'em high—and loving to hate the bad guy, then don't be surprised if it kills you.

--Phillip Camus

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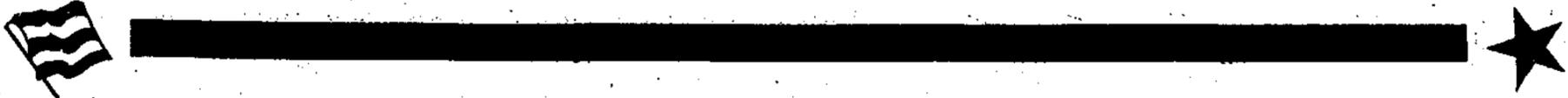
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# Bones of Contention

## Power - Working class rock n' roll

Rock n' Roll is here to stay, but has anybody sang a song about your job lately?

If not, check out a new CD, "Power," from "The Bones of Contention," a Washington, D.C.-based group that sings about workers, jobs and union rights.

By day many of the group's members work union jobs, some with the AFL-CIO. Come the weekend it's time to plug in the amp and rock out a union message.

One of the best jams on their new CD is "The Corporate Stomp," a fast paced piece that sings:

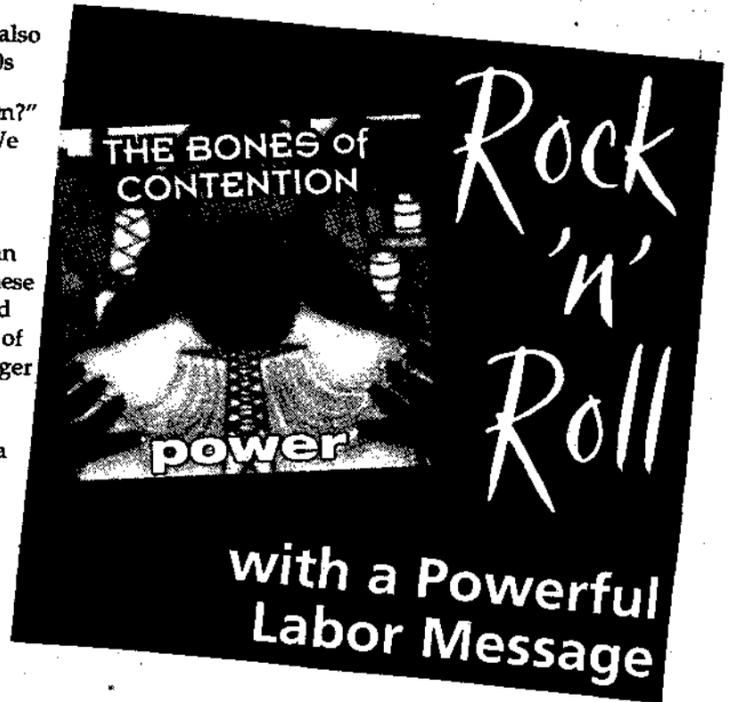
"I gotta scrimp and save just to get my lunch,  
While the bosses seem a pretty wealthy bunch,  
You know the CEO gets sixty grand a month.  
So when I retire gonna buy me a big old van;  
I'm gonna head down South and work upon my tan,  
So I ain't gonna let 'em raid my pension plan."

Besides these contemporary tunes the band also works over some labor classics, like the 1930s

coal miners' classic, "Which Side Are You On?" Plus they give a nice driving rendition of "We Just Come to Work (We Don't Come To Die)" about health and safety.

Other songs cover a variety of themes, like an original piece, "Tiananmen," about the Chinese students shot down in Beijing in June 1989, and "Overtime," "Power," plus a moving version of "Joe Hill's Last Will," about the Wobbly singer and organizer executed in Utah in 1915.

To order "Power," send \$15 for a CD, \$10 for a cassette, plus \$2 shipping for either, to the Bones of Contention, 1925 K St., NW, Washington DC 20006.



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# Underground Barfly

Hello fellow bar people! I have returned from the underground with news of the drunk and weird. Oh, yes! Bloomington's booming bar district is filled with bizarre and beautiful scenes and is bountiful with some of the best beer to buy in Bloomington/Normal! Wow! I never thought I would get that sentence out!

## Rhino's



As promised, I did check out Rhino's and, to be perfectly honest, I was not disappointed. The place was not really a very fun scene. As I suspected, it was basically a meat market filled with drunk college students. I have nothing against college students, as far as being in a bar with, but when they get too drunk and start acting like idiots I get disgusted and uncomfortable. From my look in from the outside this was the impression I suspected I would get from my visit and I was correct.

Rhino's one saving grace is that they support live music in B/N. Very cool for Rhino's. Also I must give them a thumbs up on their prices. They are not as pricey as Scuttlebutte, but they are not as pricey as Lizard's Lounge. I guess you could say their prices are average and so is their selection of alcohol.

Rhino's is a place to go to get drunk and look at saleable versions of the opposite sex--unless, of course, there is a band, at which time it is a get drunk and get down kind of place.

## Fat Jack's



I did not know quite what to expect from Fat Jack's. I had visited during the day and it seemed like it might be a pretty cool place (if it had some people in it). They have a pretty good selection of alcohol with reasonable prices, a selection of fine cigars, and a smoking room with a grand piano. The cigars were the kicker for me; a truly original place, I thought. The only thing I feared was that it would attract the pretentious and the pretentious wannabes. Upon my visit, my fears became a reality.

The place was packed with yuppiness and cigar smoke. The cigar gimmick worked like a charm! People who had never smoked a cigarette in their lives were puffing away on fat cigars! It was bizarre! Too bizarre--I couldn't stand the place for more than the five minutes I was there.

There were some fairly entertaining things that caught my eye, though. I saw a young blonde college looking woman puffing on a cigar and I was reminded of Freud's famous quote: "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar." However, upon seeing these young women carefully holding shafts of tobacco in their mouths, I decided that sometimes a cigar is not just a cigar; but I'm no psychiatrist.

## Kilarney's



This place was quite a relief from the crowded yuppiness of Fat Jack's and the drunken idiots of Rhino's.

Kilarney's is a place to go to get away from crowds and other annoying things that one finds in most bars. Their alcohol selection was absolutely fantastic--reasonably priced (\$2.25-3.50 for imports, average priced domestics) too! They had everything from Canadian to Japanese beers! On tap they had, not only the usual American pisswater beer, but Augsberger, Murphy's Irish Stout, and Leinie's. What a place!

For music, you would have to put some money in a jukebox, but there is a good selection of classic rock with bits of dance music here and there. Pretty darn cool, in the UB's opinion.

Another cool thing was how the place was decorated. From the name of the place, one can guess that it is an Irish-type pub. But upon walking into the place, you know it is an Irish-type pub! There is green everywhere! The carpet, the tables, and all over the walls is green, green, greeeeen! It's somewhat of a sportsy kind of place, too with Notre Dame banners and other Irish Catholic teams--local and national. There were no pool tables, but there were two dart boards (Irish-type pub thing again) fit the place beautifully>

All in all I would say that Kilarney's is a nice mellow place to go to have some good beer and avoid the assholes that stumble around some of the other bars in downtown Bloomington. This is the Underground Barfly signing off!

## Letters

Dear Friend,

I am very pleased with this month's article on page 19 [Oct/Nov] about me and my lawsuit. Well, as you may know, these types of lawsuits cause prisoners to go through many unjust events. I have planned to have sent you something by now, but this place has been keeping me broke by playing with my checks and other money from my family. I have filed for contempt of court on the superintendent for not following the informa papuris agreement. However, I hope to have you some money in the future.

However, I want to give you a little update on my case: I just received a scheduling order which has made my case quite complex and I need to find an attorney. I filed for appointment for counsel, and I hope to find counsel soon. Well, I have provided you with a motion for entry of appearance so you would know my case number and the deputy attorney general's name and address. Thank you very much for everything. I'll be in touch. Take care.

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# Kaz rants and reviews

Hi Kids!

Kaz again. I dicked around too long before deadline to write a proper article so I'll just berate you with some miscellaneous rants and gripes.

Am I the only person who doesn't feel like celebrating X-mas the day after Halloween?

The first time I was assaulted I was walking into a store on November 1 and having a fake green X-mas tree telling me not to pout or cry and telling me why. Since I have not dropped acid in a number of years I do not take advice from talking trees.

I do have a good joke to play on employees of such establishments (so far every store I've been in). Pick up any item with the term "seasons greetings" on it and ask an employee, "Excuse me sir/ma'am, I'm looking for something like

this in a 'Fuck X-mas' or 'X-mas sucks.' Do you have something like that?" You get some pretty cool looks, believe me.

Then people have the nerve to call me a "Scrooge." Hey, after the millionth time of hearing "Jingle Bells," I'm a little pissed. You watch, to get even I'm going to start celebrating July 4th on May 1st. If anyone thinks I'm weird, I'll just call them unpatriotic.

**Kaz on fashion**  
O.K. Enough of that. I have been wondering about this new fashion thing of grown men dressed up as "cowboys." Yeah, yeah, I like some country and western music, too, but do I have to dress up as one of the Village People to prove it? I mean, seriously, if I was to walk in to Wild West bar dressed up as a Native American or a construction worker (or any of the Village People except the cowboy) they would put me away as a loonie!

I personally have not dressed up as a cowboy since I was 10. I guess women dig the big ol' belt buckles. Grow up hick-boys! We're not in Texas!

**Kaz on international affairs**  
Well, on to international affairs. I get a kick out of all these Princess Di conspiracy theories. That she was killed because she was marrying a Muslim, landmine manufacturers were out to get her, or the Royal Family wanted to silence her. Well, here's the Kaz Princess Di theory: She was killed because she liked to hang out with a rich, arrogant asshole who thought he was too fast to die and didn't like his picture taken. Oh well, time to go. Good night kids!

--Kaz

## The New Age Wrangler, "Road to Freedom"

Well, this issues C.D. is interesting to say the least. When I first received "Road to Freedom" by The New Age Wrangler my first impression by the name was that it was some kinda weird country. It was in the same ballpark, but not exactly. The music by Kim Mortimer is best described as a mesh of pop, psychedelia, and country, and a pretty cool one at that.

The C.D. starts off with a tune called "Let's Go and Love." If The Doors were a country band they would sound something like this. More traditional songs such as "City Boy, Country Girl," "A Boy Named Kim," and "Is There Football in Heaven" are better than anything I've heard on B-104 (face it; most "pop" country sucks). "Nobody Loves You" is as good, but it tends to drag out too long at 7:02.

"Every Weekend is a Lifetime" is one for my heart. It's an ode to all of his fave sports teams (which happen to be the same as mine, extra brownie points). "Rock 'n Roll Ladies" is just some fun '70's rock (y'know, guitars, repetition, but I like that sometimes).

As a whole, all the songs on this C.D. are not going to blow your mind out, but all 12 tracks are worth a first and second listen, and even more, depending on your taste. \*\*\*

--Kaz

- \* sucks
- \*\*for die-hard fans only
- \*\*\*not exceptional, but worth a second play
- \*\*\*\*kicks ass
- \*\*\*\*\* a classic

the Lavenders



--david.Ⓢ



# Seeing Red

## Behind the News

by Steve Eckardt

The past month or two has been packed with events full of sound and fury that signify nothing--and signify everything, too.

The whirlwind of news stories is a strobing display of happenings intense, short-lived and disorienting--a junk food for the mind that leaves consumers numbed and dazzled, mouths waiting for another bite.

Princess Di, Promise Keepers, currency collapses and environmental calamity in S.E. Asia, campaign money scandals, UPS strike, space station near-disasters, and strange weather....

Whatever next?

\*\*\*

In my 'seventies college days I created a cartoon character out of a phantasmagoria of oom-ing campus mystics and navel-gazing "neo-Marxist" intellectuals, stirred with my own working class roots and devotion to fighting against the U.S. war in VietNam--plus nightly doses of R. Crumb's Zap Comix and large doses of illegal pharmaceuticals.

My man, who I dubbed "Baseball Bat Billy," would pop out at appropriate occasions with a 44-oz. Louisville Slugger and ask: "Hey mystic, is dis bat real?" three seconds before taking a home-run swing at their face.

At the time I--hey, I was 18--I felt quite clever: funny how the onrushing homicidally-heavy club can make even the most clueless duck real quick. To me, Baseball Bat Billy--who never lost an argument--brought everything back to earth.

\*\*\*

The news is chaos--both engineered and real. To the most cynical it is naught but a Roman circus: a non-stop entertainment staged to divert attention from the crumbling Empire.

And indeed, the whirl of hot scandalous news stories does create a curtain that obscures the operative societal physics--the societal forces in motion underlying everything.

Still, no question there's actual news within the cyclone.

You can even pick out certain obvious and disturbing trends, too: the rich getting richer, the poor poorer; the resurgence of actual genocide, along with ultra-right organizations; and the diseases, extinctions, and disasters that signal rising danger for life on Earth. (Of course, all this is mixed with pseudo-trends like invading armies of immigrants, dark "super predator" youth, and shrill feminists--all bent on destroying Our Way of Life. Plus there's pseudo-news, like the absurd coverage of the personal lives of "celebrities"....)

But whatever, the propaganda machinery has a ready, pacifying answer: there's light at the end of the tunnel. It's the formula of every article in Time magazine: there's a big problem; it's bad, maybe *real* bad--but there's people working on it.

This is just one facet of the grand answer for everything: "reform." Reform (not a tool for you, now, but for experts) is the answer because whatever the problem it's either being worked on--or was already dealt with.

Like for an alcoholic or a junkie, there's never a *fundamental* problem--there's always an excuse. In the end it's the old "used-to-be" gambit. Liberals (we're not going to even mention the *conservative* enemies of humanity) easily frown and nod their heads, yes, there used-to-be inexcusable racism in this country; yes, there used-to-be economic collapses; yes, there used-to-be awful pollution; heck, there even used-to-be some police brutality.

Yes--like McNamara said about killing more than 6 million people in VietNam, Laos and Cambodia: "mistakes were made."

And then there was ... Reform.

\*\*\*

My admittedly-sophomoric creation, Baseball Bat Billy, sat out most of the eighties. But once

created, characters sometimes take matters into their own hands.

So Billy did see some honorable action during the U.S.-sponsored bloodfest in Central America (yes, once there used-to-be up to 50 people a day found tortured to death, hooded, thumbs wired together behind their backs).

Billy was especially inspired by the truckloads of murdered Guatemalan peasants and by the charming propensity of U.S.-trained Salvadoran torturers to yank fingernails out of babies in front of their mothers before snuffing the little ones, raping the moms and delivering them a molten lead enema as a *coup de grace*.

Yes, Billy would periodically bust his chains and show up at a Republican fund-raiser asking "Ever hearda da death squads, motherfuck?" and not even wait three seconds before he started swinging.

Well, mistakes mere made.

Truth is as the "sixties" wound down (which actually happened around 1975-76), I was putting childish things behind me--learning a lot about the enormity of the monster and the long history of struggle against it.

I figured out you needed more than a baseball bat.

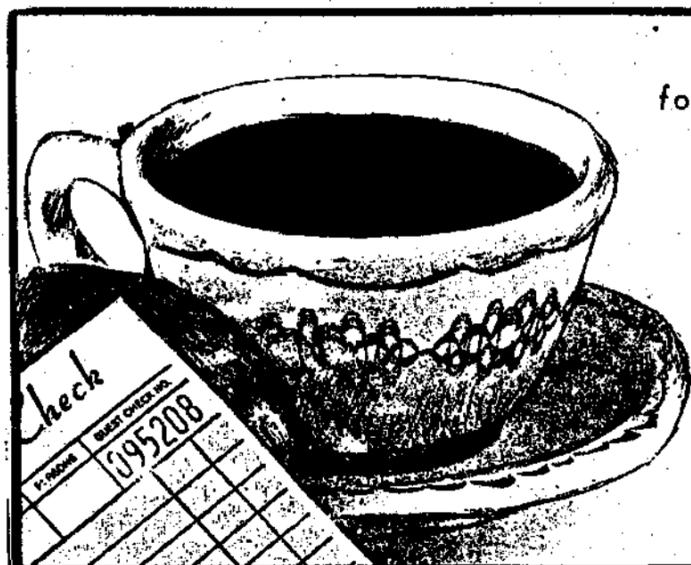
I told Billy to leave...

\*\*\*

In case neither Roman circus infotainment nor Reform ain't enough to keep us darkies smilin', there's always the threat of violence. After all, the chaos laid before us by the news apparatus serves ... chaos.

For though it's still early, the news is beginning to smell like the "destabilization campaign" waged by the CIA against the Allende government in Chile. (Yes, once there used-to-be U.S. imposition of military dictatorships.)

"Create a climate of instability, disorder, and chaos," read one internal memo, "increasing public demand for strong new leadership."



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No question that today we're regaled with tales of infants beaten to death, 14 year-olds with automatic weapons, estranged husbands gunning down their wives, crazy dictators armed with weapons of mass destruction, child molesters let out of prison, and women killing their babies.

It's insane, right? "Time to cut the bullshit and find somebody to take care of business. Hell, you start doing some killin' and people'll straighten up right quick."

Intertwined with this nascent destabilization campaign is what the for-real Reds in the (U.S.) Socialist Workers party are calling "the pornographication of politics:" the obsessive and resentful voyeurism of the personal foibles of the rich and famous.

Here's their hard take (from the October 6th issue of *The Militant* [gopher://gopher.igc.apc.org/11/pubs/militant]): "This type of scandal-mongering, which surrounded much of the coverage of [Diane] Spencer's death is an effort to exacerbate and profit from middle-class panic and to drag workers into the pit of resentment and carnal envy. The outpouring over Spencer's death reflected the emotional frustrations and sexual misery that are widespread among middle-class layers and among layers of working people under capitalism in decline."

"From the standpoint of the working class, it's much better when every worker couldn't care less about the sex life of ... [any] public figure."

They're right on the money. The old hate-Hillary campaign, the deification of the parasite Spencer and the flagrant ultra-right Death Angel packaged as "Mother Teresa" together form a filthy diversionary circus that lead straight into the embrace of fascism.

But (just between you and me) do ya think Paula Jones blew the Prez or not?

\*\*\*

Billy *tried* to be patient, he even let me throw him out. 'Course he'd come back anyway once in a while and start pacing around, reading the news while muttering curses, taking swings and spitting in my wastebasket.

I finally pulled out all the stops to get rid of him. I told him he was himself becoming an enemy of humanity. I told him that simplistic, anarchist, populist or terrorist "solutions" lead right into the arms of Stalin, Pol Pot, Farrakhan, Susan Brownmiller and, yes, Patrick Buchanan. After all, the U.S.'s foremost fascist began his presidential campaign by saying "Why are our people not enjoying the fruits of their labor? Because we have a government ... that does not listen anymore to the forgotten men and women who work in the forges and factories and plants and businesses. We have instead a government that is too busy taking the phone calls from lobbyists ... and the corporate contributions of the Fortune 500...."

I said, "Billy, the fucking Nazis are saying 'let's kick Big Money's butt'--you dig?"

Billy just didn't get it. He said he was sorry, but he was a man of action. I told him "great--but that don't mean shit." I even got Rosa Luxemborg's book *Reform or Revolution* off the shelf (he was always a sucker for dear martyred Rosa) and read him this:

"No coarser insult, no baser aspersion, can be thrown against workers than the remark: 'Theoretic controversies are only for academicians.' .... The entire strength of the [revolutionary] movement rests on theoretic knowledge."

I said, "Action/schmaction--maybe you should try to *think* first."

He was hurt. All he could say was "I thought I was your hero."

I said, with cruel exasperation, "Billy, you are a fucking cartoon character. You were only my 'hero' in the sense of being the main character in a story. You want a hero--go study Che Guevara, and study him seriously. Now go--just go away."

I picked up some rumors about Billy, some true, some no doubt apocryphal: he was working in the garment industry, he'd joined the Cubans fighting against South Africa in Angola, he'd become fluent in Spanish. Recently some even put him in north Korea, gathering facts on the famine with a big plan to get the word out.

Who knows? I guess I'm just realizing as I'm writing this that he'll always be out there, somewhere.

Then--bingo!--damned if he didn't ring me up just now.

Turns out he's a Teamster now and smilin'. He's flying high off the strike and the victory there--and at BART (San Francisco's public transit agency). He's telling me about a strike in the Dominican Republic, and how 40,000 people just turned out in Argentina to celebrate Che and the Cuban revolution.

Truth is I was kind of embarrassed. I just said, "I'm past deadline on my column now, Billy. I got to do a wrap."

"Hell," he said, "read it to me."

Well no way out of it, so I did.

When I was done, Billy just chuckled. "You always were a wordy sonofabitch," he said.

"Thanks a lot, my *hero*," I said, laying it on.

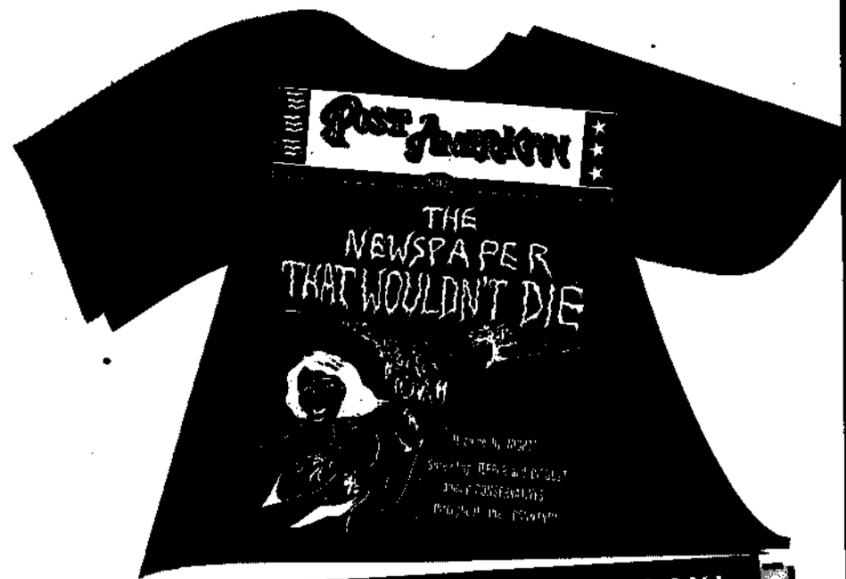
He let the dig sail by: "No, it's good, my man," he said. "I like all that analysis about how the propaganda machine fucks up people's minds. It's cool."

"But why don't you end it like this: tell 'em Baseball Bat Billy's holding up the world now, not a bat, and asking 'duz dis look like Reform's gonna fix it?'"

"Tell 'em 'don't *consume* the news --get wit' some other people and *make* the news instead. Do it like we did at UPS."

Leave it to Billy to bring it all back to earth.

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# Crash and Burn

## by Steve Eckardt

Visit [www.SeeingRed.com](http://www.SeeingRed.com) to get more, or leave questions or comments.

CHICAGO-With 3000 square miles of tropical rain forest burning, more than half the people of Southeast Asia are engulfed in a pall of hazardous smoke-smoke so thick that streetlights and headlights burn at noon, and people who venture outside wear rags or masks across their faces.

"Vast fires for profit choke region of millions" headlined the 25 September Chicago Tribune, which named only the immediate culprits: "profit-hungry agrarian and logging companies."

"Smog is so thick that it's sometimes impossible to see the other side of the street," reported the London Daily Telegraph's Jonathan Head from Jambi, Sumatra. In Kuching, a city of 2 million located in the Malaysian portion of Borneo, "residents report visibility of only a few feet," said the Tribune.

The "haze," as local authorities delicately term it, "has threatened the health of millions," according to a 15 October Associated Press dispatch from Jakarta. Indeed, tens of thousands have thronged hospitals-this in countries where medical treatment is simply non-existent for most people-and death totals are simply unknown.

The smog most likely did kill, however, 234 airplane passengers and 29 people on board two ocean freighters in separate lack-of-visibility crashes.

Authorities have been forced to close schools and warn people "not to go outside unless absolutely necessary." Yet, as Jonathan Head put it, "people live in small cramped houses that offer no protection against the smoke. It even swirls in and out of the lobby of the new [Jambi] Novotel hotel, which has a filtered air-conditioning system, forcing the hotel management to shut off smoke alarms."

The 25 September Tribune admitted that "the fires have caused billions of dollars in damage to high-tech production, the timber and tourism industries. Cash crops are dying or suffer stymied growth because the haze has blocked sunlight."

Meanwhile, reports Jonathan Head, "outside the city, the night sky is lit up by the glow of the forest fires...."

### Latest News: No News

But forget more recent reports like that from Reuters on 3 November that "seven Indonesian airports were closed due to thick smoke from forest and bush fires" or one on 8 November that "we have noticed a marked increase of hot spots in the last few days," as an Indonesian monitoring official was quoted by Haze Emergency Online ([www.vensara.com/haze/](http://www.vensara.com/haze/)): by mid-October coverage of the greatest single ecological disaster in the history of Southeast Asia had nearly disappeared.

Why?

"Hong Kong Stocks Plummet, Shaking Markets Worldwide" headlined the 24 October Washington Post, in one of the milder phrases used to describe frantic selling that gripped every stock market in the world.

"What appeared in July as an isolated currency problem in Thailand has become a full-blown crisis in Southeast Asia, encompassing Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan and now Hong Kong, the region's premier economy," allowed the Post in the same article.

Yes, hardest hit-and failing to rebound in later days-were the economies of (you guessed it) Southeast Asia. Seems that the combination of the most expensive financial collapse in the history of Southeast Asia with its worst environmental disaster was too much for even the slickest bourgeois apologists to handle.

After all, these very countries were the ones touted as "Asian tigers" or "Asian dragons," their "super-charged growth" described as a "miracle," their free-market economies and openness to Western capital held up as a model for the entire world.

In fact, both crises are even worse than what has been reported: Pakistan teeters at the brink of a second currency devaluation and already-submerging Japanese banks face

swallowing US\$75 billion [ital]in bad loans. Then there's China, 60% of whose foreign investment comes in through what is now the financial wreckage of Hong Kong; and Australia, 60% of whose trade is with countries now essentially bankrupt.

Nor has the scope of the crises-even within Southeast Asia-been fully reported; Indonesia, for instance, is the fourth largest country in the world, though you'd hardly know it by how little it's covered.

Furthermore, many of the fires-and certainly the smoke-will not disappear with the now-delayed monsoon rains: sub-surface coal and peat are now burning and will not stop within the scale of years or, likely, decades. (Ask the people from the Pennsylvania ghost town of Centralia about that[ital]-the ground started burning there some 25 years and millions of dollars ago .... and still is.)

### Whodunit?

Truth is that the mainstream press will never adequately cover or analyze these events because their only explanation is a word that's unprintable: imperialism[bold], the term for monopoly capitalism and its systematic pillaging of the world. It's the normal operation of this system that is directly responsible for the disasters in Southeast Asia.

But how does a handful of wealthy nations keep the majority of the world destitute and force them to ravage their own lands to make payments to the West?

### In a word: loan-sharking.

Begin with the simple fact that poor countries desperately need money-there's no hope of escaping poverty without it. Without roads, railroads, machinery, water-let alone food- it's difficult indeed to make progress.

Enter loan-sharking Western capital, which presses loans on the Third World countries knowing full well they can never be re-paid. (They even add conditions that much of the funds be spent back in the lender nation.)

Proposals are made for miraculous plans that will guarantee future "emergence" into the club of the elite-Big Plans: dams, superhighways, nuclear reactors and the like.

Any hesitancy is met with bribery-at the very least the promise of a wealthier nation to come, but mostly with cash money.

Of course Big Plans are not what poor countries need. They need the basics-and the basics are pretty cheap: immunizations, literacy, clean drinking water, a bunch of 1000-watt generators.

But Big Plans need-and generate-Big Money.

Even better, Big Plans ensure resulting projects will fail, being utterly inappropriate.

Meanwhile, the poor country pumps out its lifeblood-the little desperately-needed cash it has-to "service" the loan. Forced to come up with the "vig," they burn their own forests to produce timber and agrarian products they can sell in the international market (we'll skip how Western capital itself controls



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the markets and pays less than market value).

Then the loan sharks turn up the pressure: the local currency is "over-valued," they declare: time to devalue-in other words, start paying double.

At last, the entire venture collapses and the Third World country does a Mexico, or a Thailand, and an Indonesia, or a ....

Heads shake and tongues cluck in the media of the imperial capitals: Gee, they were once so promising, so close to "emerging." But "spendthrift ways" down there ruined it all-so much money spent on imports[ital]. (Anyone remember those loan conditions?)

Then there was that sickening "endemic Third World corruption"-why, there's been wholesale bribery, for crissakes.

And so leg-breaking time comes-clothed in the form of a "bail-out:" oil or other natural resources are signed over (though credit given only in new, de-valued currency), austerity measures are imposed to squeeze even more from the poor, and then-at last!-the country is given .... more loans[ital].

But how bad can all this be? After all, the only thing smoking in the USA is the red-hot stock market: rock-solid and making everybody rich.

Anyway, Asia is far, far away from the Western hemisphere.

**Associated Press dispatch 29 October 1997; 4:21 a.m. EST: Amazon Burning at Record Level** by Michael Astor MANAUS, Brazil (AP)-*This year's burning season in the Amazon rain forest is so bad even a lake is on fire. Two factors-drought...and government policy...are speeding destruction of the world's largest wilderness, not to mention choking inhabitants of the Amazon's largest city with thick smoke....The fires now are the worst in memory....Worse, the fires have spread into virgin forest, where deep roots usually keep trees so moist they rarely burn. By most estimates, at least 10 percent of the 2 million square-mile Amazon has been destroyed.*

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# Cassini Saturn Probe & H.A.R. P. Project

The Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice (P.O. Box 90035, Gainesville, FL, 32607) sent me a packet of information that gives their reasons for the opposition to the sending of plutonium into space. The recent Cassini Saturn probe was the latest in an ongoing and escalating program.

The literature listed 36 reasons why they oppose sending plutonium into space. Their reasoning goes far beyond the possibility of an explosion on launch, which was the narrow focus of the media reports I read. The reasons for their opposition are vast and deep. They deserve to be carefully considered.

For example, their 28th reason goes as follows:

"There is no discussion of the safe disposal of the radioactive by-products (there are many) from isolating PU-238 (plutonium). The stuff not destined for Saturn is still capable of poisoning the Earth and has half-lives of around 25,000 years and is highly radioactive. It will be NASA's responsibility for the next 500,000 years. The risk entailed in that isn't described in NASA's report, and the cost isn't in any accounting report I've seen either. . . 10,000 years from now, even 100,000 years from now, NASA will be demanding money from your descendants for the upkeep on its nuclear waste facility used to store by-products being created today for 'your' Cassini mission. That cost is not reflected in any NASA document."

Consider it this way: does anything the government does work the way it is supposed to? Is our government a model of efficiency?

And that government is going to take good care of this highly dangerous material for an unimaginable length of time.

Yeah, right!

And no wonder that cost was not reflected in any NASA documents. To include the true figures would have made them look like idiots.

And even this is just the beginning. The 36 reasons spin off in many directions and weave together to form a very powerful argument against ever again sending plutonium off this planet.

I plan to present and discuss some of the other reasons in future issues.

On another mad scientist front, the Art Bell radio talk show Coast to Coast with Art Bell (broadcast on WLS out of Chicago on weekdays 1 am -5 am and on WTAZ out of Peoria midnight to 5 am) recently had a discussion with the author of a book that opposes the Pentagon's H.A.R.P. project. What the H.A.R.P. project is is essentially this: The military wants to focus a beam of intense energy to punch a hole in the Earth's ionosphere. The ionosphere is part of our atmospheric shielding from harmful cosmic radiation.

What are the risks involved in that brainstorm? Let's just say that the Pentagon is being as open and forthcoming about the risks involved in their little experiment as NASA is being about its plutonium into space.

Art Bell made an offer to give someone associated with H.A.R.P. an opportunity to debate the critic and to give their view publicly.

To date, they have refused the offer.

Mr. Bell has offered them a chance to have five hours of radio time to make their case to millions of listeners nation wide.

It is a fair and generous offer; and a challenge.

I know this: in a tribal society a warrior must be willing to face his own people. Does our military have the courage to stand before the American people and justify this?

So far the answer is no.

-Gregg Brown

# Can we live without the natural world?

On Saturday, November 15 the *Pantagraph* published a column by Thomas Sowell with the headline "Signs of sanity?: Maybe there are reasons for hope."

In it Mr. Sowell writes of those he considers to be "environmental fascists." He writes that they "act like little tin gods arranging the universe to suit their vision and gratify their own egos."

Think about that statement. Someone is being accused of "arranging the universe to suit their vision." I agree wholeheartedly with that charge but I think it is being leveled at entirely the wrong people.

It is not those who work to preserve the life system of this planet who are trying to "arrange the universe." Those of us who hold the Earth in reverence believe that the universe is very well arranged and that its arrangement should and must be preserved.

To my mind this whole thing can be summed up in one simple question: Can we live without the natural world?

Let me repeat that question: Can we live without the natural world?

I hope that the answer is self evident. We can't. We can't. We can't. We can't.

Ecologists know that it takes trillions of interactions between millions of species for the Earth's biosystem to remain viable.

Mr. Sowell writes of the "long lists of endangered species" that he doesn't believe are worth trying to save. I think that effort must be made as if our own lives depended on it, because, in truth, it does.

That point is made by a brief quote from A Basic Call to Consciousness, the Hau de no sau nee (Iroquois) Address to the Western World, delivered at the 1977 U.N. Conference on Indigenous Peoples:

"The original instructions direct that we who walk about the Earth are to express a great respect, an affection and a gratitude toward all the spirits which create and support Life. . . When people cease to respect and express gratitude for these many things, then all life will be destroyed and human life on this planet will come to an end."

Those are powerful words and they are not spoken lightly.

Thomas Sowell's bitter words and mindset were formed within the corporate world. It is that corporate world that is "arranging the universe to suit their vision and to gratify their own egos" and thereby threatening us all.

Is it so hard to understand the connections between trees and breathing?

And when he expresses his glee that the city of San Francisco is cracking down on those he terms "riffraff" and then calls someone else a "fascist," we are all put on warning as to what his (and his corporate sponsors) intentions are.

Signs of sanity? Well, at least we have his attention.

Reasons for hope? That depends on us.

Walk in beauty.

-Gregg Brown



# Woo hoo! The new Simpsons book kicks ass.

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-towanda! (♥'s Homer)

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**Economic policy:**  
Gouge, gouge, gouge.  
**Country of origin:**  
India.  
**Horrible memory:**  
Thought he was a hummingbird of some kind after working 96 hours straight.  
**Immigration status:**  
Semi-legal alien.  
**Diet:**  
Strict vegetarian: no meat, no milk, no eggs.



## HOMER AND APU

### SHOW HIGHLIGHTS

"Oh, stomach churning... bowels clenching... not much time... must finish." Homer, eating rancid ham on the couch.

Actor James Woods, explaining why he wants to work at the Kwik-E-Mart: "To be honest, in my upcoming movie I'm going to be playing this tightly-wound convenience store clerk and, you know, I kind of like to research my roles and really get into it. For instance, *True Believer?* I actually worked in a law firm for two months. And then, the film, *Chaplin?* I had a little cameo in that. I actually traveled back in time, back to the twenties, where...well, I've said too much."

The "Who Needs the Kwik-E-Mart?" lyrics:  
 Whether you're hot, or burnt, or a gaudy disco/ There's no structure I have been to/ Which I'd rather call my home...  
 When I first arrived you were all such jerks/ But now I've come to know you quacks/ Muggin' with her eyes so bright/ Along with her by Frank Lloyd Wright/ (You can philosophize/ Bart's adept at spinning lies/ Homer's a delightful fellow/ Sorry 'bout the sarcasm/ Who needs the Kwik-E-Mart?/ Now here's the tricky part/ Oh won't you rhyme with me?/ Who needs the Kwik-E-Mart... (Along) Their floors are sticky-mort! (Last) They made that sticky-mort! (Start) Let's put a sticky-mort! (Stoner) That Kwik-E-Mart's a real-D'oh! (AB) Who needs the Kwik-E-Mart? (Apu) Not me!

"Come here, Apu. If it'll make you feel any better, I've learned that life is one crushing defeat after another until you just wish Flanders was dead."

"Ah! The searing kiss of hot lead; how I missed you! I mean, I think I'm dying." Apu, after saving James Woods's life.

Customer #1: I need one two-three cent stamp.  
 Apu: That's a dollar apu-ly-the... (sings it up)  
 Customer #2: Hi, I want two 20's worth of gas, please.  
 Apu: Fourteen-ny, (sings it up)  
 Bart: How much is your penny candy?  
 Apu: Surprisingly expensive.

Homer Goes Undercover:  
 Brockman: Alright, are you willing to go undercover to nail this swag?  
 Homer: (singing) No way. No way, man. Get yourself another penny, man. No way I'm wearing a hep-cat nose.  
 Brockman: Would you be willing to wear a hidden camera and microphone?  
 Homer: Oh, that I'll wear.

Disqualified Customer:  
 Homer: How old must I be to get a job?  
 Apu: I'm so sorry. Please accept live pencils of frozen shrimp.  
 Homer: This shrimp isn't frozen and it smells terrible.  
 Apu: Okay, ten pounds.  
 Homer: (accepting) Woo-hoo!

(Homer and Apu near a majestic Kwik-E-Mart, deep within a mountain range.)  
 Apu: There she is, the world's best convenience store.  
 Homer: This one's very convenient.  
 Apu: How you done or everything we do?

(Homer watches a Del Lambyza comedy show on TV)  
 Conductor: See, black guys drive a car like me here. (He mimics driving while leaning back in the seat, one hand on the wheel.) But white guys, white guys drive like this. (He mimics driving while leaning up to the windshield, both hands on wheel.)  
 Homer: (laughing) It's true, it's true. We're so lame.

Spiritual Discourse:  
 Kwik-E-Mart CEO: You may ask me three questions.  
 Apu: That's great, because all I need is one.  
 Homer: (contemplating) Are you really the best of the Kwik-E-Marts?  
 Kwik-E-Mart CEO: Yes.  
 Homer: Really?  
 Kwik-E-Mart CEO: Yes.  
 Homer: How?  
 Kwik-E-Mart CEO: Yes, I hope this has been enlightening for you.  
 Apu: But I must.  
 Kwik-E-Mart CEO: Thank you, come again.

THE STUFF YOU MAY HAVE MISSED  
 The Kwik-E-Mart does not accept checks from the following people: (Chad Miggam, Reverend Lovejoy, Homer J. Simpson, Homer S. Simpson, H. J. Simpson, Homer Simpson, Homer J. Frog.)  
 A sign in the world's best Kwik-E-Mart: "The Master Knows Everything Except Combustion to Sale."  
 The can of chicken soup on the Kwik-E-Mart bargain table is affected by inflation.



At the Kwik-E-Mart, Apu lowers the price on meat that has expired instead of throwing it out. Homer buys the meat, eats it, and is rushed to the hospital. Lisa urges Homer to expose Apu, and Homer takes his story to "Bite Back with Kent Brockman." Apu is fired by the Kwik-E-Mart company after a sting in which Homer helps to reveal Apu's violations.



Apu tells Homer that he wishes to make amends by becoming Homer's personal valet. While Apu works for the Simpsons, actor James Woods takes his job at the Kwik-E-Mart. Apu enjoys his work with the Simpsons but longs to return to the Kwik-E-Mart.

Homer agrees to accompany Apu to Kwik-E-Mart's corporate headquarters in India to help him win back his job. The company's benevolent enlightened president and CEO grants three questions, but Homer intervenes, costing Apu his chance to be rehired. Apu finally returns to the Kwik-E-Mart, where he saves James Woods's life during a robbery attempt. Eternally grateful, Woods offers Apu his job back.



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# Notes from the Land of Anti-fat

## Dieter beware

The news comes fast and furious in the wake of FDA's recall of dexfenfluramine (Redux) and fenfluramine (Pondamine), two prescription diet drugs recently linked to heart problems.

At the top of the news release pile: a series of stories about the lawsuits that are being filed against both the FDA and American Home Products Corp., manufacturer of the two diet drugs. Now, I'm not the kind of guy to ordinarily support excessive litigation, but in this case, I say sue the bastards! For too long, the diet industry and its weak-kneed overseer, the FDA, have had an overly casual attitude towards fat patients' lives. Perhaps a fiscal slap is necessary to put the brakes on some of this stuff.

Case in point: an apologia study reported in the *Wall Street Journal* where physicians in twenty-one medical centers were surveyed on the results they saw with patients taking the diet drugs. These physicians reported an 8% heart valve complication rate compared to the 32% rate reported by the FDA. What's worth noting here isn't the discrepancy in stats - it's clear from each report that we're only just beginning to understand the full effect of these drugs - but the reflection of attitude prevalent in the medical community. This is best exemplified by Dr. Morton Maxwell, head of the obesity center at the University of California. Confronted by the new, lower statistic, he opined that an 8% rate was "an acceptable risk for severely obese patients." Acceptable if you're not part of that 8%, that is.

But since the medical community has classified "obesity" as a disease instead of a body type, this kind of ethical juggling act is understandable. By simply being fat, the patient is already at risk, so why not compound it? Doctors are used to making these kinds of weighted decisions daily, so we shouldn't be surprised to hear it coming from a physician's mouth, particularly one who makes his living "treating" obesity.

And this needs to be pointed out every time: many of the patients prescribed the above mentioned diet drugs did not in any way fit the definition of the "severely obese." For them, Fen-Phen use was a deadly cosmetic decision.

Size acceptance advocates have been saying for years that the primary way to treat obesity is to look at ways to make the condition healthier, not to focus every bit of medical research into weight loss. That change clearly isn't going to happen anytime soon - fat phobia is just too prevalent. Within days of the FDA's diet drug recall, ads for a "safe, natural alternative" to Fen-Phen started appearing in the media (NutriSystem, for example, has started hyping it in *The Daily Pantagraph*).

Labeled "Herbal Fen-Phen," the new drug is typically comprised of ephedra (an amphetamine-like compound), L-tryptophan (pulled from the market by itself when it was linked to 1,500 cases of a rare blood disorder) and St. John's Wort. That last is an herb used in Europe to treat depression; it has not been linked in any formal study to weight loss. But in a climate where Prozac is being considered as a

diet drug, the leap to St. John's Wort makes a shaky kind of sense.

The FDA, cautious after the original Fen-Phen experience, has already issued a warning to consumers about this "herbal alternative." Noting that there are no known studies on their effectiveness, the agency is looking at them as "unapproved drugs." They have not, the agency noted in a public statement, "been shown to be safe or effective and may contain ingredients that have been associated with injuries."

## So what else is new?

The latest from the Journal of the American Medical Association has called into question those doctors and diet gurus who've been pushing ultra-low-fat diets as a means of controlling unhealthy cholesterol. But guess what? Turns out that a moderate amount of fat intake may actually be healthy. A recent study of 444 men placed on one of four different types of year-long, low-fat diets reveals that a moderate low-fat diet (30%) is just as effective in controlling LDL (or "bad" cholesterol) as a very-low-fat one (18%).

All four groups of men showed a comparable level of LDL reduction, while the most severe dieters showed a rise in triglyceride levels along with a drop in levels of healthy cholesterol. As with very-low-calorie diets - once recommended by the diet industry until studies came out showing they could do more harm than good - extremism in the name of fat phobia is not a virtue. That won't stop many of the diet mavens from pushing it, though.

So what's the bottom line? As medical consumers, fat Americans need to be wariar than most. "New" diets and medications are being cobbled together and packaged in unconscionable haste, while much of what was last year's dogma is being overturned by this year's research. The consequence of this: otherwise healthy fat adults who are being put at risk by the very medical community that's claiming to help them.

## Barbie gets a body makeover

Here's a small piece of pop ephemera that you can use to wash out the bitter aftertaste of Too-Many Holiday Diet Ads: Barbie's finally putting on a few pounds.

After years of possessing the most "biologically unnatural body possible," the lass with the seventeen inch waist is being redesigned to conform more closely to human anatomy. Barbie myth-keepers Mattel are keeping the new version under wraps at present, though we doubt that the new version will be as close to real as the poster doll for The Body Shop. Still, it's a start. . .

-Bill Sherman



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# Meet Ruby: Our new beauty expert

You've read about her in the New York Times. Ruby is a phenomenon. As the "personification" of commitment to self-esteem, Ruby reminds people to feel good about themselves. Life is short—why waste time obsessing about some so-called flaw?

Beauty is active, inclusive and powerful. It's not about stereotypical images and unattainable ideals.

Ruby isn't just a symbol, she's a state of mind. Strong. Independent. Informed. She doesn't *weigh* her self-esteem against false standards. She loves her body and is true to herself. And she has a sense of humor.

Self-esteem is the route to revolution. Know your mind. Love YOUR body!

—source: The Body Shop catalog

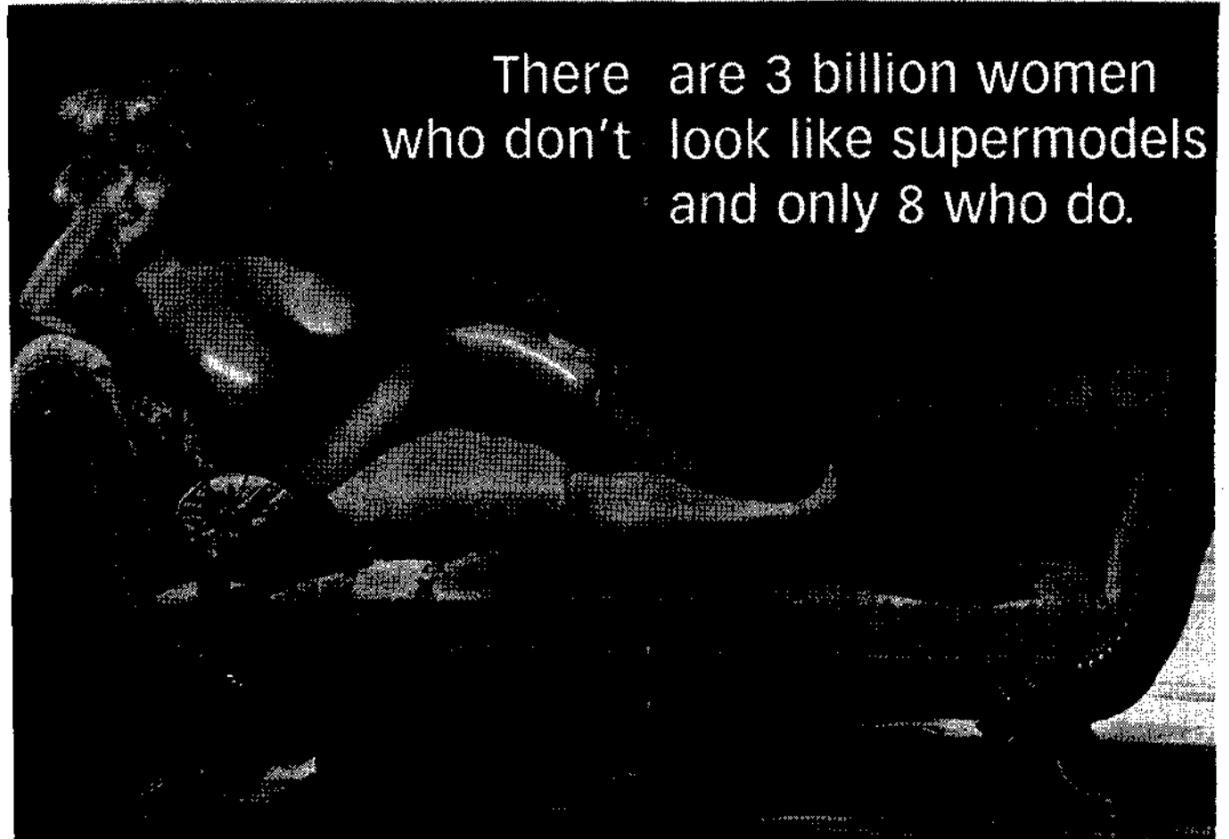
## The ideal/The real

If you open a woman's magazine, and flick through the pages, you'll notice something very peculiar: every model is a size 6. Why's that? You get on a bus, or walk down a street (any bus, any street) and the women you see aren't all a size 6. They're all sizes. All shapes. Could it be that models aren't supposed to be about real life? Could it be that these over-thin girls are actually there to inspire insecurity and vulnerability?

There is a theory that by showing only these women, magazines can create a fantasy atmosphere. One we can envy. One for us to aspire to. "If I looked like her, everything would be all right." "If I were that slim, I'd be happy." "Look at her, a cellulite-free zone, what's she got to worry about?" How many times have you heard, or said that? In short, advertisers want us to believe that happiness comes from their products. And that waif of a model, with the perfect hair, in that gorgeous setting, holding their product is testimony to the fact.

Nothing wrong with that, just a little harmless fantasy, you might think. But for a growing number of women it's not a fantasy, it's an obsession, and one that's far from harmless. This whole idealized beauty nonsense that's splashed all over the place is destroying the very people it's meant to celebrate. A psychological study in 1995 found that 3 minutes spent looking at pictures of such models in magazines caused 70% of women to feel depressed, guilty and shameful. Models, who twenty years ago weighed 8% less than the average woman, today weigh 23% less. Perhaps that's why the UK now has 3.5 million anorexics and bulimics, while in a recent survey 11% of parents said they would abort a child predisposed to obesity. Women are now considered one of the groups most at risk of developing mental health problems. And all for what? A limiting and limited beauty ideal that cramps the individual in us all and stunts your personal growth. Pretty ugly, isn't it?

--Full Voice The Body Shop



## Back to normal

Back to Normal: There are three billion women who don't look like super-models and only eight who do. The women of the world--of any village, town or city anywhere--are certainly not all thin or twenty years old. They are all sizes, all shapes and ages. So what's going on here? Are the fashion and cosmetics industries playing a game with the minds of women by creating an image of perfection that's basically unattainable? Is beauty only about being slim, tall, young, tanned and cellulite free? The Body Shop sells products that cleanse, polish and protect the skin. That's all. But we're in an industry that at times seems hell bent on encouraging women to be anyone but who they

are. Well, enough is enough. We're going to do some awareness-raising on behalf of self-esteem and self-authority. We will be challenging the cultural conceptions of femininity as portrayed in the "beauty" industry. We will encourage the celebration of the unique qualities that make each of us who we are. Self-esteem is truly the route to revolution. People are not in the habit of making the connection between self-esteem, democracy, dignity, political activism and freedom of sexual expression—but in the future they will be.

—source: The Body Shop catalog

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# Confessions of

Parenting is not easy, nor has it ever been easy. Nowadays, though, I think there are more challenges facing the above-average parent and children than there were in the years gone by. Especially for me. I am not your typical above-average parent. I have a few screws loose.

I am sleep-challenged. I have insomnia. Do YOU know what it is like to be exhausted down to the marrow...and not be able to sleep because you are too tired? Such is my plight. Each night I wake up shortly before 3am. Why? Three is the witching hour. As a kid growing up in a haunted house, 3-5am typically was when the most ghostly occurrences happened, at first waking me up, and ending with me automatically waking up waiting for them. This has continued. I, at the age of 35, am scared of peeing between 3 and 5 am, and so usually wake up on my own and pee at some point shortly before my witching hour. Just in case, whether or not I have to go, I get up and try. This doesn't mean I won't wake up at 4:15 am and need to go again.

This is exactly what happened the other night. I couldn't fall asleep and sat up until 1:00am reading. I woke up and peed at 2:55am (after having woken up for no apparent reason an hour earlier), and then woke up at 4:00 and had to go again, probably due to the water I drank when I last woke up. I tried to ignore it. After all, I had just gone a little more than an hour before and it was the witching hour. I dozed, but my bladder wouldn't allow sleep. Finally, at 4:30am I broke down. Naked, I fumbled to the bathroom in our cold house, fumbled back to bed, and was then awake due to being chilled. Wide awake. After lying in bed for an hour trying to pretend I was really going to go back to sleep, I finally gave up and turned on my reading light.

What do I think about in the night as I lie there? I make lists in my brain about what I should be doing the next day if I wasn't such a sleep-deprived loser. This time I thought, "Oh, I hate this. I am always distracted and grumpy with the kids the next day. And I've got that Post article to get done, besides organizing my work table, and all the packing to do before I go to Reno. Hey, maybe I should write about being a mom I am for the Post!" Eureka. Who says I can't be creative when I'm half asleep? I like to fool myself into believing that I am a creative genius like Einstein and da Vinci, who both had weird sleep cycles.

Mark got up at 5:45am. "Can't sleep again? How long have you been up this time?" See how used to this he is? Finally, around 6:45am my eyes got droopy. I finally fell asleep. My children are used to my cycles of sleeplessness, and they are independent and let me sleep. They also often sleep late, knowing that there is a good chance I only got a couple of hours and I'll be more fun with a little more. Hannah got their breakfast ready, and then they played until 9:45am when I awoke to Christmas music

in the living room and wild dancing and whooping it up. My less-than-six hours of sleep wasn't very restful. I usually do this at least once a week, but sometimes do it 2-4 days in a row, with a few days following of sleeping like the dead. My kids know that I am grumpier than usual on these days, and my parenting skills are worse than usual. So, they take full advantage. "Mama, we could watch a movie. Then we won't fight." I usually give in.

## But faeries are real.....

Living with an agnostic father and a pagan mother produced an interesting spiritual development and consciousness in our children. They talk about Mother Earth, the Goddess and the God, and Santa Claus all in the same breath.

I was devastated as a child when I learned Santa wasn't real. I figured it out a year or so before I was told, and, typical to my family and upbringing, I kept the secret while I was crushed. How could they lie to me about *Santa Claus*? When we first had Hannah, I told Mark I didn't want our children to go through that, but he is too emotionally healthy. "What's wrong with Santa? I believed in Santa and it didn't hurt me when I found out." I explained that we would be starting our parenting based upon a lie. "Oh, and you see nothing wrong with telling her faeries are real?" was his comeback. "But faeries are real," I answered. I won. We didn't play Santa. We told her about Santa and how it is what people feel in their hearts. Then three years ago, when she was four, she sat on Christmas morning and cried because there were no presents from Santa Claus. I said, "But you know Santa isn't real!" and she cried more. "But the other kids get presents from Santa! Why can't I?" I sat down and talked with her about it (as Mark watched with a smug little smirk on his face) and finally agreed to play Santa with her from then on.

With Keegan, I explained how Santa isn't real, but is in our hearts, and we pretend he is real. That was enough for him. He only heard "real" and will not discuss it any more. Santa IS real to him now, no matter what I say.

One of the most frustrating aspects of this with Hannah is that since we began playing Santa, she set out to "disprove" him. I don't get it. She would ask trick questions such as "How can Santa get everywhere in one night?" or "How can he get in our house if we don't have a fireplace?" A few months ago we were delivering food for Grand Prairie and we were talking about a Christmas present we gave her. She got quiet and upset, and finally pointed out that SANTA gave it to her, not her mama and papa, and then asked with tears in her eyes, "Isn't Santa REAL?" "Of course not!" I told her, and reminded her of all my talks I had had with her about the truth of Santa. "But you lied to me!" she cried. "No, I played along with you about Santa because you asked me to!" She sobbed. Keegan got tears in his eyes and plugged his ears and looked straight ahead. So

much for saving my children from the trauma of discovery of the grim truth about Santa.

## But I'm NOT cussing, damn it!

In fifth grade I made an amazing discovery....I didn't drop dead if I cussed! I have kept it up for the last twenty-five years faithfully, and haven't missed a day. Ah, how wonderful it is to call upon those magic words in frustration or anger! It releases the tension! It gives "umph" to the point you are making! Eventually, though, I discovered I was cussing even when I wasn't frustrated or angry, and finally realized whenever I yelled at the kids, I'd cuss. After asking nicely once ("Please pick up the toys in the living room") and not as nicely ("I said to pick up the toys in the living room") and still being completely ignored, I raised the decibel and language, "PICK UP THE DAMNED TOYS OFF THE DAMNED FLOOR NOW OR I'M THROWING THEM ALL AWAY!!!"

In my defense, I and other mothers have discussed how children seem to never hear the first couple of times we ask when we say "please" and then just tell them what to do. They wait for the yell, and then accuse us of being mean and yelling at them all the time. I call it "selective deafness." If I whispered, "Ah, what am I to do with all this chocolate?" they'd hear me out in the backyard through a closed door and come running, yelling "I'll eat it!" the whole way.

One day after yelling and cussing about something, I was briefly lucid and decided that even though my children have no fear of me and never take me very seriously, I didn't want to keep cussing when I yelled at my kids. I didn't want that to be their main memory of me in their childhood, which is, of course, what they would focus on in their sessions with their various therapists. I rarely cuss around my folks, in control in many situations of my life, such as with clients, strangers, at work, etc. If I can control it then, I can control it in my daily life, right? Though it pains me still to give up such wonderful words of self-expression, I came up with a plan.

I told my kids, "I cuss way too much, and I especially hate it when I cuss when I yell at you. I want you guys to know that you can change anything you don't like about yourselves if you want to badly enough. I am going to quit cussing...or at least cut way down. Here's what we are going to do. Every time I cuss, you point it out to me, no matter what the circumstances. When I have cussed three times, I owe you a treat." I then laid out guidelines for treats and cussing, "I will buy you candy or other junk food [Note: I hate buying junky, sugary crap for my kids, so it is a punishment for me...and crap isn't a cuss word, thank you] or take you out and do something special, okay? Now, some words are always cuss words, but some aren't all the time. 'Bitchy, pissy and crap' aren't cuss words. Sometimes 'bitch' and 'shit' aren't if they are naming something such as, 'I just stepped in dog shit!' I get the final vote as to whether or not it is a cuss word." The kids thought this was a great idea.



# a distracted mother

I did well at first. It took four days before I cussed three times! I had to buy the kids donuts. Ah, I could handle that. I was smug. Then, I was finishing my parents' anniversary quilt which was supposed to be done by three o'clock that afternoon. It wasn't going well. "Shit!" flew out of my mouth. "That's one!" they gleefully pointed out. "God damn it!" came out a few minutes later. They chortled, "That's two! That's two! One more and we get another treat!" I kicked them out of the room and out of the one next to the room with my sewing machine. I knew I couldn't possibly work without cussing, and didn't want to buy them the whole candy store. A few minutes later I said, "Damn, damn, DAMN!!!!" and heard Hannah from the room next to mine, "That's three!" I responded in a very mature manner. "NO IT'S NOT!!! It doesn't count! You aren't supposed to be in that room! You're not supposed to be listening! Why are you in there?" I asked. "Because I knew you would cuss," she told me.

I have done incredibly well. The bonus is that I somehow do yell less at my kids, because when I go to yell, I begin to splutter when I catch myself almost cussing. "Pick up the, uh, um, toys off the mm, uh, floor right now, gosh darn it!" It just doesn't have that zip. The kids have noticed that I am cussing less too, and have taken to entrapment. They linger around corners as I am focused on a project and lost in my thoughts, waiting for me to slip up. "Shoot!" I'll say and they will run into the room chanting, "You said a cuss word! You said a cuss word!" "No I didn't, damn it! 'Shoot' isn't a cuss word, 'shit' is!" I tell them. "But 'damn' is!" they point out. I can't win for losing some days.

## Life, according to Keegan

Keegan will be five in January. He is usually good natured, easy going and rather pragmatic. For example, I am leaving in a few days for Reno for a two week visit. Hannah, who has just turned seven, was sobbing about it yesterday. "I don't want you to go! I am going to miss you so much! Please, just don't talk to me about it! I can't think about it!" High drama. Throughout it all, Keegan sat there playing with something, not a tear in his eye. I asked him about if he was sad and he told me, "I will be sad when you leave and might cry when you are gone, but you aren't gone yet." Such a smart kid.

A couple of months ago, we were driving in the country. A blue heron flew over a lake and I hit the breaks, yelling and pointing for them to look. Keegan saw it and Hannah didn't. She was crying because she missed it, telling Keegan it wasn't fair that he saw it and she didn't. He responded to her, "That's just the way life is sometimes, Hannah. I say life is good...at least it's good to me! That's because I play and I am happy!" Such simple wisdom from such a sweet little person.

He is my "Alex Keaton" because he hates standing out. He likes everything to be normal, even in private. When Keegan was littler, I could get dancing around maniacally in our living room with Hannah, and Keegan would run around trying to grab hold of me to make me stop. "Stop, stop! You're embarrassing me!" he'd cry. I'd point out we were in our own home alone, but it didn't matter. Sometimes I have to remind myself that "you're embarrassing me" weren't his first words. He tells me that in public when Hannah and I are getting silly and talking with funny accents or pretending we are birds flying, or some other bit of goofiness. Sure, he can do it, but he's a *kid* and I am a *grownup* and should act like one, apparently.

He did hold out on his long hair until recently. He used to have the most long, beautiful banana curls you ever did see! And, he loved his "cool" hair! However, everyone called him a girl. "Oh, your little girl has such beautiful hair!" or "You have such pretty little girls!" He'd whisper to me, "Tell them I'm a boy, Mama." It finally got to the point where he would whisper this when we got into a conversation with any stranger, even if they didn't call him a girl. I pointed out to him that he didn't really look like a girl but most boys don't have long hair so people assume he is a girl. He was adamant that he didn't want it cut still, because his hair was "cool". Last summer he agreed to have half of it cut off, but it didn't help. A few weeks ago, he asked me to cut it off very short, "like a boy." I did. It made me sad, but it's his hair. He loved it! "Don't you miss the long curls?" "Sure," he told me, "but I can grow it long again when I grow up like Papa. Then no one will think I'm a girl!"

## And who is this Jesus guy anyway?

The other night at dinner, Keegan was sitting there pinching the tops of his ears down to his lobes. He'd let go, take a bite, and grab the ear again to fold back down while he chewed. I asked him what he was doing. He said he was trying to make his ears very small. Of course, I asked him why. "I want to be an elf for Santa," he told me. Mark and I snickered and I asked, "Is that like being a soldier for Jesus?" Hannah jumped in, "What's a soldier for Jesus?" "Soldiers that kill people who don't believe in Jesus," her dad told her.

Matter of factly, she responded, "I don't believe in Jesus." I giggled, "Well, I guess they'll have to kill you!" She grinned briefly, and then went on, "Well, I believe in Jesus, but I don't love him." I wanted to know, "What do you believe about Jesus?" "Well, I believe he was nailed to something. Oh, yeah, and his mother was named Mary and his father was named, uh...uh...what was his father's name?" "Joseph...God..." I murmured. "Well," she continued, "once you told me he was nailed to the side of a building. Of course, he's dead. He got nailed to something! Is he Greece?" "You mean Greek? No, he's Israeli.

No! no!...I mean he's Jewish," I told her. The conversation sort of trailed off here. After a couple more bites she asked another question.

"Was Jesus a friend of Hercules?"

-Ma'cee Murray

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 my body and he  
 Breathes completely  
 through me  
 my windows open full  
 and empty  
 like leaves, and the wind  
 stands.  
 Day begins  
 blasted over the horizon  
 like a man choking on  
 his own tongue  
 is nailed to the words  
 he is used to  
 it.  
 Being dragged by him,  
 my ropey hair makes my neck warm in the wind  
 my clothes have holes.  
 Breathe  
 life into  
 onto  
 my skin  
 I can see through  
 the I  
 in all the small worlds  
 I can become, I have  
 more now than before.

--M. Kavaras Clark

Throw your ashes in the wind;  
 it doesn't matter anymore.  
 Your roots are dead,  
 your branches bare,  
 and you don't care for  
 anything anymore  
 but the drops of rain you're missing.  
 You can't even fall yourself  
 or break yourself up.  
 Blind thorns you bare on  
 coarse bark that never seems to burn  
 stab my presence,  
 and my dangling feet fell asleep.

--M. Kavaras Clark

Here I am  
 with my back to the wall  
 And here I am  
 with my face to her face  
 and her face to his hand.  
 Here I am  
 as I move toward the wall, and  
 his shove makes her fall.  
 Here I am with my hand  
 to her hand and her fist  
 at his feet  
 Here I am.

--M. Kavaras Clark

## Trip the Mirror Fantragic

I stumbled through chaos and nitemares  
 'till I came to a face from the past.  
 I felt ill at ease,  
 all my nerves in my knees,  
 as I stared at the girl in the glass.

I struggled with reason and logic  
 to deny that the person was me.  
 But the state of unrest,  
 that I've come to know best,  
 just wouldn't let me lie to me.

So I searched for the map to my spirit,  
 and I dug 'till my hands dripped with blood.  
 But I found only lies  
 in the depths of my eyes  
 and a dark, gaping hole in the mud.

Now I've prayed for parole from my sadness,  
 and I've screamed to the gods to be free.  
 But as hard as I've tried,  
 they were small, shallow cries,  
 that no one could hear except me.

Have you been to the path of forgiveness?  
 Is the sky still alight with my dreams?  
 Could you ever decide,  
 should you stay, should you hide?  
 Can it ever be all that it seems?

I awake with the solace of nothing.  
 I attempt to betray what I know.  
 And I live with the fear  
 that I'll always be here. . . .  
 that there's really no place left to go.

--Barbie Dockstader

## Strange Release

The Silent Stranger comes again  
 to steal inside my brain.  
 The havoc He creates within  
 dictates a well-known pain.

Memories stirring up like tea.  
 The leaves are left behind.  
 Emotions softly haunting me.  
 The voids increase with time.

The scent of tainted misery,  
 reminds me that I've grown;  
 girl to woman to girl again,  
 I bleed the hurt I've known.

I've grown up and away and gone.  
 My dreams a bitter taste.  
 I've given birth to tragic songs.  
 I haven't time to waste.

The Silent Stranger smiles at me.  
 I know I've found a home.  
 A love that will not die or fade.  
 I've given but not known.

Look to the sky and see me there.  
 I lie still in the clouds.  
 The Silent Stranger's smile above.  
 The nite my velvet shroud.

--Barbie Dockstader

## YOUR POEM HERE.

The Post Amerikan is seeking poetry  
 submissions for the Poetry Page.

If interested, please mail your poem  
 to: Post Amerikan, P.O. Box 3452,  
 Bloomington, IL 61702 or e-mail to  
 pamerikan@aol.com.

We have the right to  
 reject any poem.



## The Could've's

All the *Could've's* and *Should've's*  
engraved in my brain.  
While the *Want to's* and *Need to's*  
are sounding the same.

Have the *Have to's* all fled?  
Are the *Couldn't's* all dead?  
'Cause I want to and need to  
but *Nothing* was said.

Can I take a rip of magic time  
if I swallow all these pills?  
Can I sacrifice a troubled mind?  
Should a crippled soul be killed?  
Do you know the place where dreams are born?  
Can a scream be taken back?  
Can you paste together a life that's torn?  
Is Confusion red or black?

The *What if's* try to capture me.  
Will the *Wonders* never cease?  
As the *Want to's* try to se

Are the *Have to's* all void?  
Are the *Couldn't's* destroyed?

'Cause the *Maybe's* are something  
that I just can't avoid.

--Barbie Dockstader  
Written for Brad Steff

## Firefly Press releases books of poetry by local artists

Firefly Press has released three small, low-  
priced books of poetry by local artists John  
Virtue & Joy, John Firefly and Michael  
Pacholski.

Their goal is to "give readers a chance to  
sample [their] offering on a low-risk basis,  
without spending a lot of money or committing a  
lot of time."

Prices range from one dollar to three dollars.  
John Firefly's offering is an epic poem "The  
Butterfly Tattoo." The other two books contain  
six and nine poems.

The Press will soon release its first full-sized  
book, *Candleweed* by John Firefly. The  
special, pre-publication price will be \$6.50,  
post paid to P.O. Box 1801, Bloomington, IL,  
61702-1801.

## The Anonymous Girl At The Downtown Bar

she slugs down a handful  
of mickey lites  
topped off with  
black russians too numerous to count  
as she dances around, kissing all the bar boys  
on the ear  
later on in life she goes out and wrecks the ferrari  
wraps the car and splatters her skull around  
a street lamp in some anonymous mom and pop town  
like a crimson and chrome christmas ornament  
because that was exactly the sort of thing  
her mother would do  
but early this morning  
after closing time  
is different  
now is not her time  
and after all her flirting  
she flees, leaving everyone empty  
with just that much less of themselves  
to hang on to in the bathroom  
she races that purring li'l piece of machinery  
to a cliff overlooking a waterfall  
and white water rapids shining in the swiss cheese,  
moon  
the soil cool, wet and sloshy  
beneath her bare feet  
she looks to the clear and starry sky  
asks for something, as if in prayer  
an invocation or a trance  
and with a wordless whisper  
the wind seems to answer  
she takes out a pen  
removes her indian tooth necklace  
and with a kiss she blesses the paper  
and begins to write down  
all the thousand thoughts that have blossomed  
like blushing roses in the deep recesses  
of her skull  
about the boys at the bar  
who make her feel like a wispy  
ghost at all hours of the night  
cool, invisible, not even there  
and how the fingers of twilight  
are like a bridge to the sun going down  
she wishes she could ride alone  
tuck her red hair under her collar  
ride the ferrari like a chariot  
so it warps out of the sun  
into space

## A Three P.M. Sleep

When you kiss me,  
you pull me under  
the blanket of skin  
that hides your pain

Your face settles  
on the arches of my face  
like a fog out of the sea  
that falls on a salt flat

It lifts the poison  
out of my blood,  
it cleanses me like a sponge,  
it soothes me like a new hope

Between the leaves  
and the earth  
I sleep wrapped  
in a film of trust  
whether you sleep beside me  
or not.

--John Virtue & Joy

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# ROCK-N-ROLL

## DECEMBER

- 12-6 Bad Cat
- 12-8 Andrea's Birthday Jam
- 12-13 Heatorsons
- 12-19 Christmas party w/ Blues Therapy
- 12-20 3rd Sunday Market
- 12-27 TBA
- 12-31 New Years Eve
  - Spelunkers
  - Brother Jed
  - Home Slyce

## JANUARY

- 1-3 TBA
- 1-10 Sister Groove
- 1-17 Mighty Prankster
- 1-24 Heatorsons
- 1-31 3rd Sunday Market

612 N. Main St.  
Bloomington, IL 827-9580





# The world according to Matt

## You are what you eat

An old saying states that "you are what you eat". While these words are meant to remind people to watch their nutritional intake, if taken literally the imagery is quite humorous (police at a hog roast...). In more ancient times, however, this saying was taken literally, minus the mirth.

In those days, game was hunted in an honorable fashion, with thanks and respect given to the prey, for the tribal peoples of almost every walk believed that by partaking of the animal's flesh, a spiritual consumption was also taking place. Some cultures believed that through this process, some of the preys' attributes were assimilated into their own spiritual self. Unfortunately, there may be more truth here than the modern thinker is willing to admit to.

Looking around at society today, this belief becomes a glaring reminder of what we humans have, largely, become. You are what you eat. All over, on mega-farms and overcrowded ranches, meat is being bred, fattened, and slaughtered to make a few folks really rich. The people eating this meat are born in urban hospitals, go through endless societal indoctrination (culminating in education and TV...er...the internet-Beast-thing), generate money and spend money until they die and pass what's left on, all to make the 5% of us who are richest richer. Uh...

did someone speak of McDonald's?



## It's a date

We all know what Christmas is, outside of capitalism's grandest and gaudiest holiday, to the religious minority; the observance of the birth of Christ. The operative words here are "observance of", for there is no historical evidence linking the actual event to Dec. 25. Actually, the fact that this event is celebrated on this day is a record of the kind of ethnic cleansing practiced on European pagans by the Christians, whose holiday is still enforced by the Evil Empire.

Since times before records that escaped the Christian burnings were available, the Winter Solstice held special significance to pagans all over Europe. Oddly enough, in their theology, this shortest of days was the time in which the Sun God was reborn, for after the shortest day He begins to wax and grow, bringing hope in the darkest Season. While the Christians were violently imposing their ways on the Native Europeans, much in the same ways they would later violate the Native Americans, the date for Christmas, the birth of the Christian God, was put in place of the tribal holiday. And it has remained thus.

And Christmas has become capitalism's grandest and gaudiest holiday.

## No strings attached

'Tis the season, once again, of both the bitter Winter and merry holidays. This combination of potentially deadly temperatures and warmth of heart/Goodwill (heh,heh...) to man focuses our attention on charity, for those without seem all the worse off and those with really notice it. Charity isn't what it used to be, however, and the changes are for the worse.

I hate it when, approached by a street person, a well-to-do individual declines a contribution because of that all too familiar excuse, "It'll just be spent on booze." This is a horrible "rider bill" many of us are guilty of attaching to our sense of charity. When it comes down to it, a lot of these homeless people are elderly, physically and/or mentally impaired, or just so down on their luck that the mechanics of our economy won't grant them a swift recovery, or one at all, into the realms of those with. It sounds harsh, but look reality. If one of these folks wants to get bombed, if that would brighten up a desperate existence for an evening, then the charity has done good. Besides, if a person is faced with the choice of a meal or alcohol, or seizures or alcohol, basic instincts usually prevail, and the person on the giving end is not in a position to make assumptions about the needs of the individual.

Look at the alternative. You can give your charity to charities. In this way, you make sure that the funds are distributed in a "responsible" fashion. You also, in almost every case, end up supporting the religious proselytizing and, with charities operating on the international scene, our Evil Empire's economical/technologic totalitarianism. Chances are, you are also paying for all that damn advertising and the expenses of volunteers (not that these are always superfluous).

The attitude that is often displayed when refusing reasonable charity to a streetperson, the philosophies which underline most charity groups (whether the average "member" knows it or not), and the system to which large financial organizations must submit can all be avoided by giving directly to the needy. Don't concern yourself with what your gift will be used for, whatever the person does with it is what they needed at the moment. A person in need is a person in need, and in the world my generation is inheriting the sad fact is that some people can't be saved. That doesn't mean, however, that they don't deserve what little enjoyment the rest of us might toss them. Show some compassion, for crying out loud!

# Rape Crisis Center of McLean County

We're a non-profit volunteer group whose main purpose is to offer assistance and support to victims of sexual assault and their friends and families.

Female and male volunteers answer your calls and are available for crisis assistance, information and speaking engagements. You may request to speak only with female volunteers.

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Call PATH 827-4005  
and ask for the  
RAPE CRISIS CENTER

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