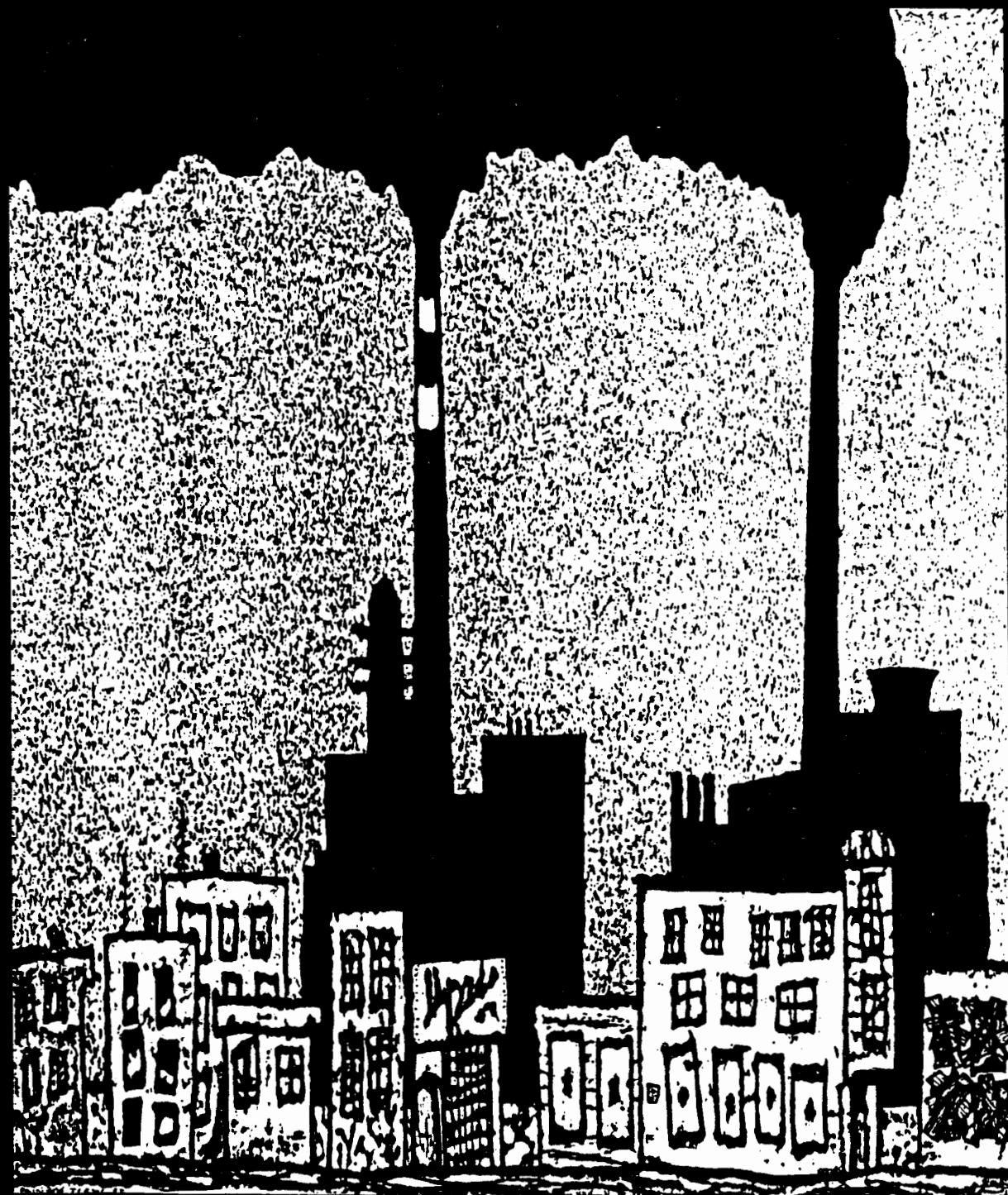


LOOK OUT!

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In The Shadow Of A Town Is Poisoned:

It's common enough in rural northern California. Some strangers show up, buy a piece of land, build some kind of structure, and go into business.

Nobody's sure exactly what their business is. There are rumors and suspicions, and new people in town with shiny cars and lots of money in their pockets.

There's talk that the strangers are running some sort of illegal lab up there in the hills. An increasing number of kids seem to be turning up with drug problems, and there are stories about gun-toting thugs roughing up anyone who gets too curious.

Still, the local economy is doing better than it has in years, and shopkeepers and businessmen are reluctant to wonder too much about the source of the new cash flowing into their tills.

People downstream notice that their water tastes a little funny, and there are unpleasant smells coming from that mysterious building. But money changes hands, a few threats get passed around, and they decide to keep their complaints to themselves.

Eventually, things get out of hand. A gun fight erupts, some kid overdoses, or maybe the lab blows up. The feds swoop down on the site and confirm what everyone suspected: that the strangers were producing vast quantities of amphetamine or some other less than desirable chemical. If they haven't gotten away, they're hauled off to jail, and the public is left footing the bill for cleaning up a dangerous toxic waste site.

That's the way it works when illegal business is involved, but what if the mysterious strangers are producing a commodity that's completely legal? And if the money generated is in quantities large enough to buy off or intimidate an entire town? And if when you call the police or the district attorney or the health or environmental protection authorities, they just shrug and say there's nothing they can do?

Then you'd be talking about Eureka, a town of 25,000 on the isolated north coast of California, which for the past 27 years has functioned as a labor pool and toxic dump for two out-of-state timber corporations. Ever since its founding in 1850, Eureka has been the center of the north coast logging and lumber milling industry, but in 1965, a new kind of mill came to town. Georgia-Pacific and Crown-Simpson both erected immense pulp producing facilities on the Samoa peninsula, a narrow sand spit that juts out into Humboldt Bay just across the water from central Eureka.

Various corporate acquisitions and divestitures have left the mills in the hands of Louisiana-Pacific and Simpson, but the product remains the same: a constant stream of air and water borne effluent that has turned the picturesque and historic town of Eureka into a foul-smelling, health-endangering sinkhole of pollution and corruption.

Eureka should be famous for its waterfront, for its wonderfully preserved Old Town, for its wealth of ornate Victorian architecture, for its spectacular setting between mountains and sea shore, but instead it evokes one image above all others: the towering clouds of noxious fumes that rise from twin sets of smokestacks, frequently blocking out the sun and turning the simple act of breathing into an unpleasant and dangerous chore.

Spectacular as they are, the toxic clouds that billow skyward twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year, represent only the tip of the iceberg. Even more damaging may be the 25 million gallons of untreated waste water dumped every day into the Pacific Ocean and which have virtually destroyed one of California's richest fisheries. Perhaps most frightening of all are the 1600 tons of

liquid chlorine stored on the Samoa peninsula, more than enough, should it ever escape, to kill every living thing in Eureka.

What newcomers to Eureka find both amazing and baffling is that local people put up with such wholesale abuse. While there have been movements aimed at either shutting down the mills or at least forcing them to comply with state and federal regulations on toxic discharges, none of them have gotten anywhere. Both mills have been in violation of the law since the day they opened, and aside from a few token fines, nothing has ever happened to them. For years the Humboldt County Air Pollution Control District logged an average of 50 to 100 complaints every month about the odors emanating from the pulp mills. Again nothing happened, except for vague promises that there would be further "testing for pulp mill odors." Testing? As more than one aggrieved resident put it, "Have they ever heard of noses?"

All but the hopelessly naive have given up hope that local government will ever move against the mills for the simple reason that local government is a wholly owned subsidiary of pulp-producing corporate interests. So, too, is nearby Humboldt State University, whose forestry, business, and economics departments have been especially willing, in exchange for cold hard cash, to produce "studies" giving the pulp industry a glowingly clean bill of health.

One of the most egregious of these was the ingenuously titled "Contributions of the Pulp Industry to Humboldt County" by Professor John Grobey, in which he cites the amount of wages paid by L-P and Simpson, and the ripple effect of those wages on other local businesses as sufficient justification for permitting the mills to go on with their dirty business.

Because a significant number of people are benefitting financially from the mills, he contends, the rest of the citizenry should be willing, even happy, to allow their environmental degradation and destruction to continue. But is Eureka really getting a good bargain out of this? Let's look a little more closely.

One of Grobey's arguments in favor of the pulp mills is that their wages are far higher than those offered by any other local industries. This is true; some pulp mill workers earn in excess of \$50,000, extraordinarily good pay for relatively unskilled manufacturing work. But it's worth noting that the pulp mills have never employed more than 1300 workers between them. That may sound like a lot in a town of 25,000, but bear in mind that only about half of them live in Eureka. So what you've got is a situation where the entire population of a city is expected to endure systematic poisoning so that about 700 people can earn an above-average wage.

Using the same logic, we should welcome methamphetamine labs into our midst because they produce a great deal of wealth, wealth which could be expected to trickle down to other local businesses and workers. But we don't, because we as a society have determined that the damage done by such enterprises outweighs the benefits they produce. Any dispassionate study of the pulp mills, i.e., one not funded by the pulp mills, should reach a similar conclusion.

The fact is that while the pulp industry has generated a great deal of wealth in Humboldt County, the preponderance of it has immediately left Humboldt County. Neither or he pulp-producing corporations is locally owned. Furthermore, the prosperity enjoyed by a relatively small number of pulp mill workers has not spread itself around very well; Humboldt County as a whole has a standard of living considerably below the national average.

Why this might be so becomes clear when we examine what

The Pulp Mills

Who Profits and Who Pays?

Humboldt County has given up in exchange for the largely illusory prosperity of the pulp industry. Clean air and clean water are themselves resources upon which no exact price can be put, but we know from experience that their absence devalues every aspect of life in a community, not just esthetically, but materially as well. As one EPA study put it:

Noxious odors can ruin personal and community pride, interfere with human relations, discourage capital improvements, lower socio-economic status, and damage a community's reputation. Economically, they can stifle growth and development of a community. Both industry and labor prefer to locate in a desirable area...

Tourists also shun such areas. The resulting decline in property values, tax revenues, payrolls, and sales can be disastrous to a community.

Although this particular study was not made in Eureka, I have seldom seen a better analysis of what has happened to that town. One need only look at the shoddy, tasteless sprawl of recent development for examples of ruined personal and community pride. Eureka's foul-smelling air and its legendarily corrupt politics have lowered its socio-economic reputation to the point where it is the butt of jokes up and down the north coast. Real estate prices are among the lowest of any urban area in the state. The crime rate is double that of an average city of 25,000. It remains largely a one-industry town because other businesses find it an undesirable environment in which to relocate. And tourists do indeed shun Eureka; area motels may be full on summer weekends, but most of their occupants are merely passing through.

And what of the natural wealth which is being stripped from Humboldt County to feed the pulp behemoth? The forests which have attracted visitors from around the world are rapidly disappearing. Although a wide variety of fish still swim in Humboldt Bay and off the Pacific Coast, the state of California has advised against eating them because of the likelihood that their flesh will contain deadly dioxins. Consider a 1973 University of California study which warned that a 50% drop in fishery production would cost the county upwards of \$12.5 million and over 1,000 jobs. Fishery production has since dropped by far more than 50%.

The damage being done by the pulp mills will long outlive the mills themselves. No one believes the mills will be around forever, least of all L-P and Simpson. At present they are merely trying to postpone their demise and extract as much more wealth as possible from Humboldt County before they are closed down, either by state or federal regulators or by shifting economic conditions.

In any case, the taxpayers of Humboldt County will almost certainly be stuck with the bill for cleaning up the mess that will be left behind, just as they have been forced to pay for the infrastructure that has made the mills' operations possible. A classic example is the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District, which was set up to provide the mills with the 22 million gallons per day of fresh water they consume. It was touted as a great deal for Eureka, but it ended up costing household water customers \$700,000 a year to subsidize bargain rate water for L-P and Simpson. The roads, the sewer lines,

the electric wiring required by new industrial development are largely subsidized by taxpayers as well. Take, for example, the notorious Professor Grobey's 1973 recommendation that Humboldt County spend \$39,000,000 (nearly \$100,000,000 in today's dollars) to improve local roads for the benefit of timber haulers.

In sum, Eureka and Humboldt County residents are not only being poisoned, they are being asked, or more accurately, told to pay for the privilege. The fact that Humboldt County suffers a cancer rate 27% higher than California as a whole and 16% above the national rate is not merely a depressing statistic, it also represents an enormous expense that must be met by insurance customers and taxpayers, even though there is little doubt of the source of those excess cancer cases. When it comes to specific respiratory ailments, the figures are even grimmer: California Health Services report that deaths from asthma, emphysema, and lung cancer are all about 60% above normal.

Whether we speak of the most visible forms of pollution like the dark cloud that hovers perpetually over Eureka, or the more subtle forms of

moral and intellectual pollution unleashed by the likes of Professor Grobey, the net result is a community perishing from chronic strangulation. At its heart Eureka is a jewel of a city, yet its quality of life has been so badly debased that even most Eurekans will laugh at you for saying so. Someday, when the mills are gone and their toxic wastes disposed of, when the ocean and the forests have begun to recover, when once again the people of northern Humboldt County can breathe clean air and drink pure water, Eureka could become one of California's most beautiful cities, a place where tourists will flock to and people count themselves lucky to live.

But that day may still be a long way off. The latest and most hopeful development was a successful lawsuit by the Surfriders Foundation, which had its origins when surfers (the coast north of Eureka boasts some of the best waves in northern California) complained that water near the mills was doing strange and unpleasant things to their skin. The suit charged the mills with "flagrant violations" in six different categories of water pollution that were "fatal to many ocean organisms and both hazardous and repulsive to local beach goers."

L-P and Simpson agreed to settle the suit and to bring themselves into compliance with the law, and the Surfriders declared victory. More experienced locals took a wait-and-see attitude which was vindicated when, only months later, Simpson announced that it was now exempt from the decree because its effluent in the past twelve months was "the cleanest in the company's history," despite the fact that it still exceeded legal levels on 200 days of the year.

Said Surfriders attorney Mark Masson, who had successfully prosecuted the lawsuit: "We are flabbergasted. I don't know what to do with these guys."

Welcome to the club.

Satan Lives at the End of My Street

My house is on Hawthorn Street, which is on what I guess most people would call the wrong side of Eureka. It's not a bad neighborhood, though. Sometimes I think that the only thing missing is the white picket fences and it would be the total all-American fantasyland. Like in those movies from the 1930s, where the kids have freckles and cowlicks and say things like "Golly!"

There's no kids like that around here, though. I hardly see any kids at all, except when they're coming home from school. They don't play outside. Nobody spends much time outside, except when they're loading up their cars to go someplace.

Which is strange, because this part of town is pretty interesting. I spend a lot of time just walking around looking at the houses. Some of them must be a hundred years old. Maybe after a while you get used to it, but to me it's like living in a giant outdoor museum. I've never walked home from downtown without seeing at least one or two things I never noticed before.

I make that walk almost every day. It's about a mile, I guess. I could get off the bus a lot closer, but for some reason I like to walk around downtown. Especially Old Town, which is probably the weirdest place I've ever seen in my life. If you've ever been to Disneyland, you know how they have this fake Main Street that's supposed to represent a typical American small town from the last century or something. That's what Old Town is like, except that it's almost deserted. Yeah, in the middle of the day you'll see a sprinkling of wannabe yuppies and artsy-fartsy types, but early in the morning or as soon as it starts to get dark, there's no one there except for some winos and once in a while some really scary-looking people. I don't usually go there at night. My favorite time is Sunday morning. Especially if it's all cloudy and gloomy, which you can count on it being about 300 mornings a year in Eureka.

Most people don't like that, especially where I come from. Even though it's only about 70 miles away, the weather is totally different there. Like in summer it's constantly sunny and hot, and in winter it's a lot colder and it even snows sometimes. Here in Eureka it's almost always the same, no matter what time of year it is. There's this time and temperature sign on the Humboldt Bank on 5th Street, and for the first three months I lived here I thought it was broken, because it always read 54°. In fact that's what it said today, even though it's the first week of June. I just talked to my mother on the phone, and she said it was 89° at our house.

Weird how I still call it our house, even though it's been almost a year since I lived there. Well, it'll be a year in August. That's when I came here to go to school at College of the Redwoods. College of the Retards, some people call it, but it's not that bad. It's not much different from high school. Actually, it seems easier, but that might be because I don't have my parents hanging over me asking me if I did my homework. They're way into the intellectual thing, like my father's got a master's degree and my mother has a Ph.D. I think they're disappointed I'm only going to junior college, but they're all liberal and open-minded, so they make a big deal of how it's okay whatever I do as long as I'm happy.

Sometimes I wonder, though, how they could tell if anyone was happy. They're about the most serious people I've ever known. I mean, they smile sometimes, but it's usually because somebody said something clever on NPR, or when my little sister asks a question like

why it doesn't snow in the summertime. The only time I've ever seen them laugh is when they're watching TV, and they almost never watch TV.

I was never allowed to watch it either, which made me feel pretty dumb when all the other kids would talk about their favorite shows, but after a while I figured out that most of the shows were so simple you didn't even have to watch them to be able to talk about them. Now I could watch television almost all the time if I wanted to, but I never do. The people I live with pretty much spend their lives in front of it.

I don't know why I decided to move in here. Well, actually, I moved in here because it was the first place I found, and I wanted to get away from home. But what I really don't understand is why I decided to stay. My parents totally wanted me to move out when they found out that Mr. and Mrs. Olafsen were Christians, I guess I was kind of curious to see what Christians were like, because I never knew any when I was growing up.

But as far as I can tell, they just go to work and come home and watch TV, and eat really awful, smelly things like meat loaf and fried fish sticks. They go to church twice on Sunday, in the morning and again at night, and they hit their kids a lot, but I'd hit them if they were my kids, too. They're like the total mutant bastard offspring.

Toby, who's 11, is this horrible fat kid with freckles, and all he ever does is watch cartoons and complain because his mother isn't bringing him his after-school snack (more than I would eat in a whole day) fast enough. And Audrey is even scarier. She's only 7, but she already weighs as much as her big brother. She has this really ugly family of dolls she plays with, only she's always yelling at them and hitting them, like they were real kids. Toby and Audrey both hate me, which is fine with me. I'd worry if they liked me.

Mr. and Mrs. Olafsen aren't fat like their kids, just flabby, the way most adults are. They look about as intelligent as a couple of potatoes sitting on a counter top waiting to get diced into french fries. But they seem pretty normal for Eureka. Once I went shopping with them at Waremart, which was about as close to a nightmare as I've ever come while I was awake. They filled up three baskets, and Toby and Audrey were still complaining that they weren't buying anything good, and meanwhile I was realizing that there's this whole race of Eureka people who are essentially brain dead. Every aisle we went down, there'd be half a dozen people who looked just like Mr. and Mrs. Olafsen, and they'd all know each other, and they'd all have something stupid and pointless to say to each other, and none of it would matter, but no one cared. They just kept pushing their shopping carts and filling them with worthless junk and not really smiling, but looking sort of vaguely content, the way I imagine a truckload of pigs do when then they think they're on their way to get fed but are really being led into the slaughterhouse.

I hope that doesn't sound too negative or critical. My parents tell me I never have a good word to say about anyone or anything, but I wonder where they think I learned to be like that. Anyway, I guess I don't totally hate the Olafsons, or I wouldn't have kept renting a room here after I found out what they were like. Either that, or I'm just too lazy to look for another place. But in a way, watching them is like watching some really bad TV show that you know is bad, but it sucks you in anyway because you don't have to use your brain at all, you can just sit there and stare, and tell yourself how lucky you are that you're

not like that. Even though the longer you watch it, the more you become like what you're watching.

People watch TV, or take drugs, or have sex or whatever to escape, I figure. And what am I trying to escape from? I don't like to admit it, but I've been lonely all my life, or at least as far back as I can remember. Until I was 11, it was just me and my parents, and we did home schooling, so I didn't see very many other kids. Then my sister was born, and I guess they decided it was too much trouble to have both of us around all the time, so they started sending me to school in town. Oh, I should explain that where I grew up is in southern Humboldt County, which is kind of the place where all the hippies went after the yuppies took over the Haight-Ashbury.

Yeah, yeah, I know it didn't really happen exactly like that, but I like to say it anyway, because my father gets all mad and starts trying to explain what really happened to the hippies. Old hippies are always trying to explain that, but what they're really trying to explain is what happened to them. It's like they can't seem to figure out how one minute they were standing around in Golden Gate Park with flowers in their hair and the next thing they know they've got grey hair and jobs and kids who don't understand or appreciate them. In a way it makes me glad that I don't have any big social movements to identify with.

In my own case, though, I do appreciate my parents, and I think I even understand them, though I'm sure they wouldn't agree. Like they were worried when I got my hair cut real short last summer. According to them I was doing it to reject their values (my dad hasn't cut his hair in about twenty years; he's got this long grey ponytail that almost reaches his waist) and establish my own identity. But really, the only reason I did it was because it was too hot to have long hair back in southern Humboldt. I told them that a hundred times, but they kept trying to read some deeper meaning into it.

So why did I keep my hair short after I moved here, where it's almost always cold? Well, it's nothing about my parents, but I just don't feel like getting identified as a hippie. Like at CR, if you've got long hair, the other kids are always asking you if you've got any dope, or if you want to smoke some of theirs. Personally, I liked having long hair, I liked the way it looked and the way it felt flopping around on top of my head. But it seems these days that you can't say or do or wear anything without everyone using it to lump you into some category or clique.

So I try to look as ordinary as possible. Short (but not too short) hair, no bright colors or tie-dyes, definitely no reggae T-shirts, not that I ever liked reggae anyway, which made me sort of an outcast in southern Humboldt. Most people don't pay any attention to me around here, except once in a while rednecks in 4x4 trucks yell "Fag" if I'm walking on 4th or 5th Street at night, but I think they do that to everyone.

School's been out for a couple weeks now, and I still have another 17 days before classes start again. My parents wanted me to come back down to the mountains for the summer, but I wouldn't even think about it. I said I'd get a job at Denny's or Taco Bell if I had to, but one way or the other I was staying here. They thought I was crazy; most people in southern Humboldt think Eureka is only slightly better than hell itself. "Wouldn't you at least rather live in Arcata?" they said. Arcata is a college town about six miles from here, where all the students have long hair and throw frisbees around, and the men have beards and thick glasses and drink cappuccino, and the women are like my mother, with about three times as much education as they ever get a chance to use.

It's kind of a citified version of where I grew up, which of course is exactly why I don't want to live there. You might think I hate my parents, or at least their way of life, but that's not it at all. In fact, a kid couldn't ask for a better family, and even if it was kind of lonely on the mountain, that was more because I chose not to spend a lot of time hanging out with the other kids. If anything, my life back there was too perfect — no, that's not it, it's more like it wasn't my life at

all. Everything was arranged for me, and all I had to do was enjoy it, make the most of it. That's okay for a while, I guess, but I want to make some kind of life for myself, even if it's kind of a mess compared to what my parents provided for me.

So you probably think I'm a hypocrite for letting my parents support me. Not exactly a life of your own if someone else is paying the bills, is it? Yeah, I guess I could get a job, but I'd get paid so little that I'd spend all my time working just to pay for rent and food. That's not much of a life either. Besides, my parents have plenty of money, and as long as I get good grades, they're happy. So I guess for now, going to school is my job. Which means I'm on vacation now, so I should be doing something special to celebrate.

But I don't know what that might be. So far all I've done is walk around a lot more than usual. Today I went to the theater on F Street and saw some really stupid Arnold Schwarzenegger movie. I left before it was over because I got tired of seeing him beat people up and kill them, and I didn't even get half a block from the theater before some lunkhead who's probably been raised on a steady diet of movies like that tried to start a fight with me.

It was unbelievable, really. I was standing there waiting to cross the street when someone shoved me. He was wearing a Eureka Lumberjacks (I think that's the high school football team) shirt, and he was about twice, or maybe three times as big as me. I asked him why he pushed me, and he started accusing me of being the guy who tried to pick up his girlfriend at some party last weekend. I told him I'd never been to any parties in Eureka, and he yelled that I was a liar and why didn't I have the guts to fight like a man. All the time he kept pushing me, and I was looking around wondering if I should run or what. A few people stopped to watch, but nobody did anything.

It seemed like he was just about ready to hit me when a police car came around the corner. The cops slowed down and were looking at us, and I tried to look back as if to say, "Help," but they just sat there staring. The guy who was trying to start a fight suddenly walked away, saying, "You're lucky this time, but you'd better watch your ass. I'll be around, and I'll catch up with you one of these days."

"He's really a dork, isn't he?" I didn't know who was talking to me, but when I turned around I saw that it was one of the people who'd been watching. He was a kid, maybe my age, or a couple years younger. He was small, anyway, about three inches shorter than me, and real skinny. His hair was super short, or at least the sides were; he had on one of those stocking caps, the kind sailors wear. I noticed he had a couple of earrings, too.

Basically, he looked kind of weird, not dangerous weird, but weird enough that normally I would have been too nervous to talk to him. But I guess I was so relieved at not getting beaten up that I forgot my usual shyness, and I smiled at him.

"He went to my high school. He was always picking on me," the boy said.

"What happened?" I asked. "Did he graduate, or just get tired of bothering you?"

"No, I graduated. Well, at least I passed the equivalency test. I was really tired of high school. I was supposed to go to CR, but I didn't feel like it."

"So what do you do now?"

"Mostly walk around Eureka, and write stories, and drink coffee."

"That's what I do too, except for the part about coffee."

"You don't drink coffee? How come?"

"Just never got in the habit, I guess. Besides, it didn't seem like it would taste very good."

His eyes got all wide. "Coffee not taste good? Coffee tastes total good. Why don't you come and have some with me?"

I almost always say no when someone invites me to do something, just a habit, I guess, but I don't know, I guess I felt like doing something different, so I said okay. He took me to a place called the Gourmet Gallery in Old Town, and when I started to get some money out, he said, "Wait, I know the girls here, they'll probably give us

coffee for free."

He knew them all right, but it seemed like they were used to him asking for free coffee, because they argued about it for a long time, until I offered to pay for both of us. "Are you sure you can afford it?" he asked.

"Yeah, my parents support me," I said. Some kids might be ashamed to admit that, but I don't mind.

"I guess mine do, too, but they don't give me any money."

"Why don't you get a job?"

"That's what they say. But it's not that easy. For one thing, I like to stay up at night and sleep in the day, and most jobs want you to come in and apply in the mornings."

"Yeah, that could be a problem, I guess."

"And besides, I don't want to work at some fast food place. I think I'd get sick from the smell of all that greasy meat, and if I didn't get sick from that, I'd for sure get sick from the sight of all those fat, greasy customers."

"What kind of job would you like to have, then?"

"I'd really like to work in a book store. But I don't know if you've noticed; there aren't very many book stores in Eureka. Probably one for each person that knows how to read, which adds up to maybe two or three."

"Well, I read, and I guess you do, so that's two already."

"Right, and if we keep looking, we might find one more."

"Don't you like Eureka?"

"I think I do. I've hardly been anywhere else. I know I complain about the people here a lot, but I figure they don't know any better. Besides, they've probably all got brain damage from breathing pulp mill air and drinking pulp mill water."

At last, I thought. Someone besides myself who thought about the pulp mills. The mills are the biggest and most noticeable thing about Eureka, yet most of the people act like they're not really there. My first day living here, I noticed this really awful smell, like dead rats being barbecued in a pit of sulfur. I mentioned it to Mr. and Mrs. Olafsen, and they looked at me like I was crazy.

"Smells all right to me," Mr. Olafsen said. "He probably means the pulp mills, dear," said Mrs. Olafsen. "Oh, that," he grunted. "I never even notice it. I don't know why that would bother anyone." "He didn't say it bothered him, dear, he was just curious about what it was."

Well, it did bother me, in fact it was almost enough to make me sick, but I didn't say so, because I got the impression from Mr. Olafsen that it was almost unpatriotic to complain about the pulp mills. Mrs. Olafsen later told me that there were some hippies and environmentalists trying to stir up trouble about the mills being unhealthy, and that really irritated Mr. Olafsen. "It's probably best not to talk about it to him," she said.

But it wasn't just him. One day when it was hard to breathe, and the plumes of smoke from the mills were blocking out so much of the sun that it seemed all grey and overcast even though there wasn't a cloud in the sky, I mentioned to the guy at the corner grocery store that the pollution was really bad today. He looked at me as if I'd just said all the meat in his display case was rotten, his prices were too high, and

his wife had bad breath and acne.

"Whaddaya mean? A little bit of smoke too much for you? There's a lot of guys' jobs depend on that smoke. We wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for that smoke."

I tried to explain that I wasn't out to destroy anybody's jobs or his business, all I was saying was that the smoke was really thick that day, and maybe it would be nice if they'd fix the mills so that they didn't pollute so much.

"Yeah, and whose jobs are you gonna get rid of to pay for it? Are you gonna be the one who goes and tells their wives and kids they can't earn a living no more just 'cause the air don't smell sweet enough to suit some prissy environmentalist?"

I wanted to tell him that I wasn't a prissy environmentalist, that I'd just been trying to make conversation, but I got the feeling he wasn't in the mood to be friendly. A lot of my conversations end like that, which might explain why I'm so shy.

Another time I mentioned the pulp mills in my Environmental Science class at CR. The teacher asked us to name potential sources of air and water pollution, and the kids were suggesting all sorts of things, half of which don't even exist in Humboldt County, but not one person said the pulp mills. So I finally raised my hand, and the teacher just nodded

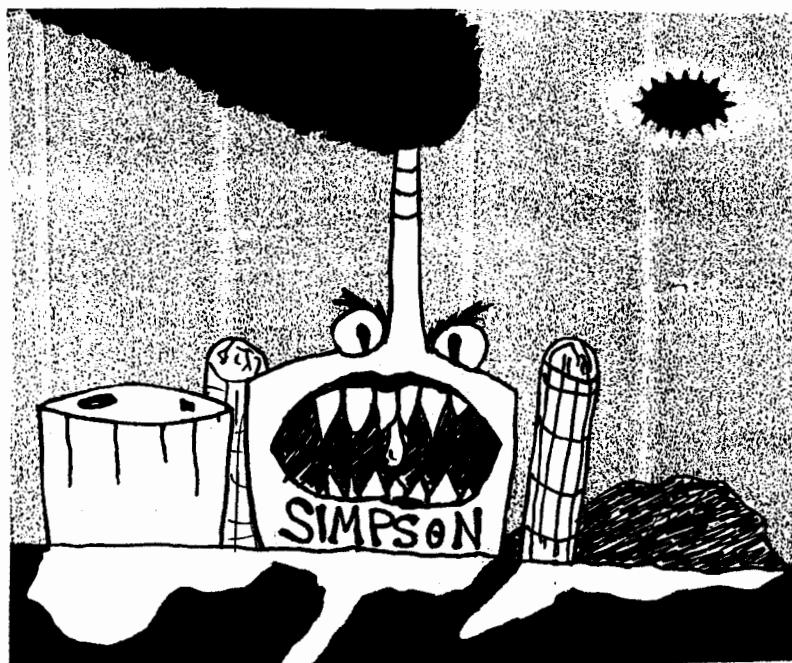
and said, "Yes, there are those who contend that the pulp mills produce unacceptable levels of pollution," and then he moved on to the next subject.

After class, some kid cornered me and said, "Hey, you know my dad works at the mill, and he makes an honest living at it. You're not even from Eureka, are you? Maybe you should keep your mouth shut about things you don't know anything about."

I decided it was best to keep quiet, and after a while you do get used to the smell. In fact the last time I went down to southern Humboldt for a visit, I almost missed it. When I got back, it wasn't till I smelled that familiar stink that I felt like I was really in Eureka again.

Not that I've learned to like it. It still makes me a little sick on bad days. I guess every city has some bad things about it. But I started thinking a lot about the pulp mills. It's almost like they became this living thing. I see one of them every morning, as soon as I step out of my door. It's right down at the end of my street, well, not really, it just looks that way, as if my street was a conveyor belt that feeds right into this monstrous boiler that everything gets sucked into and vaporized into sick-smelling smoke that comes pouring out the top. Once I even felt like the street was pulling me along, and I had to turn around real quick and go the other way, because it was too scary to even look at the mill.

I told that story to my friend, and he nodded. "I have bad dreams about it. Once when I was little, I dreamed that the mill was this creature that could walk, and it came right up my hill to my house and



it was going to eat me, and every time it opened its mouth, it was full of flames, and it had eyes, and they were full of flames, too."

"Wow. I was starting to think I was the only one that it bothered."

"No, I think it bothers a lot of people, but no one will say anything about it because it's supposed to be good for jobs."

"Is it?"

"I guess. My dad works there. He thinks it's great. He wants me to work there too."

"Really? How much does it pay?"

"Way more than anything else around here. But I don't think it's worth it. My dad'll probably be dead by the time he's 45. Or he might as well be, anyway."

"Yeah, I know a lot of people like that. Or at least that's what it seems like to me. I feel kind of bad thinking that about someone, though. It's like you're saying their whole life isn't worthwhile when there might be all sorts of things going on inside their head that you don't even know about. But I guess you know your dad pretty well. What's he like?"

"I don't know anything about him except that he must be insane. Or else he had a lobotomy or something. He's like a robot. All he does is go to the mill, and come home and watch television and drink. Oh yeah, his one big night out a week, he goes bowling with the same slugs from the mill that he works with everyday. I mean, all that's bad enough, but the scary thing is that he doesn't seem to care. He acts like people are supposed to live that way."

"I think most people do live that way. At least that's what I hear. My parents don't. Almost no one where I grew up does."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, almost none of them have regular jobs. A lot of them grow dope, or have businesses that they run out of their own homes. Like my parents, they translate books for some publishing company in Europe. It's all done through the mail. Sometimes my dad doesn't go into town for a month or two at a time. He doesn't like crowds, and to him a crowd is like anything bigger than our family."

"Did your parents ever grow dope?"

"Sure, when we first came to the mountains, before I was born. Actually, they were pretty much full time dope growers until about 1975. That's when they got hooked up with that translating deal. Then they supposedly quit growing because they didn't want to set a bad example for me."

"Supposedly?"

"Yeah, well my dad denies it, but I know he still grows a few plants for himself. I found them, and then I watched him sneaking up there to take care of them. We had a big argument, and he accused me of spying on him and not treating him with respect, so I decided it was easier to go along with him and pretend it wasn't happening. Not that I care whether he grows dope anyway. I hardly ever smoke it myself."

"I never do. It makes things too weird."

About this time the cafe was closing, and as we got up to leave I realized that the coffee was having an effect on me. I felt all edgy, like I wanted to go somewhere new, or do something I'd never thought of doing before.

At the same time, it was getting late, and normally I would have started home by now. I automatically began to say goodbye to my friend, which is when I realized that I'd been talking to him for over four hours and I didn't even know his name.

I asked him, but it seemed like he didn't hear me. Instead he asked, "Do you want to go down by the bay?"

I'd walked along a little bit of the waterfront before, but only in the daytime. It was almost totally dark now, but I guessed nothing too bad could happen as long as there were two of us. First we walked out onto this little dock at the end of F Street and sat there for a little while listening to the waves splash against the wood. You could hear voices, too, from somewhere across the water. The moon came up. It was just past full, and everything seemed very bright.

Then we started walking along the edge of the water, except

where there were buildings in the way. I'd heard a lot of homeless people lived under the docks and in the abandoned buildings on the waterfront, and I saw some of them. At first they made me nervous, but most of them scuttled away when they saw us coming, the way crabs do.

We walked almost all night, going really slow, stopping to look at everything. Sometimes we'd both stop at the same instant, for no reason at all, and stand there for the longest time looking at... well, looking at nothing, except that night even nothing seemed like the most important thing in the world. It was weird; I never felt like that before, never felt so comfortable with someone that I didn't have to say anything, never felt like someone knew what I was thinking and feeling almost before even I knew it.

I know I might be giving the wrong impression; the way I'm talking, it sounds like I'm writing some kind of love story, but that's not how it was at all. Yeah, it was romantic, but not that kind of romantic, more the kind of romantic you think of when you go off to explore distant planets or figure out the secret of time travel. It's like our bodies weren't even there. Once I turned and looked at him, all lit up and sort of eerily glowing in the moonlight, with his face hardly showing at all except for that strange little smile he wears sometimes, and I swore I could look right through him as if he were no more than a transparent sheet waving in the breeze in front of the buildings of downtown Eureka.

By the time it started getting light we were down at the end of Del Norte Street, and he took me out to the end of this pier. We sat there for an hour or maybe even two, until the sun was well up in the sky. It might sound peaceful, but it wasn't, because just a few hundred feet from the end of the pier was the pulp mill, and it made a terrible racket that never stopped the whole time we were there. It was a constant roaring that made me imagine some giant beast that fed on human flesh and would only stay in its dungeon as long as it received an uninterrupted supply of food.

Sam - somewhere along the line he'd finally told me his name - seemed to hear me thinking. He looked over at the mill, then back at me. "Satan lives over there," he said. He was dead serious. Me, I wasn't raised to think too much about God or Satan, but I very nearly believed him.

Right after that the wind changed direction, and the giant cloud of smoke that came pouring out of the mill started drifting toward us. I'd never been this close to the mill before, and pretty soon the smell was unbearable. Even still, I didn't want to leave, but Sam stood up and said, "I have to look for a job today."

"You mean you're not even going to go to sleep at all?" I asked. "Won't you be too tired to go looking for jobs?"

"Sleeping's boring," he grinned. "And I'm always too tired to look for a job. But if I don't get one, they're going to kick me out of the house."

I started to say that he could come stay at my house, but something stopped me. For one thing, I hardly knew anything about him, and besides that, I didn't think it would go over too big with Mr. and Mrs. Olafsen. Instead I said that maybe when he got a job, he and I could get a place together, that I was getting sick of the place where I was living. I was, too, though I hadn't realized it until that instant.

Sam smiled. "That would be cool." Then without saying anything else, he walked away. I was too surprised to say anything, to call him back and ask him where he lived or when I might see him again. I stood there feeling like a total imbecile, probably with my mouth hanging wide open. From the other end of the pier, Sam turned around and waved. I tried to motion to him to wait for me, but for some reason all I could do was to give a kind of half wave in return. He walked up the street toward town and didn't look back again.

I went home and slept all day. It must have been seven o'clock in the evening before I felt like getting up. In the next room I could hear the television banging away with some kind of shoot-em-up, I couldn't tell if it was cops and robbers, or cowboys or what. Toby and

Audrey were squalling at each other at the top of their lungs, and Mrs. Olafsen was yelling at them to shut up. I wanted to go outside, but I didn't want to have to walk through the living room to get there, so I did a strange thing: I took the screen off my window and climbed out into the yard and left that way. It was the first time that I ever remembered sneaking out of a house, and it was fun, even if I was only playing some sort of game with myself.

I didn't know where, but I knew I had to go someplace. I started walking down B Street. I wasn't paying much attention to where I was. Some kids yelled at me, and even made out like they were going to chase me, but I didn't pay any attention to them and they drifted away. The fog had come in, very thick and low, and it made it seem a lot later than it was.

It was getting dark by the time I got to Old Town, and everything was closed except for a couple bars. I realized that I was hoping I'd see Sam, but I didn't have any idea where to look, so I just wandered around the streets. Some guy asked if I could spare some change, so I gave him everything I had in my pocket. It was more than a dollar, and he was so surprised that he forgot to say thanks.

I even walked up and down some of the alleys in Old Town. They didn't seem so scary anymore, just mysterious and spooky, but in a nice kind of way. After a while I went down by the water, but there was no one around there either, except for a couple of guys drinking. They didn't pay any attention to me, and eventually I walked home.

II

I went looking for Sam every day that week, but I didn't see him again until Friday. He was coming out of the Gourmet Gallery as I walked up F Street. He didn't act surprised, he just smiled and said hi, as if we ran into each other everyday.

"What happened to you?" I asked. "I never saw you again."

"Nothing happened to me," he said. "Oh, except I met this girl and she invited me to come to her house in Arcata. She said she was an artist and she wanted me to be her model. So I stayed there for a while, because things aren't too great at my house right now. But she wasn't a very good artist. I think she wanted to have sex with me."

"You think?"

"Well, after a while I was pretty sure, but then I left, because I felt weird. It seemed like sex made her feel sad."

I'm not that comfortable talking about sex, so I asked him what the problem was at home.

"The same old thing," he said. "They want me to get a job or to get out of the house. My father doesn't understand why I won't go work at the pulp mill with him."

"What does your mother say?"

"She understands why I don't want to work at the pulp mill, but she says that if I can't get a job anywhere else, then I should take what I can get."

"What are you going to do?"

"Find a job, I guess. I don't know, nobody wants to hire me. I think they think I'm weird, maybe because I have earrings and stuff."

I hadn't thought that much about it, but it was true. Sam wasn't the kind of person you expected to see when you went into your typical business. I wondered what he could do.

"Look what I made," he said. He dug into his back pack and fished out a stack of pages.

"What is it?"

"It's the first issue of my magazine. I'm going to print it now. Want to come?"

I looked at his magazine as we walked. It wasn't like any magazine I'd ever seen. It all looked really handmade. Everything was written out, and most of the pages were decorated with pen and ink pictures. One part of me wanted to say that it looked like something a kid in elementary school would do; another part realized that simple it was, I could never do anything like it.

A lot of the drawings were of the pulp mills, and there was one really funny one where the plume of smoke over the mills turned into this monster with big fangs and it was chasing little kids down the street. I know that doesn't sound funny now, but it was.

Then I turned another page and suddenly saw a picture of myself sitting with Sam on the end of the pier. It didn't look that much like me at first, but I knew right away who it was supposed to be. I was flattered. I'd never been in a magazine before.

"What are you doing this magazine for?" I asked.

"Just to do it. And maybe so people can find out who I am."

"I usually try to keep that secret."

"I used to, too, but I found out people are afraid of what they don't know, and I don't like people being afraid of me."

"You're like Casper," I laughed.

"Casper who?" he asked.

"Casper the friendly ghost. You know, in the comics. He's really nice, but everyone's afraid of him because he's a ghost."

"Yeah, I feel like that a lot."

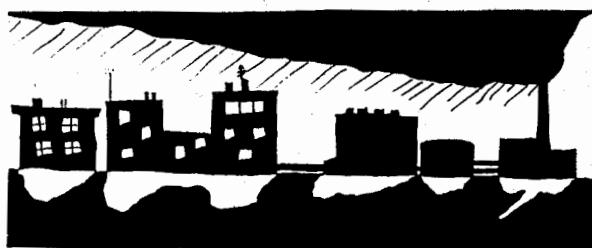
"Like a ghost?"

"Yeah, or invisible. Sometimes I think I'm not even here."

I looked at him for a long time, and he didn't say anything. It was like he had forgotten and let show more of himself than he had intended to, and now he was waiting to see what I would make of it. Or maybe if I would somehow use it against him.

There was a copy shop over by the post office. Sam knew a girl who worked there, and I guess she was letting him use the machines really cheap, or maybe for free. We were there for hours. Sam would print bunches of copies, then we'd sort them out on the floor and put them in the right order and staple them together. It was pretty weird to see how a bunch of disconnected pages could turn into a magazine that made sense.

Well, maybe not total sense. I pictured my parents and their friends back in southern Humboldt reading Sam's magazine, and I realized that they wouldn't understand most of it. I felt farther from home, and older than I'd ever felt in my life. It was like before, there'd always been this road, kind of long and winding, but a road all the



same, leading to this bridge into a warm, comfortable world where everything made a certain sort of sense, even if it was all too safe and predictable. Only now the road was all torn up and rocky, the bridge was in flames, and my parents were looking at me from across the canyon, like they weren't quite sure who I was. There's this old country song that goes, "I ain't got no home in this world anymore." For the first time I realized what that meant, that the only home I would ever have from now on was the one I made for myself.

All this time I'd been absent-mindedly folding and stapling magazines. Then there were no more pages to put together, and Sam said, "Come on, let's go over to the Power Station."

I thought he meant the electric plant a few miles south of town, which seemed like an awful long way to walk, and not that interesting a place to go anyway. But the Power Station he was talking about was only a couple blocks away, and was a sort of punk rock night club where they had bands playing. There were kids hanging out all over the sidewalk in front, and some of them were scary-looking, like the one with an anarchy symbol cut into his hair and a bicycle chain

wrapped around his neck. But most of them seemed nice, even if they looked a little weird. There were a few kids who looked like they were only about twelve years old, and about half the kids were younger than me. Sam seemed to know most of them.

He went around passing out his magazines to people. Sometimes they'd pay him a quarter or so, but he gave away more than he sold. It didn't seem to bother him. After a while I heard music starting inside, and I asked Sam if he was going to go in and see the band.

"I don't have enough money, and what money I do have, I want to save for food."

I offered to pay his way in, because I was curious to see what it would be like inside. At first he didn't want me to, but finally he let me. It was really crowded in there. I expected, I guess from seeing movies and TV shows, that the punks would be beating each other up and being really violent, but mostly they were just dancing or standing there watching the band. I was surprised, too, that the music wasn't nearly as harsh as I expected. In fact, it almost sounded like a mixture of hippie music and punk rock. Somebody told me that the band's name was Nuisance, and that they sang lots of songs about marijuana.

"That should make you feel at home," said Sam. He liked to tease me about where I'd grown up.

I kind of liked the band, even if they did remind me of southern Humboldt a little too much. In a way, they helped me appreciate it, too, like it sort of made me realize that not many kids get an opportunity to grow up in a place so unique.

Then the show was over, and Sam and I walked home. I mean, Sam walked with me all the way to my house, and then went on his own way. For some reason I kept forgetting to ask him where he lived. Whenever we were together we would talk about all sorts of stuff, but it would usually be all philosophical and abstract, never down to earth things like "What's your phone number?" or "Do you want to meet me in Old Town tomorrow?"

In the next few days I found myself wishing I'd made some arrangements to get in touch with Sam, because, weird as it might sound, I really missed him. I mean, it's not like I was in love with him or anything, it's just that I'd gotten used to this sort of comfortable, easy-going feeling that came from being around him, and when he wasn't there, it seemed like something was missing.

I read his magazine a whole bunch of times, and I'd imagine writing stories or drawing pictures and helping him make another issue of it. In fact, I sort of started this story thinking that maybe I could put it in his magazine, but then it got way too long, and besides, I don't think he'd want a story that had so much stuff about him in it. Every day I'd walk around Eureka for hours, but I never saw him. If I saw any of the punks from the Power Station, I'd ask them if they knew where he was, but either they'd act like I was some kind of dork not worth talking to, or else they'd say something like, "Nobody ever knows where Sam is. Sam doesn't even know where Sam is."

School started again, and though I went to class every day like I was supposed to, I didn't really notice the hours that went by in class, or on the bus to and from there, or doing the homework that I didn't do that much anyway. I still found plenty of time to walk around, and for the first time in my life, I started drinking. I don't know why, it just seemed like something to do. One night I went down to the store and hung around until somebody that looked cool came along and I asked him to buy me some beer. I was surprised at how easy it was, and even more surprised at how much fun it was to get drunk.

I wondered what it would be like to get drunk with Sam. I pictured us sitting alongside the waterfront laughing at stupid stuff and making fun of the pulp mills and pretending that the noise they

always make was the roar of a giant monster coming to devour us. One time I woke up at about four a.m. in the Olafsen's backyard, and couldn't remember how I got there. After that I eased up quite a bit on drinking, but I'd still get a sixpack a couple nights a week.

It was a Tuesday, I think, or maybe a Thursday, and I was hanging out in front of Larry's Supermarket, across the street from the post office, hoping someone would show up that I could get to buy for me. For some reason, hardly anyone was shopping that night, and I kind of drifted off into some stupid daydream. I remember snapping out of it when I heard a couple car doors slam.

I looked up, and saw a bunch of mill workers. I didn't pay much attention to them, figuring they weren't the kind of guys I should ask to buy beer for me. It wasn't until they came back out and were getting back into their cars that I noticed something familiar about one of them. He was small, and had a gentler, softer way of moving than the others, and... no, it couldn't be, but it was...

"Sam!" I yelled, but they were already driving away. I felt like a idiot, trying to catch up to a car on foot, but I did it anyway. I watched their tail lights blur into a line of hundreds of cars, and yet I still knew which set was attached to the car with Sam in it. I saw it turn into the bowling alley.

I know it was a dumb idea, but I kept walking. I had to catch up with Sam, had to find out what he was doing, even though a part of me already knew.

The wind picked up. It seemed to find its way under my collar, up my sleeves and pant legs. It was colder than usual, and the fog that was hanging low over the city was so thick that you might as well have called it rain.

By the time I got to the bowling alley, I was feeling so damp and cold that I was almost shaking. The parking lot was jammed full of cars. It was league night, no doubt. The place would be packed with pulp rats.

A few months ago, I would have been scared to set foot inside. But I was a different kind of person now. For the first time in my life I felt like I was deciding things for myself. Instead of wondering what I should be doing, I was doing it.

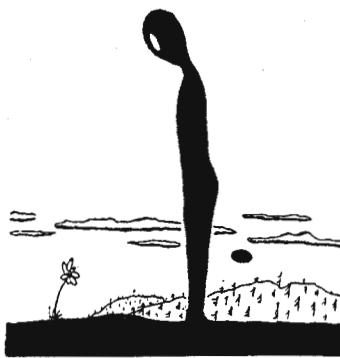
I hate the smell of cigarette smoke and cheap beer. I can't stand the sound of men laughing twice as loud as they need to. Country music drives me right up the wall. So you can imagine that pushing open those glass doors and setting foot inside was like crawling up the bowels of hell.

Nobody paid any attention to me. I guess I don't look as weird as I feel. I walked straight over to where I guess I knew Sam would be. He was standing there with a bowling ball in his hands, sort of holding it up in front of his chest like he was getting ready for his turn, laughing at some joke somebody had just told.

He looked all wrong. Even his smile seemed forced or twisted, like some perverse sculptor had come along and stuck it where it didn't belong. His eyes seemed cold, too. Not mean or evil or anything, just totally blank of the emotion I was used to seeing there.

When he noticed me, his nostrils flared out slightly, as if he were angry or afraid. Something about the way he stared at me told me I shouldn't come any closer, shouldn't try to enter into the world he'd decided, for reasons I guessed I'd never know now, to join.

"Goddamit, Sam, you here to bowl or are you going to stand there staring into space?" I heard one of the men yell. Sam looked at me for just a second longer, as if I were a mildly interesting pebble on the beach, then stepped over to the lane and hurled a perfect strike. Someone slapped him on the back and handed him a beer. I turned around and walked all the way back to downtown Eureka. There wasn't much traffic, and over all the sounds of the city, louder even than my careening and colliding thoughts, I could hear the grinding roar of the mill.





Finally! An election that wasn't a disaster for Mendocino County! At the risk of premature optimism, I'd say it even turned out pretty well. The sweetest victory of course was Liz Henry's decisive one-vote triumph over Fort Bragg ogress Heather Drum, a candidate from hell, the real estate and timber industries, not necessarily in that order.

I wasn't that enthusiastic a supporter of Liz when she first ran for Supervisor, back before Laytonville was gerrymandered out of the Fourth District to give Drum & Co. a better shot, but my respect for her has steadily grown. In my mind she's Mendocino County's most effective Supervisor, and although I'd hate to lose her, I could easily see her moving on to higher office. The assembly seat currently held by Dan Hauser is one good possibility.

Hauser, by the way, looks set to go after Barry Keene's state senate sinecure. Keene, in a cynical bit of skulduggery that stunk to high heaven even by Ukiah standards, quit the day after the election to take a higher paying job as a lobbyist while claiming his real motive to be that he was "fed up" with politics. His tasteless and ineffective public relations stunt - even the corporate press had a hard time swallowing it - will force the taxpayers of the hard-pressed north coast to spend some \$250,000 on a special election to replace him, an expense that could have been avoided if he'd had the decency to quit a few months earlier. Mendocino County will get stuck with 50 grand of the tab, and the advice from here to the Supes is: don't pay it. It's not worth it, especially with the race shaping up to be a rerun of the assembly matchup between the corrupt and stupid Dan Hauser and the corrupt and insane Anna Sparks.

Hauser creamed Sparks in the November election, as well he should have; with all his faults (too numerous to recount in this limited space), he's not a frothing at the mouth lunatic like the madwoman of McKinleyville, merely an unprincipled dullard. If you follow Humboldt County politics, where Hauser got his start, you know that venal mediocrity is often the best you can hope for. Mendocino County is a paragon of good government compared with our neighbor to the north.

Southern Humboldt voters didn't fare so well in choosing a new Supervisor for the Second District to replace the famously corrupt Harry Pritchard, legendary for his contention that Eureka's noxious pulp mill discharges were not as toxic as the salt air coming in from the ocean.

The Second District includes Garberville and environs, but was gerrymandered to exclude many of the rural hippie lands to the west after counterculture type Alan Katz, nearly beat Pritchard a few years back. This time there was no danger of radicals gaining a foothold in the county building; voters were offered a choice between Roger Rodoni, representing Pacific Lumber, and Roy Heider, whose main assets were that he wasn't Rodoni and that he was from Garberville.

Heider won in a very close race despite a mediocre campaign and a notable lack of public speaking skills; the home-town factor was no doubt what carried the day. It was both funny and sad to hear some local hippies trying to put a good face on Heider's victory on the grounds that "finally we've got someone representing southern Humboldt." While I share their view that Heider will do a better job of looking out for Garberville's interests in Eureka, he's going to have to change his spots a great deal if he's to turn out as anything other than

a rubber stamp for the business interests that have run Humboldt County as a closed shop since time immemorial (well, at least since the white man showed up). And in case any of the hippies missed it, here's Roy Heider on what might be the area's number one issue: "I think all of Humboldt County's social problems began with the arrival of marijuana."

Meanwhile, back in Mendocino County, an unexpected and pleasant surprise: the ousting of First District Supervisor Marilyn Butcher by Seiji Sugarawa. It had never occurred to me that the vicious and sullenly corrupt woman who embodied the spirit of Ukiah at its worst (words fail me here; just envision an endless four-lane blacktop lined with a hideous succession of fast food franchises and neon-bedded mini-malls staffed by grotesquely corpulent pasty-faced illiterates groveling for minimum wage handouts and snarling at the sub-minimum wage Mexican illegals for not slopping out the toilets fast enough) was vulnerable, let alone that she could be beaten by an outright liberal with a strange-sounding foreign name in a county where Asians constitute no more than one or two per cent of the population.

Butcher had served as perhaps the single greatest disgrace to Mendocino County politics (though she faced stiff competition here from a dreary succession of county school superintendents). With her departure, the criminally deranged of the region are, for the first time that I can remember, without a personal representative on the Board of Supes.

At various times in my life I've boasted membership in the United Auto Workers, United Steel Workers, and the American Federation of State, Municipal, and County Employees. My dad, who witnessed firsthand the harrowing and sometimes deadly struggle of the unions to obtain recognition back in the 1930s, instilled in me a healthy respect for organized labor.

That's why it's especially hard for me to see a union as corrupt and inimical to workers' interests as the Fort Bragg local of the International Woodworkers. The IWA, under the direction of Don Nelson, has been stuck deep in the corporate back pocket for years, but this year it reached a new low in endorsing right wing psycho Anna Sparks for state assembly. It runs counter to nature for a union man or woman to vote Republican under any circumstances. In the case of Sparks, who makes ordinary Republicans appear almost reasonable, it defies all understanding.

Actually, I may have figured out the IWA's "reasoning," such as it is. They've applied the Republican principle of trickle-down economics to labor relations. Workers should sacrifice their pay, job security, safety, pensions, and futures so that the corporation can prosper. Then the warm, humanitarian souls at Georgia-Pacific will share some of their wealth with the lowly peons who toil in their vineyards. *Noblesse oblige*, right? After all, look how well the rich have taken care of us since Ronald Reagan and George Bush handed them the keys to the bank.

Some of you might recall that when corporate negligence resulted in the death of mill worker Fortunato Reyes a few years back, Louisiana-Pacific was hit with a fine in the neighborhood of \$3,500, roughly the amount of money the timber giant earns in about thirty seconds of operation. Why did L-P get off so easy? Perhaps the

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)'s sympathy was aroused by the thought of how much money the company lost during the couple days its production lines were shut down for cleanup and investigation of the accident.

What made me recall that incident was the news that equally hard-pressed Pacific Lumber Company (division of Maxxam Redwood Liquidators, Inc.) was given a group discount by OSHA when "serious safety violations" led to the deaths of three workers at the Scotia mill. The total cost to the company, which Maxxam head Charles Hurwitz has personally milked for at least twenty to thirty million bucks: a whopping \$7,525, working out to \$2,508.33 per employee. Sharp-eyed corporate planners might note that in this era of cutbacks and layoffs, running superfluous workers through the debarking machine might prove to be a better bargain than paying into the state unemployment compensation fund. Lends a whole new meaning to the concept of "severance pay," doesn't it?

From the Brave New World of Doublespeak, New Age Division, we find Laytonville School Board members K'vaka and Asbury tackling the problem of public concern over pesticide use on school grounds. Rather than simply eliminating pesticides, the ever-creative K'vaka (who is often seen shopping for organic produce at the Good Food Store) proposed that "pesticides" henceforth be referred to as "landscape chemicals," and that furthermore, the school board cease publishing information about upcoming pesticide (oops, landscape chemical) applications in the weekly *Observer* lest the news "unduly alarm the public and be a cause for poor public relations."

The *Lookout* suggests that the same principle might be applied

to the problem of poor public relations caused by children bringing home bad report cards. After all, who can blame parents for being reluctant to pay their school taxes if little Johnny or Susie repeatedly comes home with Ds and Fs? A solution could be to make sure that any child earning less than a B simply not be issued a report card for that quarter. What's more, think of all the time and money to be saved on paperwork and fielding calls from outraged parents.

Another pressing issue afflicting Eureka these days is the attempt to regulate the size of advertising signs. With south Eureka having devolved into a hideous neon wasteland where the signs frequently dwarf the buildings they were intended to call attention to, the last straw seems to have been when that lovely monument to late American capitalism, the Bayshore Mall, doubled the size of its concrete and neon erection (gee, Babs, I never noticed there was a shopping mall with a parking lot twice the size of downtown Eureka until they put up that neat new sign).

The issue was debated furiously, with councilman Jim Worthen declaring that the city was in danger of becoming "a ghost town" if businesses were restricted in their pursuit of garishness. Frightened by the spectre of shoppers deserting a denuded Eureka to spend their hard-earned timber dollars in McKinleyville or Field's Landing, the council approved a watered-down ordinance that restricted new signs but grandfathered in all existing ones. The responsibility for Eureka's beautification apparently still rests in the hands of late-night commandos, like those who altered the Chamber of Commerce sign welcoming tourists with the slogan "You've Found It!" to the more succinct "You've Found Shit!"

Once Upon A Time In The Mountains



Part IV

Melissa looked at Danny. As she did she realized that she was genuinely afraid that her father might kill him, or at least seriously hurt him. But despite the hate-filled expression on her father's face, he didn't seem interested in physical violence. If anything, he looked helpless, and older than he had ever appeared before.

Or maybe he was just curious. After all, people like Danny weren't a common sight on the mountain. And in that instant, Melissa realized that she too must have changed a great deal, not so much physically, but in the way she carried herself, the way she saw herself. The ramshackle house, these strangely dressed and slack-jawed people who stood gaping at her, the backdrop of yellow hills and dark green forests and deep blue sky, all seemed strangely disconnected from her, as if she were a tourist in some exotic land rather than a child returning to her ancestral home after only a few weeks' absence.

"Who's your buddy, Melissa?" were her father's first words.

"Uh, this is my friend Danny. We hitched up here together."

"Your friend, huh? Didn't waste no time gettin' in with the weirdo crowd, did you?"

"No, she didn't, sir. Why she came and looked us weirdos up the

very first day she got to town." Melissa couldn't believe what she was hearing. Nobody ever talked back to her father, let alone some skinny kid with orange and green hair.

Melissa's father looked surprised, but didn't say anything back to Danny. That left an opening for her mother to invite everyone in for coffee. She hadn't changed, Melissa thought. Still always trying to smooth things over, trying to make it seem like it was normal to live this way.

The minute she entered this house, she was overpowered with a familiar smell, that of freshly cut and drying marijuana. It was hanging all over the room. Danny stared as though he had never seen anything more amazing in his life, but Melissa was as annoyed as she was curious.

"Isn't it awfully early for harvest?" she asked. "You usually don't start until the middle of October."

"Goddam CAMP," her father growled. "They flew us two days in a row. I finally said the hell with it, went out and cut it all down. Been up all night cleaning the stuff. Could use some help, too."

"I can't stay. I have to get right back to Berkeley. I just need you

to sign..."

"What kind of help do you need?" Danny interrupted.

"You ever do any trimming before?" Melissa's father asked.

"No, but I can learn."

"Danny, what are you talking about?" Melissa said. This was starting to seem like a bad dream. "We have to be back in Berkeley; today."

"Relax, Melissa, the university can wait. Trust me."

"Trust you! You don't know anything about the university!"

"And you don't know anything about people, and behind all the fancy offices and bureaucracy and forms and regulations there's nothing but people. Learn how to deal with people, and you can get the university to do whatever you want."

Part of her wanted to believe Danny, and part of her wanted to strangle him. But it didn't matter anyway, because she could tell that he had made a powerful impression on her father. "The son you always wanted," she thought.

Ignoring a few more feeble protests from Melissa, Danny sat down to learn the art of manicuring freshly cut marijuana. Melissa and her mother were left sitting at the kitchen table, staring wordlessly at untouched cups of coffee. Melissa tried to remember the last time she'd had a genuine conversation with her mother. Then she tried to imagine what her mother might be thinking. Both times she came up blank.

An hour passed. Danny and her father were chatting away as if they'd known each other all their lives. Out of habit, or maybe out of some inborn tradition, Melissa had reached for a marijuana branch and begun methodically trimming it. Then another, and another. There was something timeless about the ritual. She couldn't recall how old she'd been when she'd first started helping with the harvest. Ten? Eight? It seemed like something that had always been part of her life, at least ever since they'd left the seashore and come to these mountains.

As the hottest part of the day approached, there was a brief CAMP scare. A helicopter appeared overhead, and slowly circled the house, low enough to rattle the dishes. Suddenly Danny didn't look so self-assured. In fact, he very nearly went tearing out the door, but Melissa's father grabbed him by the back of his shirt and stopped him.

"Don't give them anything to look at. They'll never leave then."

Eventually the CAMP crew drifted off in search of greener pastures and manicuring began again. Melissa's neck ached, just like it always did when she sat hunched over for hours, picking leaves away from the buds at breathtaking speed, barely pausing to think about what she was doing or where she was, completely caught up in the work of the moment and yet vaguely aware that something was wrong, that this was not where she had meant to be at all.

The whole afternoon passed like that. It was a sudden breeze from the kitchen window rather than the gathering darkness that made Melissa realize it was almost night. Her mother got up and turned on the light. Danny and her father were still babbling about something. Their voices had turned into background noise for Melissa, just like the trees rustling outside and the steady drip of water from the broken bathroom faucet.

The bright light overhead seemed to draw her thoughts back to her immediate surroundings. As usual, her mother hadn't said a word all afternoon. For a moment Melissa wanted to tell her something about college or about Berkeley or what she was feeling, but she couldn't think of anything that would make sense. Danny and her father had been chain smoking joints, and smoke swirled up around the ceiling, so thick it almost cast a shadow.

Just when it seemed things couldn't get any worse, Melissa's father went to the bedroom and came out with a small white envelope. Her heart sank. She knew the envelope would contain either speed or cocaine, and either one would turn her father into someone she didn't want to be around. He dumped some of the powder onto the table, scraped it into lines, and snorted two big ones. Melissa thought she caught him smirking at her as he inhaled. Then he offered the rolled

up bill to Danny, who didn't even glance at Melissa before he helped himself.

Melissa had never seen Danny under the influence of anything stronger than alcohol or pot. She felt scared, like she didn't know him anymore, like he was one of her father's friends instead of her own. And as the night wore on, that seemed more and more true. Danny hardly said a word to her, except once in a while to repeat some stupid joke that he and her father were laughing about. She would stare back at him with a look she imagined was the embodiment of hate, but if he noticed, he didn't show any sign of it.

When her mother went to bed, Melissa did too, not even bothering to say good night. Her room looked exactly the way she'd left it, except a little dustier. The only real difference she could notice was the smell. It wasn't a bad smell, in fact it was kind of pleasant, but she didn't recognize it. It was as if a stranger had been living here.

"And the stranger is me," she said to herself, almost giggling, until she remembered her predicament. The voices in the kitchen seemed to grow louder by the minute. She could hear bottles being opened and glasses clinking. "Just like old times," she thought, bitterly.

She threw herself on the bed, startled by how creaky it sounded and how fragile it felt. The blankets were dry and scratchy against her skin. She buried her head under the pillow trying to shut out the sounds. It helped a little, but made it hard to breathe. She tried crying herself to sleep, but not a tear would come.

Though she thought she would be awake all night, the call of a nearby owl gradually lulled her into forgetfulness. When she woke, the sun was already high and her room was uncomfortably warm. She felt frazzled, as if she'd been on a binge, and then she remembered where she was, just as she heard her father and Danny rattling around in the kitchen. She thought of going back to sleep, but knew it would be impossible. Reluctantly she opened her door and stepped into the kitchen.

It was a good deal cooler there, but smelled stale and sour, even above the all-permeating scent of drying marijuana buds. Her mother was sitting at the table, wordlessly trimming. Her father and Danny were arguing, good-naturedly, it seemed, about something pointless. In the middle of the table Melissa saw her financial aid forms from the university. What were they doing there? She tried, as inconspicuously as possible, to edge closer and get a look at them. Could it be? Yes, that was her father's signature, and her mother's, too. Before it could sink in, she caught Danny looking at her with a self-satisfied smile, as if he were saying, "See, just leave it to me..."

She should have been happy, she guessed, but instead she was just angry. Besides, it didn't matter anyway; it was already too late. She charged out the front door, halfway intending to walk all the way to town, and from there... She didn't care anymore, she just had to get away.

Danny caught up with her as she stood at the edge of the road contemplating whether she really wanted to start walking, wondering if that would really accomplish anything.

"What's the matter, Melissa?" he asked. "We came here to get him to sign your forms and he did. What more do you want?"

"It doesn't make any difference now," she hissed. "It's past the deadline. And anyway, I'd rather get kicked out of the university than see what I had to see last night."

"What are you talking about?"

"I thought you were someone different. You're just like my father. Just another stupid junkie drunk."

"Wait a minute, Melissa. I've seen you put away a little beer yourself."

"That's kind of different, don't you think? And when did I ever sit up all night snorting speed and yukking it up like some macho redneck? You should just move here, move in with my father. You'd fit right in. He always wanted a son, anyway."

"Look, Melissa, save that kind of stuff for your shrink. I'm not your father, I'm nothing like your father. That doesn't mean I can't

relate to him. Sitting there talking to him on his own terms for one night of my life isn't going to make me into a different person."

"You sure seemed like a different person last night. Not like any person I thought I knew." She could feel herself softening, feel a certain tenderness creeping back into her soul. She hated herself for it. She wanted to spit in his face, claw at his eyes, but she couldn't bring herself to fight anymore.

"Okay, whatever," she said. "Can we go soon?"

"I'll be ready as soon as your dad finishes telling me about the time he had to hide in the woods all night because the sheriff was looking for him," said Danny.

Melissa laughed. "That story's not even slightly true. He made the whole thing up, but he's told it so many times now I think he actually believes it."

"I know," said Danny, "but it's a great story anyway."

The trip back to Berkeley went very quickly. Just two rides and there they were amid the chaos of Telegraph Avenue, as if nothing at all had happened. Danny pressed her to go over to campus and hand in her forms. She resisted, claiming that it was too late and wouldn't do any good now, but he finally convinced her to try.

He went along with her, and just as she should have known, he somehow charmed the woman in the financial aid office into accepting the forms late. Melissa was still a student. A student, she realized, who hadn't been to class all week and had two term papers due tomorrow.

"You'd better leave me alone," she told Danny. "I've got a ton of work to do."

"That's all the thanks I get?" he protested half-seriously.

"After what you put me through, you're lucky you don't get knocked upside the head." She was half-serious too.

It was impossible to study, let alone write in her dorm room, so Melissa worked in the library until midnight, then got up early the next morning and went back there before class. Her work suddenly seemed easier than before, and the excitement of being a University of California student came back all over again. She could almost feel herself glowing, and pitied the other students who looked like they had to drag themselves through the motions of getting an education.

In English class she even raised her hand to offer some opinions, and barely noticed when the TA dismissed her ideas as "poorly thought out." What did he know anyway? A pathetic grad student who was lucky if he ever set foot off campus. She'd probably seen more of Berkeley in a few weeks than he had in all his years at Cal. Her thoughts drifted off to the prospect of seeing Danny that night, and maybe going to Gilman Street, or to a party, or just hanging around a cafe and talking about all the crazy stuff he and the other punks always seemed to come up with.

As things turned out, her homework took a lot longer than she expected, and she ended up studying until past midnight. She caught herself thinking about Danny a few times, but she'd see him tomorrow. She felt sure enough of herself now to not worry about his feelings for her. She went to sleep thinking contentedly about how great it would be to have the whole day tomorrow to spend with him.

But when Saturday morning came Danny was nowhere to be found. She walked all the way over to his house, but none of his roommates had any idea where he might be. Her spirits barely dampened, she strolled leisurely back toward Telegraph, figuring he'd turn up before long. It was noon when she got there, and the place was crawling with people, including a lot of punks, but none of them had seen Danny.

Still, it was such a beautiful day that nothing was going to bother her. She spent an hour or so browsing in the basement of Moe's bookstore, popped across the street to see if Danny might be sitting upstairs in the Med, and then walked back to her dorm to get a jacket. It was still warm, but she was expecting to be out late tonight. Unfortunately Tiffany was there, and tried to start an argument about how Melissa was looking for trouble if she went around the streets dressing the way she did and hanging around with "those" people.

Melissa was shocked to find herself seriously thinking about busting Tiffany right in the chops, but instead she just laughed out loud and walked out of the room.

She went back to the Med, and spent at least an hour drinking one cup of coffee which had cost her every last bit of her change. Still no Danny. Janelle came in, by herself, with some copies of her new magazine. She sat with Melissa and showed it to her. Melissa was impressed, and quietly vowed that one day she'd make her own magazine too. But she wasn't jealous of Janelle anymore; she could see that even though Janelle seemed to know everyone and everything, she was just as shy and insecure as anyone else when it came to putting her art and writing before the public. She really seemed to care what Melissa thought of her magazine, too, which made Melissa feel important.

An odd-looking boy came in... well, he wasn't so much odd-looking as odd-acting. His name, according to Janelle, was Thadicus. Not a very typical name, thought Melissa, but before she could reflect on it for more than a moment, Thadicus' friend joined them, and his name was Eggplant. Melissa couldn't help thinking that a year ago these people would have frightened her, but now they seemed completely normal. She felt like she belonged here.

More time passed, nearly an hour in fact, before Melissa remembered that she was looking for Danny. "Oh, I saw him," said Eggplant. "Just before I came in here. He said he was on his way home."

Melissa didn't want it to be too obvious that she was rushing over to Danny's house, so she forced herself to wait a few more minutes before leaving. Once she was out of the Med, she thought about taking a bus, until she remembered she didn't have any money. It was already starting to get dark, and she walked as quickly as she could down Telegraph toward Oakland.

By the time she got to Danny's street all that was left of the day was a rich golden glow on the edge of the western sky. The lights were already on in San Francisco across the bay. But closer at hand, in the middle of the next block, were the flashing lights of several police cars and an ambulance. She didn't pay much attention at first - there was a lot of crime in this neighborhood - until she realized that the police cars were directly in front of Danny's house.

She ran the rest of the way. The sound of police radios echoed eerily down the street. Several neighbors stood around staring, but none of them seemed to know what had happened. Melissa didn't see any of Danny's roommates, or anyone she knew.

She was almost ready to walk right up and knock on the door when she heard someone whisper her name and felt a tug on her jacket. It was Danny, and before she could say anything, he turned and walked away, nodding his head as if to indicate that she should follow him.

Try as she might, she couldn't catch up with him until he'd reached the corner and turned. Even when she'd reached his side, he kept walking, so fast that she had a hard time catching enough breath to ask him what was going on.

Finally, after they'd traveled another block, she grabbed hold of his shirt. "Stop! Will you tell me what is happening?"

Danny hardly looked like the same person she'd come to know. Usually he seemed sure of himself, almost arrogant, but even here on this dark street she could see that he was scared. Terrified, even. The last time she'd seen someone look so desolate, it had been a little boy who had gotten separated from his parents at the supermarket and was wandering up and down the aisles crying.

"I'm in big trouble, Melissa," he said. "Will you help me?"

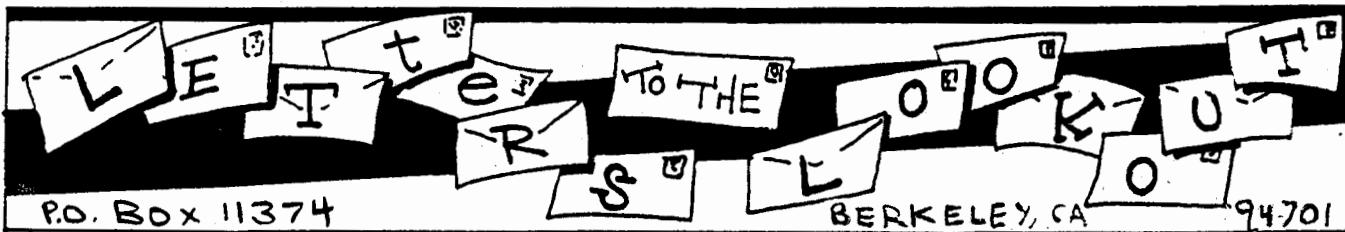
"Help you what?"

"Help me get away."

"What do you mean, get away? What did you do?"

Danny sighed, so low and deep that it sounded suspiciously like a sob. "It's Leah. They found her dead in my room. An overdose. They're going to try and put me in jail for murder."

To be continued...



Dear Lawrence,

As a longtime admirer of your writing, I receive each issue of *Lookout* with anticipated pleasure. (Unfortunately, I haven't caught much of your music, so I can't say the same for it.) You've got a clear, straightforward, committed writing style, along with a good dose of uncommon sense, which hits its mark much more often than it misses. Unfortunately, I think you've missed the mark in your response to Sid Que's letter in #37 questioning your support for "high speed trains." Although I, too, share Sid's concerns about the relationship of faster and faster transportation speeds to disorientation and social alienation, I think there are just as important instrumental arguments against bullet trains which focus on the usually ignored "side effects" which such monumental, capital-intensive projects inevitably bring with them.

For example, as the brilliant ex-priest Ivan Illich argues in his essay "Energy and Equity," the costs/side-effects of faster transportation speeds (much beyond human-powered speeds) include the implicit acceptance of a whole complex of fundamental social relationships dictated by technocratic imperatives which are undermining human freedom and communities at an accelerating rate. I won't try to recreate Illich's essay here. Instead I'm enclosing a battered old copy of his book *Toward A History Of Human Needs* which includes this important essay, knowing that he can speak more eloquently and succinctly than I ever could on this subject. I hope you'll take this small challenge to read Illich's essay - which I believe you may find as compelling as I have. Certainly it's easily readable, and if you're not familiar with Illich's work, it may well turn you on to his larger low-tech vision.

One of the reasons why I'm especially sensitive to the problem of high-speed trains is that there is a small consortium of business-types here in Missouri trying to get a welfare-subsidy from the state to build one from St. Louis to Kansas City, bisecting the state and passing close by to Columbia. So far, many people unthinkingly have decided it might be a good idea, based on the hype which emphasizes the speed, jobs, and projected economic "development," while ignoring the costs and side-effects of this technology completely. I hope you'll reconsider your support for this type of transportation, or at least try to balance your support with a new consideration of its actual cost and side-effects.

Jason McQuinn
Columbia MO

Beloved fellow reconstructors of free thought:

Yes, the time is red upon the bough for getting Lawrence back to the ground. Free fall, baby, here y'go!

Basics 1: The European asskissers of the subhuman elite have forever played pretty Schubertian mood music about keeping Momma-God's resources from harm. Yet from their first touch on the Azores where they burned all the great forests, all the great forests to plant sugar cane for their subhuman kings and queens to California where you get your faces rubbed in it every day, they have never, never dealt with Earth with love for Her but only to serve those business interests that still today make Queen Liz the richest of the rich.

Basics 2: We injun-types were all impermeated with the fires of freedom by that land where you are. We are the siblings of those, black, brown, white or yellow, whom that land has entered and set its fires to the same as us.

Now to put point 3 straight across, Lawrence, there are absolutely no basics, as you so much again and again assume, in demanding that the subhumans pay attention to Earth's resources, they being the only ones who could do anything about it. Contriving such vaporous

platforms upon which the reform-minded might wish to take a stand has always been their trap-door dodge.

Now down to the ground? In spite of all those "Americans" who are really European asskissers of the elite, you have all around you there so many of those who have grown up beside those rivers of our blood that their so holy, holy forefathers from Europe set flowing and that still flow, some of them still being regularly fed, from ocean to ocean, grown up beside them to feel real sympathy toward them and to know a spirit from them, and these people carry the fire.

And all I'm saying, our Larry so capable, is celebrate them. So what if one of the good guys like Graham gets sucked into the maelstrom of Dan Quayle-heads, what's new? Look about thee, Larry, and give a great shout for those you see and for the stench of injun blood they reek of. Shout about them and celebrate them, those that have never sold out. Those that are proof of freedom and hope.

C'mon, friend Lawrence, let's just get right down and be serious about this great feeling of freedom you've got in you. Because it ain't here in Europe nowhere, pal. From northernmost to southernmost this is suck-under-land. I caught my girl, this great, great free bird of art that came streaking through K.C., Mo., back when she was sent out of here by her parents to save her from the subhumans that were gunning down any woman with spirit. All you need do is look at Greece today to see what a thorough job, as is always the case, they did of it. Y'know when the English were running Greeks their way, they'd kill a young gallant, roll him in tar and hang the thing in a cage before his mother's house, sometimes for fifteen years. We're talking about Europe, Larry, and what they hope to do where you are. What's the pattern? Remember Rod Steiger saying, "Europe is a cemetery"? Yeah, with angelically soaring cathedrals and Schubertian mood music. They create an intricately contrived no-exit cemetery of the spirit and then think that being there is living. And very cultural, too.

Accentuate the positive, ole buddy. It's only there where you are.

Y'know on this Emerald Triangle thing you're so inspired by, here in Greece which was all matriarchy before the war-lovers came stompety-stompety-stomping in — (remember that 27 injun nations today are run by women and the "principal chief of the Cherokees" is Wilma P. Mankiller) —, all of the temples — and the ones on Crete — had their naves lined up toward first a low hill for Her belly beyond which you could see twin tips of one or two mountains for Her breasts. In other words, the temple itself was and still is located at that triangle from which all life has forever, despite the stupid stompety-stomper stories of ribs and bewhiskered homosexual deities, come.

All I'm saying is maybe this talk of and this actuality of an Emerald Triangle gets into your mind the way it does in mine and gives you and surely lots of others there the beautifully blissful sense of being in the right place on the rightest of most beautifully, blissfully right planets.

Another sumpin: I hope you know D.H. Lawrence on Democracy where he writes how property, whether state or private, will be the last idea to disappear as all ideas are on their ways out, yielding to the immediacy of electronic-like realization. He points out how having things has no reality. Using things. That's the path to the creative quick.

Roy Westernsky Culver
Athens

Lawrence,

(...)King of the Mountain; if there exists a more opinionated, arrogant, ego-drenched person in the world...then you seem to have a problem.(?)...)
(etc.)You seem to have found a way to offend just about anyone

whether or not they generally agree with you. Your sometimes warranted apologies seem to be accompanied by a left hand full of compliments and a right fist committed to the respondent's ass. [It is not my intention to pursue a battle of wits when I know I am in way over my head (though you appear to amuse yourself in making fools out of people like myself)](etc.)

(?) Is alienation punk? (I ask seriously not knowing scrap about "punk", and prior to reading your publication thinking that punks were just kids that wanted to shock the hell out of their mothers and get looked at on the street corner long enough to hiss back.) Please, if you will, excuse the apparent generalization of punks, but I'd also like to know if reverence is solidly un-punk.(?)

(...?) Money, for *Lookout!*, where does it come from? I always pick it up off a stack with no invitation to provide \$(...?)

(Zzzz) I wanted to comment specifically about something in *Lookout* #37. You called people like myself "...trying-to-be-trendy white libs who unquestioningly suck up anything dished their way by a black artist as long as it's sufficiently harsh and confrontational," but sometimes you've got to swallow a little bit of pride and a little bit of ideology to be helpful. No black person ought to listen to me tell her (him) how to fight to be free when I couldn't even fit the shoes if I wanted to; furthermore, there is a surplus of examples in white culture of "...the misogyny, the homophobia, and the barely contained violence..." to fight against without having to put down already suppressed people. Mind you, I agree with your basic synopsis of the situation, I'm just asking you to let the "millions and millions of African-Americans [who] don't beat up or rape women, don't bash homosexuals, don't sell drugs or join gangs, don't participate in drive-by shootings, and are deeply ashamed of and angry with the members of their race who do..." fulfill their duty, and not even risk being perceived as part of the "...sensation-starved white folks who dominate the media..." .(Zzzz)

'van ives
Los Gatos CA

P.S. I am not a prominent member of your or anyone else's counterculture; my purpose was not to attempt to find this letter's way into your magazine, so I will not be offended by whatever you do with this letter after having read it, but a response would be appreciated.
P.P.S.(Z") Advice is cheap, mine, (not to drop *Lookout*, but...) write a book.

(!...?s.Zzzz??!jzs) Money for *Lookout* works like this: Typically I print 10,000 copies at a cost of about \$850. Between our wholesale distributor, subscriptions, and direct mail order, I sell between 1500 and 2000 copies, which brings in approximately enough money to pay the printing bill, leaving me with 8000 or more copies to give away in northern California. Obviously it's not meant to be a profitable enterprise; if it were, I'd accept paid advertising, which I don't. Obvious next question: if I don't make any money, and it's so much work, why do I publish this thing? I'll let you decide that.

Dear LL:

I like *Lookout* so much, but I do get tired of the same old tripe that year after year is parroted about Scientology, and so I was dismayed to see that even you still believe that garbage, at your age, no less.. I'd never thought of you as the credulous type before, though maybe an extreme distaste for religion in general (which is understandable) provokes you to make these snide comments. It's almost laughable how that same baloney gets recycled year after year, and how many otherwise intelligent people go right ahead and fall for it. What I'd like to ask you is exactly what is intrinsically bad about this group (other than the fact that it is a religion!)

You put the word "church" in quote marks, as if Scientology is not a real church. Aren't you aware that Scientology is just as legitimate a church as the far more powerful, sinister, exploitative Catholic church, — which on commenting on elsewhere, you don't put in quotes? Undoubtedly, your snide remarks on Scientology reflect an embittered cynical attitude toward religion in general (justified all to well by your knowledge of the universal tendency of human greed seen in most powerful cults, but because Scientology is more mysterious than the usual cults, it has to be more evil and more deserving of attack.) Why, you seem to think Scientology might be as hellbent on wresting power and money from pele as the Catholic

Church, the Fundamentalists, or the American psychiatric and medical establishments! Even if this appears to be true, why attack Scientology as if it is worse? In a capitalist system such as we have, they do have a right to do it without being singled out for attack as if they're worse than their competitors.

But, although the Church of Scientology does receive compensation for their Dianetic spiritual therapy (auditing), it's considerably less per hour than psychiatrists charge (\$50 as opposed to \$75, usually more and with no guarantees and possibly many years of treatment) and people see positive results (i.e. emotional healing, being better able to function) quicker. It's also cheaper than the expected tithing so many churches require or put pressure on members to pay. But what price mental/spiritual health, anyway? So many people seem to have no hope of ever attaining it. (I realize Dianetic practices, no matter how successful in healing people, still amount to "criminal quackery" according to the AMA, just like chiropractic, acupuncture, or Reichian, herbal or dietary therapy, etc. used to in the professional sickness professions, whose profits depend heavily on keeping the public sick, paranoid, angry, depressed, and ignorant, and I must say that they're doing a great job of it. They're fighting hard in the legislatures to wrest their power back out of the hands of alternative therapy, and they have plenty of legislators in their pockets.)

I used to distrust all religions, Scientology even worse than most. At any rate, if you do have any hard facts about this church's being even a tiny fraction as exploitive as most world religions, I'd sure like to see them. I have seen plenty of evidence that the government and the medical (psychiatric) establishment have tried their hardest to destroy the Church, and the net result seems to be that the Church is stronger than ever. They have good reason to be aloof and to put Church writings in a vault, considering the current worsening atmosphere of censorship, and politically powerful religious extremists, the real enemies who are bent on setting up a theocracy. You should put *Lookout* in a vault too. If Scientology is a sinister money grubbing mind-control cult, then you, you magazine, and thousands of devoted readers, are just as sinister a cult, as well as that University you just graduated from. I agree, education is pretty sinister to the ignorant. Just what exactly are you trying to do, anyway, enlighten people? I ought to sic the FBI, IRS, and AMA on you because you are probably corrupting youth.

My favorite kind of mind-control cult is the kind that enlightens and liberates the human mind, not the kind that keeps us in abject fear, passivity, ignorance, and with narrow snide attitudes toward other ways and other beliefs. I don't belong to any church but if I were to join one it would probably be the Church of the Subgenius who are an out of the closet mind-control cult and proud of it.

One more point, about John Crawford's letter. Hate to break the news to him but it turns out that Adolf Hitler was not a vegetarian after all. Sadly, this is a myth. *The Animals' Agenda* magazine, May 1992, p. 31, says, "Vegetarian historian Rynn Berry has refuted the myth that Adolf Hitler was a vegetarian by documenting Hitler's taste for Bavarian sausages, ham, liver, and game, and his banishment of vegetarian organizations from all territories occupied by the Nazis. Noted chef Dione Lucas, who often cooked for Hitler, mentioned his liking for stuffed squab on page 83 of her volume, *The Gourmet Cooking School Cookbook*. I myself was kind of disappointed to learn this, having been a vegetarian for about 25 years and having to put up with your average dead body eater's assumption that all vegetarians are either saints, religious weirdos, wimpy, or kooky yet wonderful celebs. For me, Hitler provided a refreshingly politically incorrect counterbalance to the likes of Adam & Eve, John the Baptist, Gandhi, Shelley, Tolstoy, Mister Rogers, Madonna, Michael Jackson, Paul & Linda McCartney, Annie Lennox, Jerry Brown, Popeye, and last but not least, Bugs Bunny.

Personally, I think there are two reasons for the Hitler veggie myth. One is that Hitler as a young man did abstain from meat for a while at least, having expressed to friends an aversion to dead flesh which was only temporary, as he seems to have entirely overcome this problem in later years, as is well known. You can't overrun Europe and order mass genocides and be too squeamish. Secondly, various writers were trying to both explain Hitler's megalomania in terms of his private life and also sensationalize him in order to sell books, so

they seized on the suggestion that he had an aversion to meat and turned him into a total lifelong vegetarian, as well as a person with sexual abnormalities, also a myth. The reality was too dull. But this vegetarian myth must have been a comfort to many; confirmed dead body eaters who have felt any twinge of guilt at their own personal contribution to the ongoing worldwide holocaust of animals who are slaughtered solely for the human meat habit. This mass necrophilia, as well as war and various kinds of hatred, seems hard to root out of human nature, which feels the need to justify its cruelty by then labeling those who believe differently as weird or sinister.

Other than the items which I commented on, I sure enjoyed your last issue and was sorry to finish reading it. Whether you print this or not, hope you found it enlightening. I look forward to the next *Lookout*.

D.E.W.
Bryte CA

Hi Larry,

I'm a big fan of your writing and your zine, but I totally disagree with your views on politics, elections, and government. You seem to accept the choice of choosing your own master in the form of voting as some kind of real choice. You say you'll probably vote for Gov. Bill Clinton in the November election and not for some smaller party because they don't have a chance of winning and what we really need is a new party. You allude to hoping that someday future socialist politicians can win.

So I guess I'll have to believe that you're one of those people that still believes in the political system of representation. You'll let someone you've probably never met represent you in government through your vote and make important decisions about your life and others. If Bill Clinton or the socialists you vote for does something you disagree with and comes to your town and you go out in the streets to protest, the same cops will smash your skull with a baton. It doesn't matter if it's Bush, Clinton, some socialist or Lawrence Livermore in power. All of them will have to defend their power when it is challenged by people who want control of their own lives and all will inevitably call in the pigs to crush skulls and fire tear gas when the opposition decides to fight back rather than do some useless non-act of protest like hold up a sign and march around in circles, sign a petition, or vote. There is no choice for me in a system that won't ever let me have control of my own life. There could never be a government or politician who could represent my views and I've never heard of a politician who had anything close to your views on the issues you write about in your magazine. Yet still you'll sign away your power over yourself to some politician who supposedly is trying to represent you and in local government elections whoever happens to live near you. I'll also have to assume that since you believe in the political process and elections that you believe in that fair and progressive idea of majority rule. That's what voting is after all. You've probably had all the same persecution as I have all my life for having different views, looking different or just not fitting in all nice and neat and not wanting to either. By voting or believing that the majority should rule which is what I believe democracy is all about you would be letting all the assholes and idiots in your school who beat you up or look at you funny, or all the people in your county, the rednecks and the yuppies, or even all the people in your tiny neck of the woods or down your block, who can be just as diverse pick one person to make decisions for all of you. By supporting the Labor Party in England or Neil Kinnock or Gov. Clinton or some socialist you're picking your own master and you're reduced to a slave. No government will ever let you be truly free. I don't want a kinder, gentler politician telling me what I can do. I want true freedom, which has nothing to do with the bullshit elections and political parties you advocate in your otherwise excellent zine. The only way people will start to live truly free lives is by abandoning the whole system of power and control and working together with people who are like-minded to create a world based on cooperation and compassion, not coercion and competition. People need to reclaim their lives. There is nothing that any government can provide that you and a community that wants to can't provide for itself. I guess I have rambled off the very basic ideas of anarchism that you have often put down in your writing. But I don't see any other kind of real freedom. Under any form of government they'll still be

sending helicopters over your home to bust marijuana growers. They'll still beat you up at the protest. They'll still spend your tax money on bullshit that you don't believe in. They'll still make laws that serve their needs and control you. As for the actual act of voting for the evil of two lessers, you may want to sacrifice your beliefs and your dignity and go to the polls to keep out Bush or the Tories. I understand that and don't disagree with it. But to believe that vote is really changing anything is ludicrous. It is what we do with our lives regularly to create real freedom, not the half ass vote on election day that will really change the world. I would think that you could also see clearly that it isn't that there is something wrong with just certain politicians or parties. But that there is something very wrong with the whole nature of power and controlling freethinking individuals. You've made it clear that you are a freethinking individual and I don't think you need anyone to tell you what to do.

Kill Gina Arnold,
Adam Bregman
Los Angeles

Adam, Adam, Adam,

You seem like way too intelligent a guy to be thinking and speaking in simplistic slogans. This claim that voting is "choosing your own master" is one of many bits of anarchist doggerel that when held up to the light means little or nothing. When you choose a plumber to fix your toilet or a mechanic to work on your car, you're not making them the master of your sewage or transportation systems, you're simply picking someone to do a task that you lack either the time or expertise to do yourself. Choosing a president or a congressperson is much the same thing.

Of course that runs smack into your contention that a) all governments are the same, i.e., bad, and b) that we have no need of governments anyway. To say that all governments are the same is too preposterous to be worthy of discussion. As bad, as criminally stupid as the Bush and Reagan regimes proved to be, you'd can't be contending, can you, that they're fundamentally the same as the governments of Hitler or Mussolini? And bringing things a little closer to home, perhaps you're not old enough to remember, but I am, that the changes in government we've seen in this country over the past couple decades have made a very big difference indeed, unfortunately almost entirely for the worse.

You say voting makes no difference, yet the Supreme Court is on the verge of taking away a woman's right to control her own reproductive system precisely because people voted for a right wing president beholden to religious fanatics who then proceeded to appoint like-minded individuals to the nation's most powerful court. The reason that our educational system is in ruins and people are starving in the streets of every American city is because people voted for a government committed to enabling the few to get fabulously rich at the expense of the many. The sights I see in downtown Berkeley or San Francisco were unimaginable when I was a boy; they still are very nearly unimaginable in most of the world's industrial democracies where more liberal governments still hold sway.

But you claim governments are unnecessary; that "communities" can cooperatively do a better job of providing for their own needs. Perhaps you can provide me with some examples of how these communities will do that. How, for example, will the citizens of South Central Los Angeles obtain the funds or the materials to rebuild their communities, to educate their children, to create an economy capable of sustaining them? It's all very well for you, with your education obtained at a state-operated or subsidized school, to speak casually about how "freethinking individuals" can do everything for themselves, but what about people who have never learned to read or write, who have never known an employment opportunity beyond drug dealing or prostitution? There are millions of people for whom this is reality, and without some serious help from the more fortunate sectors of society, not only will they have little chance to escape their fate, they will very likely end up dragging the rest of us down with them.

No doubt you agree that the less privileged members of society deserve help from the more fortunate; your quarrel is with the notion that it should government that helps to organize it. Then I ask you: if not government, who? The McDonald's Foundation? The Spiky-Haired Punk Rock Anarchist Federation? The United Way or your local church or synagogue?

You see, these are issues that people have wrestled with long and hard, and the general consensus has been that, with all its faults, democratic government works better than any of the alternatives yet suggested. That's not to say it's by any means a panacea, although your all-or-nothing approach implies that anyone who votes is somehow expecting that single act to address all of the world's problems. My vote for Clinton was only one small act in the context of a life aimed at making a better world. Many of the things I do are far more important than who I vote for, but it's my considered opinion that the activities I engage in and the beliefs I pursue will have a better chance of flourishing under even a moderate or conservative Democratic government than the under the rabidly right wing Republican one we have been enduring.

Under Bush and Reagan most of the progressive movement's energy has gone into fighting to preserve those rights we already possessed. During the presidencies of Kennedy and Johnson, civil and political rights were steadily expanded - often at great cost, it's true - but the fact remains that progressive forces were able to pursue a positive agenda rather than fighting constant rearguard action against the forces of encroaching repression.

I guess my biggest dispute is with your concepts of "individuals" and "freedom." Although the notion of the free individual has been very nearly apotheosized in modern times (though it barely existed previously), you might be interested to know that that notion, as expounded by the likes of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, lies at the very heart of capitalism. A more reasoned approach reveals that there is no such thing as an individual, that we are all collections of attitudes and values shaped by a society from which, try as we may, we can no sooner extricate ourselves than we could wean ourselves of breathing air.

"Politician" has become a dirty word in our times; to a large extent, this is the result of attitudes fostered by the capitalist-controlled and largely right wing mass media. These are attitudes which play directly into the hands of those who currently control the country. If only idiots vote... well, we can see the results of recent elections. I admit that I've fallen for the same propaganda. Back in 1980 I didn't vote, believing that Carter and Reagan were equally bad. In fact, I've long suspected that almost the only reason extremist Republicans have been able to hold power for so long is that so many people have entirely given up on the political process.

Total all politicians with the same brush is dangerously simplistic. Look at it this way: technically speaking, both a nickel-and-dime marijuana dealer and a psychotic axe murderer are criminals. Are you going to tell me that since they're both criminals, it wouldn't make any difference which one moved in next door to you? Whoever moves into the White House is in a sense living next door to all of us. Since we're not likely to see the abolition of the Presidency or the Congress anytime soon, shouldn't we at least try to minimize the harm they do?

By the way, this is a bit of a cheap shot, since it's based on something I read in your zine Shit Happy rather than what was contained in your letter, but in said zine, your largely laudatory account of the LA riots portrays you as disgusted because while you were off smashing the state, someone tried to break into your car. Get a clue, dude. They were doing exactly what you seem to think is so great: going after the rich and privileged. Though you may imagine yourself to be some downtrodden victim of society, to the majority of people in South Central, you're a rich, overprivileged bastard. When you rhapsodize over random violence and looting, these are the forces you set in motion.

Now I'd like you to give a little thought to the rather blatant and inherent contradictions of a suburban middle class youth such as yourself driving downtown to participate in what you imagine is some sort of revolution. Did it ever occur to you that inner city residents of LA, about half of whom are too poor to afford their own automobiles, have to put up every day of their lives with the air pollution, the noise, and the physical disruption of their community produced by the automobiles that more privileged white people such as yourself take for granted. You want to take a real, substantive step toward a more equitable and livable world, burn your car and promise never to buy another one. Yeah, I thought you'd find that a little too hard; better stick to spouting slogans. All that aside, I know your heart's in the right place. Not that many years ago, you could have heard me saying

many of the same things you are.

Lawrence

Dear Mr. Livermore:

I recently ran across the *Lookout* and took it home to read. I thought you made some interesting points until you jumped on the anti-Israeli bandwagon. Go ahead and "ridicule" my so-called "ignorance and bigotry if it makes you happy. If you think the cartoon you printed with your article is not anti-Semitic, you don't know the meaning of the term. Nor are you familiar with the history of Palestine. In fact, because of people like you, who will believe whatever's in fashion (on the left, of course), misinformation is forever growing.

The PLO and other Arab terrorist groups know their public relations. They count on people like you being ignorant and ready to blame the Jews — oh, pardon me, the Israelis, for the whole problem. As Golda Meir said, peace will come to the Middle East when the Arabs love their children more than they hate us. So far it hasn't happened. You don't seem to understand that the Arabs have declared a jihad, a holy war, against the state of Israel, the aim of which is Israel's total annihilation. If you agree with that aim, I'm sorry to disillusion you, but you will be indistinguishable from an anti-Semite.

As for your whining about loans to Israel, I'd like to remind you that during the Holocaust the US government refused to admit Jews fleeing nazi death camps. Maybe you don't think that was anti-Semitism either. But millions died who could have been saved, had President Roosevelt, the Congress, and American public opinion been willing to help. The Statue of Liberty only lifts her lamp when it's economically profitable. To speak in America's defense, no other country accepted Jewish refugees either. If our government wishes to belatedly help the people they ignored in the 1940s, what's wrong with that?

Every country in the world sat by and watched Jews being murdered in record numbers and did nothing unless they themselves were attacked. America waited until Pearl Harbor to enter the war. Jewish lives were simply not important. What if the United States had never been attacked? Maybe we'd all be saying Heil Hitler. Except for the Jews, of course, we'd have been "exterminated."

Palestine was reclaimed as a Jewish state because no country on this planet gave asylum to the Jews in our most desperate need. And although we accepted the UN partition in 1948, the Arabs refused. They wanted Israel destroyed and they still do. But they are learning to lie about their intentions — not to their own people, but to gullible Americans. For you to call Israel a "psychotic client state" is disrespectful to all the Jews who have died to provide a safe haven for their persecuted brethren.

Recently, sentiment against Israel and Zionism has become so rabid as to be indistinguishable from anti-Semitism. It's just more fashionable to be "anti-Zionist." Have you ever wondered why Israel is subjected to greater scrutiny than any other country? Held to higher standards? Blamed for promoting American interests in the Middle East and elsewhere when those activities don't work out? It is our government, the American government, who "can't afford to provide its own citizens with housing." Are you naive enough to believe what you print?

The American government has enough money to house, clothe, and feed every US citizen. It chooses not to do so. How does this relate to aid to Israel? The Israeli government is not in a position to tell the Americans what to do with their own money. Our money. The taxpayers' money. I'm a taxpayer and I want Israel to exist in peace, and I'm willing to pay for it.

If you think the PLO could bring any semblance of peace to the Middle East, even if they got everything they demand, you don't know nothing. Listen to what Arabs, Palestinians, say to each other! Read the anti-Semitic books on sale throughout the Arab world. Hear on Arab radio the promise to destroy the infidels (Israelis). Maybe you have personally never been hated and persecuted for your religious beliefs and ethnic origins. If you had, you would perhaps be less sarcastic and more understanding. Israel wants peace with safety. The PLO wants war and destruction. It bothers me, Mr. Livermore, to see which side you're on.

Morgan Firestar
Oakland

Dear Mr. Firestar:

My article in Lookout #37 contained no words of support or encouragement for the PLO. For you to suggest that the PLO and similar groups "know their public relations" is idiotic, unless you consider blowing up airliners, murdering civilians, and taking innocent men, woman and children as hostages a good way to win friends and influence people.

Nor did I "blame the Jews...for the whole problem." Carrying on a successful religious war requires two opposing groups of superstitious fanatics. As far as I personally am concerned, the tenets of Judaism and Islam are equally barbaric and retrograde, and I would shed not a tear to see both faiths (along with Christianity, Hinduism, and all similarly soggy substitutes for thinking) banished from the earth tomorrow. If not sooner.

And I'm further aware that within the state of Israel there is a wide variety of opinions, as the recent election amply demonstrated. My criticism was primarily directed at the now-ousted Likud Party and its hard-line supporters, who are barely distinguishable from the extremists and terrorists on the Arab side. Likewise, there are many moderate Arabs and Palestinians who, regardless of what their governments say or do, would greatly prefer to live in peace with the Jews. Lumping all Arabs together, as you do in your letter, is every bit as racist (technically speaking, it's even "anti-Semitic") as you accuse critics of Israel of being.

Anybody who knows history is aware that the conduct of the US, British, and other governments in refusing sanctuary or assistance to the Jews before and during World War II was disgraceful. But how does that justify taking (by violence and terrorism, as you well know) the land belonging to another people to establish a Jewish state? However, despite the fact that Israel was established on stolen land through murder and intimidation (as, of course, was the United States and most other countries), I don't wish to see it destroyed, merely to see it respect the rights of its neighbors and its many citizens (and residents of the occupied territories) who happen to not be Jewish. To give special treatment to people because of their religious beliefs and ethnic origins is racism, pure and simple; that's why Zionism has been tarred with the brush it has.

And while what was done to the Jews in this century was a particularly horrific chapter in the chronicle of man's inhumanity to man, it doesn't differ that substantively from what happened to black Africans or native Americans. What would you say to a black or Indian state established within US borders which systematically discriminated against white Americans and which depended on US financial aid to do so? Israel is not held to any particularly high standard, I should think; not if, for example, we continued to furnish it with more foreign aid than any other state in the world even while it committed such flagrant crimes as helping to equip South Africa, the closest modern equivalent to Nazi Germany, with the atomic bomb. But by the same token, if we as taxpayers are going to be forking over in excess of three billion dollars a year to help support Israel, I don't see why we shouldn't have the right to at least comment on how that money is spent.

By the way, which "American interests" is Israel promoting in the Middle East? Certainly not mine. Lawrence

Hello Larry and others,

Picked up a copy of *Lookout* recently and thought I'd send you some feedback. I appreciate your desire to cast more light on the various ways in which the world is in crisis, especially ecocide, and hope more people initiate similar efforts. But I have some basic problems with the content of much of your analysis.

You basically see the situation in this country to be an American problem, one primarily caused by Republicans. You present Japan and Germany as "more successful economies," ones the US can learn from in becoming "successful" again. This shows a lack of systemic understanding.

To begin with, your discussion of Japan and Germany leaves out important pieces. You write "Japan (or Germany) did so-and-so," but it's the ruling elites who actually made these decisions, with the prime aim of strengthening their hold on power. And you analyze both nation-states as if they were separate units which stand or fall on their own merits, rather than sectors of a single integrated world market.

Their post-World War II success is largely due to the operation of an integrated global economy originally planned around American corporate needs, and is in large measure the result of US military spending.

The article on Japan-bashing talks of "familial cooperation" between business, workers, and the government. Never do you mention that the government has always had the policy of smashing "uncooperative" labor organizations, a process which was even furthered after World War II by the McArthur-led American occupation authorities. To this date, major Japanese corporations employ gangsters to keep the workers in a "cooperative" mood. Some happy family! (as if the nuclear family is in essence a good thing) Furthermore, the job security and benefits accorded the cowed employees of the major businesses do not extend to the small ones, which employ over 70% of workers, and often supply vital parts to the majors, while funneling most of their profits back to the big banks.

Japan's "success" has meant very little to most workers, whose housing tends to the inadequate, but worker passivity means the elite, who run both the companies and the government, can afford not to worry about short-term profits; they can always count on squeezing what they need out of the work force. This is not simply a bad feature which can be discarded while the "good" parts are borrowed; it constitutes the heart of the Japanese "model." In any event, Japan's "prosperity" has been kept going recently largely by real estate speculation. The collapse of that game is throwing the miracle machine into a spin.

Likewise, you painted a rather rosy picture of Germany, forgetting to mention, among many other things, the computerized ID cards Germans have to carry. "Homelessness is almost unheard of." Really? Is that why there are so many squatters in Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Köln? Many units are being kept vacant while the owners speculate on real estate values, and there are lots of needy folks. As with Japan, the "world's third most successful economy" is in a tailspin. (Read about the recent strike wave?) In both Germany and Japan, you also neglect the roles that the looting of the environment (e.g., Japanese companies clear-cutting the Philippines) and workers in other nations play in these "success" stories.

This crisis is not an American problem (nor a British one, nor...), but a global systemic crisis. Analysts as far back as the early 19th century (e.g., Adam Smith and David Ricardo) understood that profit cannot come from selling at a price higher than cost; as a sixth grade math student can show, that only explains a single enterprise's profit, not accumulation on a society-wide scale (of course, schools still teach that profit = revenue - cost). Capitalism exists by forcing a certain group of people, i.e., most of us, to work more time than would be necessary to produce our needs, so that we can earn money to buy these needs. The excess time, in the form of money, on a global level, is the source of profit. Every enterprise, from street peddlers to multinationals to company-nations (like Cuba and the late Soviet Union), tries to corner as much of this surplus as possible. But the managers just can't work us hard enough to keep up with the total requirement for profits, including the repayment of loans. So the entire global system is sinking into this black hole, especially because of accumulating debt, and the only question for each nation is how to slow its own sinking. This leads to all-out competition for economic survival at every level.

There is nothing natural about this set-up. It has been forced on an unwilling population from the very beginning, starting with the Enclosures in Europe in 1400-1850, where large landlords took over common land or small holdings and evicted the residents, who were thus forced into cities, where they were further forced into work in the growing factories through laws such as vagrancy regulations. People frequently rebelled against this in the beginning, and wherever else capitalism has been introduced it has been fiercely resisted by indigenous people. In the former "socialist" bloc, it was the government which played the roles of landlord and capitalist; what took 400 years in Western Europe, Stalin's enclosures accomplished in 20 years. The system's survival requires our submission. Since capital accumulation means turning the natural and living into dead commodities, it also necessarily results in planetary destruction.

Your lack of systemic analysis also shows itself in political conclusions which would have been naive even back in 1967. You blame Republicans for corrupting America, and hope that Democrats

can provide a breathing room for some good leaders to emerge. Ha! From the very beginning, this country was run by a rich elite. The founding fathers shaped the constitution so as to ensure their dominance (check out the ideas of those rich white men, such as Madison). Voting was initially reserved to property-owning white men. Only when the elite's hold on the economy was secure was voting slowly extended to other groups, and that was generally done in order to divert grassroots initiatives from more radical paths.

The elite's control has constantly grown, especially under so-called liberal leadership. Roosevelt's New Deal was shaped by men such as Averell Harriman of Union Pacific, Herbert Lehman of Lehman Brothers, and Reginald Jones of General Electric. For example, unions were guaranteed the right to organize, as long as they accepted the elite's control of the means of production. John Kennedy, one of your inspiring leaders, played a major role in promoting the overseas expansion of American corporations, especially in the "underdeveloped" part of the world, and boasted of that in a Tampa speech just days before dying. You credit Lyndon Johnson with domestic reforms (paid for with multinational looting), failing to mention how he was pushed into those by riots, or how his Kerner Commission recommended breaking up urban concentrations of poor people to lessen their ability to organize, or the anti-dissent COINTELPRO terror his regime initiated.

The "Great Society" social reforms actually reached their heights under the reign of Republican Richard Nixon. The cutbacks started not under Reagan, but under the Democratic Carter, because the worsening of the global systemic crisis meant the system could no longer afford to buy off and splinter the poor, and had to resort to repression. Whatever positive changes have happened in America have been the result of popular uprisings, not of some benevolent leaders.

You dismiss those who can't see the difference between the Labour and Conservative Parties in Britain. Maybe these people remember the role Labour governments have played in using armed state force to break strikes, and in raising exploitation rates in the 70s via inflation, instead of the Conservative approach, unemployment, or Labour's role in setting up a nonpartisan police state apparatus complete with secret bunkers.

Throughout the world, so-called left parties have won office after radical populist campaigns, only to institute "Reaganomics" once in office. This includes the Mitterand regime in France, the Gonzalez government in Spain, Menem in Argentina, Papandreou in Greece, Blanco in the Dominican Republic, Manley in Jamaica... Even "Communist" parties behave like this. There is really only one way to run a capitalist economy, and that's to maximize exploitation. The better-off national units can afford more carrots, but all ultimately rely on bullets.

What's the alternative? It is to propagandize for and to participate in radical initiatives aimed at the destruction of commodity relations and the creation of a drastically decentralized society based on maximum local self-sufficiency and voluntary, non-hierarchical cooperation. These include squatting for housing and community centers, land occupations aimed at local food production, the growth of an insurgent counterculture which would include a rediscovery of archaic practices that predate hierarchical society, and eventually, the occupation and alteration of the production system. You say this is utopian? I say what's utopian is to hope that a system which is inherently based on exploitation and environmental destruction can operate in a benign, or even less destructive way. History shows otherwise.

Check out diverse publications which publicize this perspective. These include *The Fifth Estate*, 4632 Second Ave., Detroit MI 48201; *Anarchy*, PO Box 1446, Columbia MO 65205; *Drunken Boat*, PO Box 718, New York NY 10009; *Midnight Notes*, Autonomedia, PO Box 568, Brooklyn NY 11211; and *Processed World*, 41 Sutter St. #1829, San Francisco CA 94104; plus ourselves, The Social Club, 2140 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley CA 94704.

Jack Straw
Berkeley

Dear Jack,

Your facts are largely correct, and to some extent fill in details that I will freely admit to having neglected in the articles to which

you're responding. Your analysis, however, is badly skewed by ideology, to the point of being worse than useless.

Apparently I have to constantly reiterate for the benefit of knee-jerk anarchists like yourself that I harbor no delusions that mainstream political parties or institutions hold any prospect of salvation for the suffering masses such as ourselves. This being nearly the end of the 20th century, though, is it too much for me to expect thinkers like yourself to have grasped the concept of relativity? Of course the preponderance of the Democratic Party consists of power-tripping, self-interested, exploitative and irredeemable idiots. Is it not possible for you to understand that however true this might be, the Republican Party is infinitely worse? Or that by the time your party, or faction, or cell achieves any kind of significant influence, centuries may well have elapsed, during which our chances of survival, if not a humane existence, would be marginally, if not measurably greater under a Democratic as opposed to a Republican administration?

Of course your ideas are utopian. So are mine. I don't like the capitalist system, the white male hierarchy, the fact that my relative prosperity contributes to at least some extent to environmental depredations, the exploitation of the third world, and greatly increased poverty and homelessness right here in Berkeley. I just don't see how tarring both major political parties and all large corporations (and just who is this "elite" you keep talking about; from the perspective of about 98% of the world's population, you are the elite) with the same severely blinkered brush is going to help anything. It's not all that different from the Christian crackpots currently in control of the Republican Party branding anyone who disagrees with them as un-American and irrelevant to political discourse.

Ditto for your slams on the Japanese and/or German political or economic systems. I'm under no delusion that either of those systems represents a utopia, either. I'm merely pointing out that within the context of modern capitalist states, those two function more efficiently and more humanely than our own. Ensuring that people have access to housing, medical care, education, and the other prerequisites of everyday life is not merely an effort to "buy off and splinter the poor." It's also common decency, and, believe it or not, good business in the broadest sense of the word. Neither Japan nor Germany, nor any other industrialized state that I'm aware of, represents a model or goal toward which we should direct our efforts, merely a direction in which we should be tending.

Homelessness is almost unheard of in Germany, as well as most other western European countries. Most of the squatters to whom you refer are among the voluntary poor. That's not to say I'm against squatting - I yield to no one in my outrage against landlords who treat housing as a speculative commodity rather than a human right - merely to point out that official policy in most industrial countries is that people do have a right to housing as well as most other necessities, and in this respect, the United States is lamentably backward. All right, so national health care or free education through the university level won't usher in the millennium here in the USA - but at least they'll bring us up to the level of what is generally considered a civilized society.

Most of your recommendations for social change make sense and are to be desired, but they don't exist in opposition to or exclusive of incremental change in the existing political system. As you rightly point out, most governmentally introduced reforms have occurred in response to popular pressure or uprisings, and the changes you advocate could certainly bring the same sorts of pressures to bear on the powers that be. But however righteous and/or rigid your ideology, those powers are not going to vanish or even greatly diminish in the immediate future. Whatever program or ideology we devise has to take that into consideration; any other approach is like refusing to build roofs on our houses because we are morally opposed to rain.

Lawrence

Dear Lawrence,

#37 of Lookout was a good read, but the harshing on Public Enemy was a little too severe.

Sure P.E. do a lot of sloganizing like "Fight the power" which can be misinterpreted and the energy misdirected by their listeners, but that is just "scratching the surface" criticism. You consistently

neglected to address the positive energy PE puts out. Public Enemy have been in the forefront of instituting a racial introspection in this country, both in whole communities and in many individuals. In other words, they are helping to open the eyes of a society which wanted to say "color doesn't matter," when in fact people are still discriminated against in social and economic spheres as well as historically kept under the boot because of color. In many ways PE is making it safe, albeit on an impersonal commercial level, to be proud of your ethnic culture. Again, I should reiterate that it's not all PE's doing. There are people behind the movement.

You complain that their concerts are all male. If you look at most aggressive forms of music, each scene is usually male dominated. Do you blame PE for this or is it just a sad case of historical circumstance? I'm not trying to excuse it or justify it, just pointing out that your criticism is one that applies universally and not just to PE shows. What about punk?

You also bagged on PE and rap for being too macho and having a fucked attitude toward women. You must not know much about the hip hop scene. There are many groups (Jungle Brothers, X-Clan, Hiphoprisy, etc.) who don't take a fucked attitude toward women and who in fact praise them. The whole machismo criticism is fair but you must recognize the historical context in which it occurs. The machismo of hip hop culture definitely has different origins than mainstream Rambo testosterone.

You also ripped on KRS-1 because he beat up PM DON. Yeah, it was hypocritical of him, but to dismiss everything KRS stands for and accomplished because of one event, I would have to diss everybody who ever inspired me. I don't expect people to be immaculate in their personal revolutions or political revolutions, do you? It's as if the Black Panthers fucked up once by firing the first shot in a police standoff, then some shoddy reporter writes an article that says the Panthers are full of shit and all their programs are full of shit.

This brings me to my last point. In this society we tend to scrutinize that actions (political, social, cultural) of an oppressed group more so than groups who wield the power. I think this comes from television, specifically as seen by the extreme scrutiny of the LA uprising participants and lack of government policy / action scrutiny. I believe everything needs to be criticized in order to maintain integrity, but that criticism should come from within the group instead of a person who knows little about the intricacies that make the specific culture stand erect. I ask you to apply the same criticism to New Kids On The Block, who deserve it more.

Lawrence, I luv your writing, I luv punk. Your attitude toward the other music and culture I am beginning to love makes me want to quit this whitebread eatin', xenophobic punk scene.

L. Louie
Davis CA

Dear L.

Your points are well thought out and well stated, but I'll have to disagree with the majority of them. I don't claim to be an expert on rap or hip hop, but one doesn't need to be to make judgments about right and wrong. Although I have no idea what race or ethnic origin you are, your willingness to cut PE some slack because of their cultural background is characteristic of many white liberals, and has a subtext implying that we can't expect African-Americans to conform to the moral standards at least nominally applied to "mainstream" society.

You're darn right PE do a lot of "sloganeering," and if my criticism of them only "scratches the surface," it might be because self-proclaimed black spokesman Chuck D's lyrics and public statements seldom reach beyond the painfully superficial. It's supposed to be news that America is a racist country? Please. Malcolm X made that case far more eloquently and intelligently thirty years ago. Encouraging people to be "proud of [their] ethnic culture is progressive? It's not all that great a step from ethnic pride to the horrendous "ethnic cleansing" we're seeing in the Balkans these days.

What's so great about "aggressive" music, especially if it by nature attracts a predominantly male and aggressive audience? That was always one of the worst aspects of old-fashioned punk shows, and thankfully, something which is gradually disappearing from the current punk scene. An excess of testosterone is an unpleasant thing

regardless of whether it emanates from the mainstream or the underground. Many of the hip hop groups whose rhymes are totally PC in the gender arena still manage to put forth enough hypermasculine attitude to more than counteract the intellectual sense of what they're saying.

OK, so maybe KRS-1 lost his temper and did something stupid. I agree; no one should be discounted because of a single mistake. But a month after the fact, in a nationally published interview, KRS not only failed to apologize for his mistake, he gloried in it, spewing nonsense about how PM Dawn had transgressed on his "kingdom." Same old gang warfare nonsense I've been hearing since my own juvenile delinquent days back in the 1960s. The whole interview made KRS sound not so much like the educator he likes to make himself out to be, but rather like an entertainer with declining record sales who needed to cop a new image before the gangster rappers sliced off all his audience.

As for your reference to the Black Panthers, as someone who once supported that group (and who, living across the street from their Berkeley headquarters for a year, had ample opportunity to observe them in action), I'd have to say that the Panthers are as over-romanticized by remnants of the white left as they were over-estimated by law enforcement authorities. Their impact was ultimately far less than once imagined, and at least as much negative as positive.

One valid point you make is that oppressed groups are subjected to greater scrutiny than is the ruling class. This shouldn't come as any great shock, being that the major media are virtually without exception owned and operated by the ruling class. If you published a newspaper or ran a television station, how much space would you devote to exposing your own shortcomings? On the other hand, I don't think you could argue that the Lookout has been hesitant to level criticism wherever it might be relevant. And for every ornery word directed at Chuck D, I'd venture to say you could find several dozen aimed at the sick, slimy bastards who rule this land. Most punks I know neither eat white bread nor are xenophobic; at the same time, to accept and/or praise anything produced by another race simply because it was produced another race is itself a classic illustration of racism. I agree with you that some hip hop groups are more progressive than others. Public Enemy and Boogie Down Productions are not among them. LL

Lawrence,

I picked up a copy of your magazine in San Francisco, at Rainbow Grocery in the Mission. I read through most of the entire thing in one sitting. You have really excellent and clear observation and analysis of things.. Your straightforwardness is really sound and I mainly wanted you to know that I liked to find such a voice as yours. Can you or would you be interested in expanding your section called "Notes From All Over" to include many more countries that you are aware of (as relates to the issues already looked at and how this government's policies affect them)?

Keep up the great writing, and all the best of support goes to you from this part of the Bay Area.

Oh, how often do you publish Lookout?

Julian Warner
San Francisco

Larry Livermore -

I love the serial "Once Upon A Time In The Mountains", but I hate that it's taken me years to read through Part III, because of how infrequently Lookout comes out.

Also, in the Letters section, it seems you receive much mail from foolish people. Then you make a fool of yourself by responding. Please, just print the letters and let the readers decide. If someone writes in who's a fool, most of us are smart enough to pick up on that, thanx.

Matt Foote

Sorry, but I publish the Lookout as a labor of love, not to cater to the entertainment needs of the masses. If you can't wait to see how my stories come out, write your own.

And readers, I leave it to you decide: is this letter writer (or answerer) a fool, or not? LL

Journey To The Mysterious East Bloc

Of all the world's possible destinations, Poland has always ranked very low on my list. I don't think I'm alone in this, even though I have some pretty odd tastes in travel (the two places I most want to visit are, not necessarily in this order, Greenland and Iceland). At least I've never seen many ads or posters featuring bikini-clad beauties beckoning the fun-loving tourist to "Come frolic in Poland!"

All those Polack jokes I heard while growing up in heavily ethnic Detroit didn't help either, nor did the several linebackers of Polish extraction and subnormal IQ who delighted in making my life miserable back in high school. And even though I'd like to think I'm mature enough by now to get over youthful prejudices, there's the added complication that Poland in 1992 is by all accounts an economic and environmental basket case, struggling mightily to recover from 50 years of Soviet domination.

Well, that's what it said in the newspapers anyway, and I'd seen enough of East Germany, both before and after the wall, to know there must be something to it. But I'm getting ahead of myself...

I had nothing more in mind when I flew over to London last summer but a peaceful month of relaxing in my quiet room in Westbourne Park where almost no one knows my phone number and wouldn't call me anyway because it's too expensive. I thought I might take in a few movies or plays, read some of books, and sleep a lot. After two years of working and going to school full time, and on the heels of handing in a 58 page thesis in exchange for a degree, I figured I deserved it.

But I didn't reckon on Christy and her bright ideas. "Dude, I'm going to meet up with the Mr. T Experience in Germany and tour with them through Poland and Czechoslovakia. Why don't you come."

For readers who don't follow the punk rock scene, the Mr. T Experience is a band from the general vicinity of Berkeley, California. I've known them for years, and while I've always liked them, both as musicians and people, the idea of going on tour with them sounded a little strenuous. Bear in mind that a punk tour doesn't normally consist of the posh hotels and sex and drug orgies celebrated in the songs and stories of more renowned rock acts. It's more likely to entail sleeping on concrete floors in unheated buildings and hoping there'll be enough bread and cheese, or at least bread, to go around.

I've been on a couple such tours in the allegedly civilized United States and the charm wears thin very quickly, especially if you're not in the band and getting at least the gratification of hearing people cheer you on (there are no guarantees of this either). And I'd heard the story of one band who'd played Poland and who, for their promised hot meal, received (shades of Ronald Reagan!) warm bread soaked in catsup.

Still, the opportunity to see a side of Eastern Europe that ordinary tourists would never get near was hard to pass up. After hemming and hawing for a few days, I found myself crawling out of bed at some horribly unnatural hour and trundling down to Liverpool Street Station to meet Christy and begin an arduous marathon journey to the heart of central Europe. (Yes, I know that sounds terribly pretentious and clichéd; please bear in mind that I can't remember the name of the town where we were going. Oh yeah, now I remember, it's called Osnabrück. Haven't heard of it? Neither had I.)

Now I know this is going to sound bourgeois as all get out, but at a certain point in my life, the romance of traveling vast distances across Europe by boat and train began to lose its appeal. The first couple times I crossed the North Sea it was exciting, but six and a half hours of staring out the window at an endless expanse of slate-grey water wears a bit thin. I highly recommend the 45-minute airplane flight from London to Amsterdam over the twelve-hour boat-train combo, and if you shop around and plan ahead, it's not even much more expensive.

And Holland was barely halfway to where we were going.

Beautiful. Eighteen hours of virtually nonstop motion on packed trains with people jabbering in half a dozen languages, most of them obnoxious. Fortunately, Christy's a good traveling companion and conversationalist. Unfortunately, she possesses a talent which I lack, that of being able to sleep almost anywhere. She arrived in Osnabrück relatively rested; I, having slept approximately half an hour, was in fairly grumpy fettle.

But the fun was just beginning. The Mr. T Experience were just starting their show when we arrived, and to be honest, it was nothing special. Germans are better at acting jaded than anyone except possibly Californians and New Yorkers, and while some of them danced and sang along pretty energetically (well, it's not always easy to distinguish between energetically and drunkenly, and with Germans, it's not usually worth trying), things were pretty low key overall.

By the time the show wrapped up and everything was packed away in the van, it was getting on toward three a.m. When we told the Germans we were planning on driving all night to get to Prague in time for the next day's show, they looked at us as though we were explaining that our cardboard box was really a transmogrifier capable of taking us to the moon at the speed of light. "No, you will never make it," was the consensus. "Crazy Americans. Your country's social system is in ruins, and you don't even know how to make a tour." (Yes, I may have only imagined I was hearing the latter; my German is not quite what it ought to be.)

And if I couldn't sleep on the train through Holland and West Germany, I wasn't about to now that we were headed toward East Germany and a whole stretch of country that I had never seen before. I stared fiercely out the window for the rest of the night, seeing, as you might infer, very little except extensive darkness. It was already getting light when we entered East Germany, no longer a separate country, though it might as well have been.

Those of you who've visited West Germany in recent years know that it's frighteningly modern and efficient, making much of the United States look like a rather bedraggled banana republic. Americans feeling a need to re-assert their superiority over the Teutonic races are advised to head for the East (although they had better do it soon; modernization is proceeding at a frightening pace), where the West's sleek autobahns suddenly give way to rutted and potholed two lane wagon tracks. I exaggerate only slightly, and wait till we get on the subject of Polish roads.

Most of the towns we passed through were fairly decrepit, though everywhere you could see cranes and construction sites. By six or seven a.m. people were out in droves, and the streets were clogged with traffic. The most common car was the old East Bloc Trabant, a sort of glorified go-kart lacking the latter's style or efficiency, but there was no shortage of Mercedes hogging the road as only a middle-class German with attitude can do.

Along the side of the road there were stands selling a variety of things, most of which appeared to be useless junk that wouldn't be in much demand even in countries with large disposable incomes. The most common stands, though, had big signs announcing "Cellular telephones," and this really baffled me. Were East Germans going straight from pseudo-communism to self-centered yuppiedom without an intervening period of good taste?

What I finally deduced, although I'm still not sure I'm right, is that the booths were not selling the phones, but rather renting time on them to people who needed to make calls in a country where the only thing rarer than a public pay phone is a private phone in an average citizen's home. Again, this is changing rapidly, but I still remember a West Berlin acquaintance sneering at the hopelessness of life on the other side of the now-vanished Wall: "You can't even make a phone call over there. They don't belong in Germany, they should stay with Russia."

After hours of rattling over progressively bumpier roads and past shabbier and shabbier towns, we approached the Czech border. I had a splitting headache from not having slept in a day and a half, but I more or less forgot about it as I gawked at the unfamiliar sights. Border procedures were minimal, involving little more than a display of passports. My first impressions of Czechoslovakia were that everything looked kind of shaggy and overgrown, and that there were a lot of hitchhikers.

On closer examination, most of the hitchhikers appeared to be prostitutes. But after the first couple miles, during which we were descending a long, almost precipitous hill, there wasn't much more to see. The countryside flattened out into something resembling Michigan or Ohio, and towns were few and far between. Rural Czechoslovakia seemed backward, almost primitive, more or less what I was expecting. That only left me all the more unprepared for Prague, a huge, and by Eastern European standards, very modern metropolis.

When I say modern I don't refer to the architecture. Most of central Prague has not changed much for the past century or two. But it offers a quality of life not radically different from any large city in Western Europe or North America, though you'd be hard pressed to find a such a civilized urban environment in the United States.

The downside: the place is crawling with tourists, the camera-toting, ice cream-slurping variety that infest places like Venice and the more sordid quarters of London, Paris, and Mendocino. Since the borders opened up, Prague has become Europe's bargain basement destination. But the plague is confined to a relatively small area; ten minutes' stroll takes you into quiet districts distinguished by stately boulevards, lined with grand, almost grandiose architecture that manages to be magnificent without being excessively imposing. Kind of like Vienna without the froth.

I hate to say it, but the place is a real estate agent's dream. If full-fledged capitalism is ever unleashed on Prague, you're looking at Greenwich Village-cum-Disneyland on the Elbe. Fortunately, socialism is far from dead, even if the entrepreneurial spirit is running rampant. As much as the Czechs chafed under Soviet-imposed communist rule, they came away from the experience with a more cohesive sense of society than we in the West enjoy.

Right, I hear you saying, how could I make such sweeping generalizations based on spending a mere couple of days in a city? Oh, I don't know, it comes pretty easy, actually. Let's just put it this way. While the Czechs are making the transition to a market economy, they've haven't thrown the baby out with the bathwater. Certain things are still taken for granted as human rights, among them housing, education, medical care, and a living wage, even for the unemployed. By the way, the unemployment rate in the western, or Czech half of the country is a whopping 3%. A real economic basket case, eh? California should have it so good. In the whole city I saw one beggar, and he was a German hippie. Compare that to Berkeley or San Francisco.

It's important to point out that Prague is by no means a rich city. Even the comfortably well off make do on an income that would be considered brutally insufficient here. But the more liberal social contract leaves Czechs less susceptible to the fear that haunts so many Americans, the nagging awareness that one could suddenly find oneself out on the streets foraging for the bare necessities.

That's not to say that things couldn't get tougher. When I was there, Czechoslovakia was in the midst of deciding to split into two countries, largely because Slovakia, the eastern half of the federation, wasn't doing nearly so well as the Czech lands, where Prague is located. Slovakia, with unemployment at 12% and rising, and with a largely agricultural economy, wanted to go slow in abandoning socialism and central planning. Vaclav Klaus, the newly elected prime minister and a Czech, is an admirer of Margaret Thatcher, one of the world's most notorious exponents of social Darwinism.

Czechs seemed largely resigned to seeing Slovakia go; the eastern part of the federation seemed to matter as much to them as, say, Nebraska figures in the thinking of a New Yorker. One thing I hadn't

known until our Czech hosts informed me was that Czechoslovakia was an artificial country, patched together out of the wreckage of the Austrian-Hungarian empire following World War I, so the impending breakup was hardly an earth-shaking dislocation of the natural order of things.

Anyway, enough socio-political disquisitions for now; we had a punk rock show to attend to. Five or six hours before the show was scheduled to get underway, kids were already gathering up and down the sidewalks of a mostly residential block. The venue appeared to be some recently excavated tomb or national monument; in order to get to the room where the show would take place, you had to descend two long flights of stairs, with every footstep kicking up a cloud of dust and the temperature falling to meat locker levels even though it was a warm summer day outdoors.

My fantasies about the origin of the building notwithstanding, it turned out to have been a movie theater built in the 1920s. This was, however, the first time it had been used in decades. The city had turned it over to a group of young people to use as a cultural center.

The other band on the bill tonight was also American. Most Lookout readers will be familiar with Fugazi, but for those who aren't, suffice it to say that they're the most successful independent band in the world, their records selling into the hundreds of thousands, possibly by now even having breached the million mark, without having ever dealt with a major label. They apply similar principles to their tours, laying down strict conditions about everything to door prices (in the United States, never over five dollars) to all-ages access. Backstage I watched Ian Mackaye, who in addition to playing guitar and singing for Fugazi, runs the band's own label, Dischord Records, books the tours, and even drives the van, carry on a long and serious discussion with a Polish punk who was upset over how an upcoming Fugazi show in his country was being handled.

It seemed that the Polish promoter was sticking to the letter but not the spirit of Fugazi's rules. He was charging the equivalent of five dollars for tickets, but five dollars represents a couple days' pay to most Polish workers. Ian carefully explored various options such as cancelling the show (thereby disappointing lots of kids) or forcing the promoter to refund part of the cost of tickets he'd already sold (an administrative nightmare) or giving the show to a different promoter (but that wouldn't solve the problem of kids who'd already bought tickets from the original promoter).

All this took up at least half an hour, and I honestly can't remember how it was finally resolved. What impressed me was how Ian paid such close attention to details that the vast majority of bands simply couldn't be bothered with. Bear in mind that any band touring Poland is doing it mostly for love; the debased state of the Polish zloty guarantees that there's little if any money to be made. Speaking of money, I might add that Fugazi handed over their entire paycheck from the Prague show to the Mr. T Experience, knowing that we were headed for Poland the following day and would probably be needing the money.

If this is beginning to sound like I've jointed the throngs of punk rock fans around the world who worship Mr. Mackaye like a demigod, well, maybe I have. It's difficult not to stand in awe of someone so devoted to doing the right thing. And, as I never tire of pointing out, being kind and generous and fair doesn't have to entail personal sacrifice; Ian and Fugazi are hardly hurting for money. It's just that they didn't have to debase themselves to get it.

By the time the show started, over a thousand people were crammed into the hall and movement became uncomfortably difficult. I hung out upstairs for a while drinking Fugazi's share of the beer provided by the Czech promoters (Fugazi don't drink, smoke, take drugs, etc...) before climbing up on the side of the stage for my first-ever close-up view of the Fugazi in concert.

It was the fourth time I'd seen Fugazi. The first two times I'd watched them for half a song and then gone outside, pronouncing them boring. Both of those shows were back in the days when the band was still relatively unknown, and one of them I only attended because

the other band on the bill was the then even more unknown Operation Ivy.

But by the time they came to Oakland last year, they had become such a big deal that I resolved to watch their whole set. It was still a little boring, but had a certain appeal. This night in Prague was the first time I ever really appreciated them. I don't know if they'd changed or I had, but I found the music more lively and the performance less pretentious than before. The only fault I found was that the half hour or so of encores seemed a bit much. The crowd, needless to say, loved every minute of it, and would have happily watched them for the rest of the night.

The show had a lot of high points, but my favorite was when the sound system quit functioning. Half a dozen technicians and factotums went rushing madly around searching for the problem. After about five minutes of this, Ian glanced around the stage, strode over to the column of speakers on one side, and said, "I wonder if plugging these wires back in might help." He did, and it did. This guy does it all. I halfway expected to see him with a broom cleaning up after everyone else had gone home.

We hung out for an hour or two after the show, exchanging road stories with Fugazi. They had just come from Lubljana, in Slovenia and were headed for Austria in the morning. And we were on our way to Poland. Fugazi had been there before. We were in for an experience, they assured us. Funny, that's what everyone said.

But first we went to sleep at a beautiful old apartment belonging to a genuinely nice guy whose name I can't remember, and might not be able to pronounce if I could. Facing on a park, with majestically high ceilings, the place spoke of 19th century elegance that made the cracked plaster and primitive plumbing easy to ignore. Our host, in his mid to late 30s, dressed in black leather, described himself as Prague's "number one rocker," and had made his apartment a shrine to the Nico, the blonde femme fatale of the Velvet Underground. The only other pictures on his wall were of Vaclav Havel and the Pope.

His English was limited, and he was more interested in talking about American bands than Czech politics, but I got him to talk a little bit about it. He'd been there in the middle of the Velvet Revolution of 1989, had worked side by side with some of the people now running the country, and was unwilling to criticize anything they did. When I asked him how Vaclav Klaus' admiration for Margaret Thatcher sat with him, he shrugged his shoulders and changed the subject. He was not so reticent when it came to the subject of Slovakia. How dare they tear the country apart with their old-fashioned ideas?

Early the next morning we were off to Poland. Again, once we were outside Prague, the countryside seemed deserted. As we neared the border we passed through a long succession of hills that grew steadily steeper. Having heard horror stories about shortages or the downright unavailability of certain necessities, we stocked up on bottled water, beer, and maybe some food.

The border looked ominous, but its sinister trappings were obviously a holdover from the communist days. The guards looked as if they were still in their teens and didn't seem much interested in us. And the first few towns we passed through were like small towns anywhere, albeit a bit more shabby. In one of them some kind of festival was going on, producing a small traffic jam and giving us a chance to ogle the locals.

Based on what I'd been hearing from the media, I expected to see people starving in the streets, but aside from the rundown condition of some buildings, there was little evidence of poverty. The people looked reasonably happy, well-fed, and even well-dressed, though their sartorial efforts might not have garnered approval from western arbiters of the latest fashion.

It was when we started passing through the larger cities that I began to experience what friends who had previously visited Poland seemed to find so mind-boggling. Put simply, the place was in chaos. Granted, it was mostly a genial chaos, but it was easy to see how under certain circumstances it could be frightening. Much of the old order had broken down, and as yet had only been haphazardly replaced.

Everywhere buildings, roads, bridges were being built, torn down, or simply abandoned; it wasn't always easy to tell which was the case. Grass wasn't quite growing in the streets, but it was growing everywhere else, and nobody seemed to have figured out whose job it was to cut it down. Anywhere and everywhere might serve as an impromptu dump and/or recycling center.

Our first show was in Lodz (pronounced, for reasons I can't explain, *Woodj*), Poland's second largest city. It was on the ground floor of a university dormitory that looked like it had survived the German blitzkrieg of World War II, but only barely. The grounds had that overgrown, after-the-end-of-the-world look that I was becoming accustomed to, and my heart went out to the students who had to endure such depressing accommodations.

Until, that is, I learned that behind the grim facade, the student rooms were comfortably appointed (this was to be a recurring theme in Poland: that the most grotesque and tasteless excrescences of Stalinist architecture often masked pleasant, even luxurious apartments within). And until I learned that students were considered among the most fortunate members of Polish society, because all their educational and living expenses were provided by the state. I explained that the financially strapped United States couldn't afford to offer such treatment to its own students, but what with the language barrier and all, nobody seemed to take me seriously.

Inside the hall, which featured a sort of high school gym meets seedy men's drinking club decor, were about 150 mostly very young kids, the majority of whom sported T-shirts and hats advertising American bands. For the most part they knew no English except "skate" and "punk." Mr. T Experience took the hint and dedicated their first song "to the skaters" and the crowd went wild. Of course crowds always go wild in concert reviews, but this was a special brand of savagery. I was surprised that no one had to be carried off. Of course that might have had something to do with the immense amounts of beer (*piwo*, they call it) being consumed. Like most European countries, Poland is not obsessed with the idea that people need to be a certain age in order to drink, and in the current semi-anarchistic climate, it's extremely unlikely that any forces of the state could muster much interest in the subject. There has been a *de facto* decriminalization of marijuana for the same reason; not because laws have been changed, but because nobody can be bothered enforcing them.

Behind the scenes, though, there is a power struggle, with the Catholic Church pushing hard to reassert its traditional stranglehold on Polish mores. If the bishops get their way, harsh prison sentences will be imposed on marijuana users and abortion will be made a criminal offense. President Lech Walesa has lost a great deal of popularity for his apparent willingness to kowtow to Poland's version of the religious right. A number of kids were wearing "Priestbusters" T-shirts, a variation on the American Ghostbusters image that substitutes a finger-wagging clergyman for the unwanted spook.

Somewhere past midnight I got drafted into one of the most perilous expeditions of my Polish experience. It seems that some musical equipment had to be returned to somewhere else in town and I was the only one who had not ingested sufficient amounts of *piwo* to disqualify me from driving. Apparently drunk driving laws are still enforced with draconian glee, with people being tossed in the slammer for a single beer, small consolation for me, since a single beer was exactly what I had had.

But you try reasoning with three or four drunken Poles who speak almost no English except "Only little distance. No problem, OK?"

No problem, indeed. The first problem was backing out of the parking lot, made none too easy by the fact that the van, of English origin, was made for driving on the left side of the road, but the Polish, like sensible people the world over, drive on the right (well, actually they're quite likely to drive in the middle of the road, which is often the only place there is a road, but that's another story).

You may think it's a minor detail when driving to be sitting

where the passenger should be, next to the curb, wondering how close to the center of the road the other side of the truck is, but it's not. Trust me. It's fairly harrowing. Fortunately, we drove only a few hundred meters before I was told to stop, and we unloaded the equipment into another college dorm, where some happy-go-lucky students were, at about one in the morning, building some sort of lounge or club with materials they'd obtained by dismantling, under cover of darkness, another structure nearby.

I complimented them on their hard work. "We must work very hard," they said. "We building whole country from new."

With that, flushed with pride at having driven halfway across campus without having moshed a single pedestrian, I headed back to the show to drink a piwo or two myself. But no, the ordeal had just begun. I think maybe they were just auditioning my driving skills, but I was told "only one small drive more." Oh boy, it was when the street signs started being posted in Russian that I realized we'd been traveling a while. No, I exaggerate, but we did travel from one side of the city to the other, passing through a downtown that with its minimal lighting and shambolic atmosphere looked like Charles Dickens Victorian thrust several notches past Armageddon.

All right, all right, I won't make any more of a big deal about a simple trip across town that I'm lucky to have survived. Suffice it to say that when we finally made it back the show was over, all the beer was gone, and some of the drunkest people I've ever encountered were having serious lengthy conversations in which one party spoke only English and another only Polish, and nobody but me seemed to notice. Alcohol plays a very large part in Polish life, as I was to see again and again in the following days.

The morning saw us setting off on a marathon trip to Białystok (for once, a city pronounced more or less like it looks) in the northwest corner of the country. Our route took us through the heart of Warsaw, which I best remember for one of the most immense and frightening traffic jams I've ever experienced. We had no time to stop and look around, but the place itself was pretty immense and maybe a little frightening. It seemed to go on forever.

When we finally made it to the other side, we found ourselves in a different kind of Poland, much more rural. There were long stretches of somewhat spindly forests, most of which didn't look like they'd been growing more than thirty or forty years. In the towns we began to see many houses built from wood, and in some cases logs, in a style that obviously predated the communists and probably the twentieth century. It's a specifically northern style, and can be seen across Scandinavia, northern Canada, Greenland, Iceland, and Russia.

I'd been farther north before, but never so far east, and things felt more foreign than they ever had anywhere else in Europe. We were far, far removed from the tourist circuit, a fact brought home to me when I wandered through the entire center of Białystok without finding a single money changing kiosk or bilingual restaurant menu. One sight I vividly remember: a burly male telephone repairman perched atop a pole wearing a bra (?), shorts, and little else. His equally macho co-workers seemed to take no notice.

At this point we were only about fifty miles from the Bielarussian border, and some of us were favor of making a quick jaunt over to the former Soviet Union. Our Polish hosts were appalled at the idea. "Poland fucked up," they said, "but Russia *really* fucked up." They seemed to make no distinctions between the various Soviet republics; they were all Russians, and apparently universally hated. The mention of anything Russian would bring on a chorus of jeers. One time when we were having trouble making ourselves understood in English, I suggested that Christy, who's fluent in Russian, try that instead. Not a single Pole would admit to knowing a word of the language they'd been required to study ever since they'd started school.

I was never sure whether the Poles genuinely hated the Russians as vehemently as they seemed to, or if they were throwing on an extra filip of loathing thinking that it would impress the Americans. I did notice a poster advertising a rock festival featuring both Polish bands

and bands from Grodno, just across the border, so there's at least some contact between the countries.

The show in Białystok took place in a disco located in a very odd structure consisting of four concentric concrete circles topped by pointed tin roofs and joined in the center by a glassed-in area, part of which served as a greenhouse and another part as a rubbish dump. In another of the domes was a beauty supply store, and in a third was an elegant little restaurant which, if my extremely limited knowledge of Polish was any indication, offered Polish-Mexican cuisine: No, I'd never seen anything like it anywhere else in the country. Nobody else seemed to know, and now I probably never will either.

On a hill overlooking the site was a cathedral, built in 1962 (during the time the communists were brutally repressing the church, according to what I was taught in school), whose steeple looked for all the world like a guided missile launcher preparing to hurl the Virgin Mary into a distant galaxy. Some sort of service was going on, and the place was packed, mostly with old ladies, but with a healthy sprinkling of younger people as well. They were singing what I guessed was a traditional hymn, and everyone was joining in. The voices carried across a good part of town.

Back in the disco, the show was in full effect. The atmosphere here was just as drunken as the night before, but not as rambunctious. Maybe it was because the crowd was older - in their late teens and early 20s, as opposed to the previous night's legions of hyperactive 15 year-olds. Also more in evidence here were liter-sized bottles of vodka ("woodka") which the Poles seem to regard with messianic fervor. It is very difficult to refuse an offer of vodka, since you get the impression that at any point your head might be forcibly held back and the contents of an entire bottle poured down your throat while onlookers cheer. I learned to enthusiastically accept the bottle and upend it while allowing no more than a few drops to actually enter my mouth. The stuff didn't actually taste bad, but I had heard dire tales from those who had overindulged in it.

We spent the night in a charming little hostel that, had bars been installed on the windows, could easily have attracted the attention of Amnesty International, and which had been constructed on the site of a now mostly defunct factory as housing for Russian guest ("guest" is used here in the broadest possible sense of the word, for instance, guests who break down your door and invite themselves into your home) workers. Many of them, lacking anywhere to return to in Russia, were still living there and whiled away their days in football (soccer) games on the front lawn.

Although it compared unfavorably with most jails I've seen the inside of, the fact that you were able to come and go as you pleased (except, we were warned, on weekend nights when the Russians started their serious drinking; at such times it was best to bolt your door and barricade it with any available furniture) made it seem not too unpleasant. And there was the comforting screech of steel being machined into barbed wire or something under our window to lull us to sleep.

The next day involved an even longer trip, nearly all of which was on two-lane (at best) highways that frequently and without warning turned into brick or cobblestone lanes that might have been built by the Romans except that the legions never made it this far east. Another drawback was the horse drawn hay wagons and milk wagons, which were at least picturesque, and the decrepit army trucks, which traveled even slower, were decidedly not picturesque, and belched horrific clouds of diesel smoke into our faces.

With the pace of travel beginning to slow to early 19th century levels, we drifted into a wide-ranging philosophical and political discussion that had its origins back in Białystok when I casually remarked that an expression like "Everyone's entitled to their own opinion" was acceptable even though it wasn't strictly grammatical, because in order to use a singular pronoun, one would have to choose either "his" or "her," either one of which would be sexist if you were referring to people in general.

Mr. T bassist Aaron Rubin virtually exploded with rage upon

hearing that. "It's not the function of grammar to redress social grievances," he insisted. I countered that breaking down sexual stereotypes was certainly a higher cause than the punctilious maintenance of archaic and frequently pointless rules of grammar. You might not think this the most crucial issue facing modern society, but we screamed at each other about it all the way down the main street of Bialystok.

As we headed west the next day, lead singer and guitarist Dr. Frank joined the fray, and the topic shifted to such things as political correctness, Clarence Thomas, and the bible. I succeeded in reducing Dr. Frank to a state of near-apoplexy with my contention that St. Paul was a "wanker" who'd ruined Christianity. In between sputters of incredulity, he managed to gasp, "St. Paul was not a wanker." But what else could he say? If you have to deny you're a wanker, the battle's pretty much lost already.

Things degenerated apace from there, with Plato, Lao Tzu, and numerous other leading and lesser lights of western and eastern civilization being dragged in and raked over the coals. Rhythm guitarist Jon Von Zelowitz finally defused things by telling us a nightmare he'd had in which he was trying to get money out of an ATM machine but the machine kept mutating into unfamiliar and threatening shapes and, needless to say, wouldn't accept his card.

The show in Bydgoszcz (Beedgosh) was in a youth center on the ground floor of another of those vast housing projects that stand as already decrepit monument to communist excess. But as with the dorms in Lodz, the apartments inside were often beautiful. We had dinner in one. The walls were covered with art, the furniture was downright elegant, the food (all vegetarian, an extreme anomaly in Poland) was outstanding.

Outside, little children foraged for discarded beer bottles, which they could return for their deposit of 1000 zlotys. The zloty, a currency much maligned and ridiculed by most visitors to Poland, was then trading at about 13,000 to the dollar, which would make a bottle deposit worth about 7 or 8 cents. Since wages and prices are so much lower, however, its real purchasing power would be closer to 25¢. Since back in California I regularly see grown men and women foraging for bottles and cans that are only worth 2¢, I wondered why in this very poor country, only children would bother with it.

The next morning I conducted a lengthy interview with the young man whose apartment we stayed at - lengthy because he spoke not a word of English, so we conversed by pointing to one word at a time in a Polish-English dictionary. He explained a great deal about how the Polish social system works. By the time we were finished, I found myself nearly spluttering with frustration, not with the Polish social system, but the American one. I had already learned that education through the university level was free in Poland, but I hadn't realized that basic medical care was as well, nor that the Polish system of unemployment compensation was far more generous than our own.

For example: both of Karol's parents, then in their 50s, had been laid off when their factory closed down. To American workers that might prove disastrous, but his parents merely began collecting their old age pension ten years early. Between them they brought in 2,200,000 zlotys, enough to cover rent, utilities, and food. Karol's job earned an additional 900,000 zlotys, which provided an adequate if not quite comfortable cushion. I don't know how typical this family was, but they had nice furniture, a VCR, color TV, CD player, a well-stocked refrigerator, nearly all the amenities of middle class life. Not only that, but the parents were off for the weekend at their cottage in the country.

I heard many stories of poverty, of beggars, of criminals such as those in Bydgoszcz's "Quarter of the Flashing Knives." But though I may have been leading a sheltered existence, I never once saw scenes of desperation and degradation on the scale of what I can see in any large American city. The Polish social fabric might be threadbare and in danger of unraveling, but as of now it is still in one piece, and I think that's more than can be said for West Oakland or Detroit or Washington, D.C.

That was our last day in Poland. We hung around Bydgoszcz way too long, considering how far we had to travel to get back to Prague. Everyone else seemed to want to sleep, so I wandered around the city, past miles of crumbling tower blocks surrounded by unkempt weeds and ragged patches of broken pavement. It made me nervous; although the people I saw everywhere were obviously ordinary lower middle class working people, the physical environment looked so much like what would be considered a slum in America that I was afraid of being attacked. Another consideration was that all the modern buildings looked so much alike that I didn't see how I could avoid getting lost.

I made it back in one piece, and we set off for the border. At sunset we were still in Poland, and it was in a medium-sized town where we stopped to buy some food that I had my single most terrifying Polish adventure. I was in what passed for a supermarket, walking up and down the aisles collecting items until I realized that I had more than I could comfortably carry. I decided to grab a basket from the front, but at some point I apparently crossed a line which you weren't supposed to cross until you had paid for your stuff. A small but extremely belligerent woman came screaming at me, causing, of course, everyone in the market to stop and stare. No matter what I tried to say, in English, French, German, with sign language, I couldn't explain to her that I wasn't trying to steal anything, and I finally had to slink back behind the line, basket-less and branded as a shameless thief.

Loaded up with bread, cheese, and beer, which had comprised the basic food groups of our Polish diet throughout the trip, we drove upward into the mountains, past a few castles and through what once must have been opulent resort towns for the ancient nobility. The scenery was spectacular, but we had forgotten to attend to one minor detail: gasoline. From the Czech border all the way to Prague, not a single station was open (it's worth noting that in Czechoslovakia, gas stations are about as common as they are in the Nevada outback). Luckily it was all downhill, and somehow we made it with several teaspoons to spare.

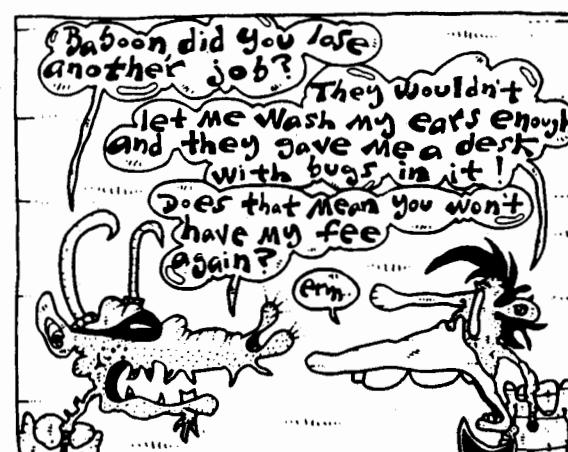
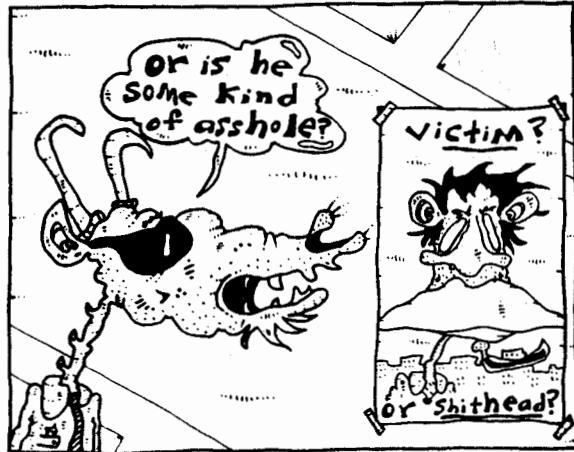
Our Czech friend, whose name I still can't recall, was working at his all night rock and roll bar. He told us that it used to close at one a.m., but because neighbors complained that exiting drunks were making too much noise waiting for the streetcars that had stopped running for the night, the city had suggested that the bar stay open till five a.m., when the trolleys started rolling again. The story stuck in my head for a long time, until I realized it was because I couldn't remember the last time such simple common sense had been exhibited by a local government back in California.

The next day there was time for a little sightseeing, but then the Mr. T Experience were off to Vienna and I had to catch a train to Berlin to begin my journey back to England. In Dresden, which looked as though it still hadn't recovered from the Allied firebombing of World War II, a college student sat down next to me. She told me that while she was happy for the new opportunities the opening German re-unification had provided, she feared that the valuable aspects of socialism were being tossed aside. The social climate was becoming more greedy, more insensitive, and East Germans unwilling to conform, she claimed, were beginning to feel like strangers in their own land.

I arrived in Berlin at midnight, and lived out my own version of Jon Von's nightmare of the diabolical ATM machine. I had plenty of money, but none of it was German, and all the currency exchanges were closed. I had a bank card and a credit card, but no access code enabling me to use bank machines. I had my friend Rebekah's address, but no phone number and not enough change to make a phone call if I did. I wandered along the glitzy and fabulously expensive Kurfurstendamm. It started pouring rain. I stood in a telephone booth and placed a lengthy and whiny collect call back to the States. I finally found a hotel willing to accept enough of my foreign currency to support a Polish family for a month in exchange for letting me sleep in a janitor's closet. I felt like I was home again.



**Dr. B.L.
Zebub
on the
question:
"Has
Society
Failed
Baboon
Dooley
?"**



Dr. B.L. Zebub's Guidelines for telling if a Patient is truly a Victim of Society!

Victims of Society: People willing to pay good money to hear you tell 'em their failures are the fault of an evil world that conspires against them and not their own sweet and wonderful selves.

a) Shitheads: people who wish to hear the good doctor tell them all of the above but are unlikely to be able to pony up the scratch.

MUSIC CAN MAKE YOU STUPID?



Once again crisis time came to Gilman Street with the departure of **George Hated**, who had taken pretty much single-handed responsibility for keeping the place going over the past year and a half. People met every Saturday this summer to sort out how Gilman would operate in the future, and most importantly, who else would be willing to be the one everyone is referring to when uttering the all-purpose solution to every Gilman problem: "Let George do it."

There was some concern that no one would turn out to be that much of a masochist, but one in fact did emerge: **Mike Stand**, who's been a Gilman regular since he was about 15, in other words, almost since the beginning, since he's just turning 21. Mike, who in his earlier years specialized in irritating everyone and anyone, this writer included, has matured (in the best sense of the word) into a very responsible and intelligent guy, though he still maintains enough of that abrasive edge to get things done and to put problem-makers in their place. The result, at least so far: the most positive and constructive attitude I've seen around Gilman in years. The place was over \$10,000 in debt when Mike took over; as of this writing, it's in the black for the first time I can remember.

Part of the reason Gilman got into trouble was some bad booking decisions, with the result that the number of people turning out for shows dropped precipitously, but that too has dramatically improved. **Maximum Rocknroll**, when they ran Gilman, exuded this vibe that it was every punk's duty to attend all shows, especially those featuring unknown, out-of-town or political bands. It worked to some extent back then, because Gilman was so new, and because there weren't many alternative venues. But that's no longer the case, and though it would be great if hundreds of people loved Gilman so much that they would show up every weekend regardless of who was playing, human nature just doesn't work that way. After all, people already spend much of the week doing things they'd rather not be doing, so it's a bit much to expect them to sacrifice their Friday and Saturday nights as well for the sake of some nebulous cause.

In other words, it's the responsibility of Gilman to put on shows that people will want to attend. And lately that's been happening a lot more often. Most memorable was August's **RAGE** festival - don't make me tell you what RAGE stood for - oh, all right, you twisted my arm, it was Radical Avant-garde Garage Extravaganza, but whatever you thought of the name, it was a massive success, artistically and financially. Most of the credit goes to Mike Stand, who came up with the idea and put the whole thing together. Not only did RAGE bring in over \$6000 for Gilman, it also produced the (one time only, they promise) reunion of Blatz, who appeared on opening night with ferocious dyke band **Tribe 8**, who played a killer show, but left a bad taste in some mouths by demanding something like \$75 gas money to get back to San Francisco (about 11 miles, for the information of out-of-towners). Oh, the show was a benefit for women's groups opposed to Operation Rescue.

Saturday night's show starred **Green Day**, who as usual packed the place, and, as they often do, donated all their money to Gilman. Self-righteous punks who persist in talking shit about Green Day might be well-advised to find out just how much that band has given to Gilman and to touring and local bands, and then find out how your favorite crustcore or peacepunk outfit compares in that regard.

Speaking of nice guys, **Neurosis** have taken a lot of criticism

lately, and I've got a little of my own which I may or may not get to later, but that was pretty cool of them to play Sunday night for only a minimum of gas money, which turned what would have been a damn good show featuring **Steelpole Bathtub** (who were the best I've ever seen them) and **Plaid Retina** into a totally awesome finale to a most triumphant weekend. Neurosis broke at least two records that I'm aware of: the most equipment ever piled onto the Gilman stage, and the loudest band ever to play in West Berkeley. I was standing right in front of dreadlocked wild man **Steve Von Till**, and the only experience I've had that compares is when I took an overdose of LSD and wandered out onto the runway at New York's Kennedy Airport just as ten 747s were revving their engines for takeoff.

By the way, those of you familiar with the new Neurosis album **Souls At Zero** (some of their uncharitable East Bay rivals persist in calling it "Sales At Zero," though that's not exactly true; it's doing pretty well) might wonder about the meaning of the cryptic phrase "The cycles they are thawing" at the beginning of a song called "The Web." Well, after some careful research I've been able to find out the true story behind those lyrics:

It seems there was this mad sculptor who, though he was very talented, had never attained the kind of recognition he felt he deserved. Critics thought his work was too abstract and obscure. Frustrated, he decided to create a more popular type of art. He came up with the idea of entering the ice sculpture competition in the annual Winter Carnival that takes place every February in Québec City, Canada. At first he thought about carving a giant replica of Michelangelo's *David* (though he hated that statue, he thought the tourists might go for it).

But after attending the first day of the Winter Carnival, he decided that the crowds were not even sophisticated enough to appreciate High Renaissance art, and resolved to make something so crass and yet so spectacular that even the most resolute hick would be incapable of ignoring it. When a troupe of Hell's Angels and their girlfriends rolled into town he hit upon the idea of carving out of ice a series of ten Harley-Davidsons, each fifteen feet high. With only five days to accomplish this task, he loaded up on amphetamines and worked pretty much nonstop.

He finished his project on the morning of the final day of the carnival. Already bands of tourists were clustering around, oohing and aahing at his work, and he was sure he would win the grand prize. There was only one thing he hadn't figured on. In Canada, there's a phenomenon known as the "chinook" wind, which occurs in late winter, and can raise temperatures as much as 50° Fahrenheit in an hour. As fate would have it, such a wind sprung up only hours before the judging was to begin. While some sculptors cursed their luck, others who had made small, portable pieces moved them inside a nearby skating rink, where the grand prize was awarded to a smiling Eskimo who had produced a perfect miniature replica of a German cuckoo clock out of a single cocktail-sized ice cube.

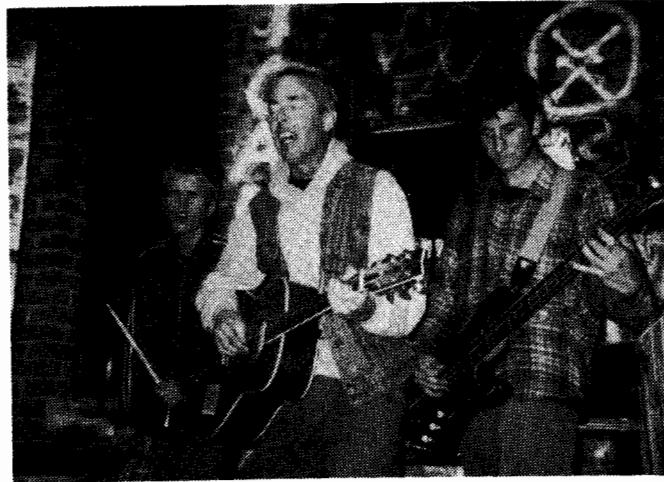
Meanwhile, the temperature outside had risen to a balmy 57° and the ten massive Harley-Davidsons melted away and collapsed into insignificant puddles. By then, however, the sculptor, to the horror of onlookers, had pulled out a gun and shot himself. Bewildered witnesses reported that he had been muttering over and over to himself, "The cycles they are thawing." Neurosis, who regularly scan newspapers for tales of pain and torment to write songs about, saw an article about the tragedy, and the rest was rock'n'roll history. And that's another *Lookout* exclusive, just for you.

Another view on the new Neurosis LP from **Bill Monsula**: "They sound like little trolls in the forest."

Although crowds have been picking up a lot at Gilman lately (though you can never satisfy everyone; noted curmudgeon **Pat H.** comments: "Before they had bad shows that no one came to. Now they have bad shows that lots of people come to. I guess that's a step in the right direction"), it's still hell for touring bands who aren't well known and aren't lucky enough to have someone big headlining over them. Anyone who's been around Gilman for long has seen one of those hell nights when every band is from someplace like Wisconsin or New Hampshire, nobody in the East Bay has heard of any of them, and band members outnumber the audience. It's kind of heartbreaking, really, to see these kids for whom Gilman is the legendary punk rock mecca, and who've been looking forward to it for their whole tour, doing their best to put on a brave face while playing their hearts out for 7 or 8 diehard Gilman loyalists.

They might do better by heading a mile or so down San Pablo to Albany Winchell's, where there's sometimes a larger collection of local punks than at Gilman. That's what Berkeley's latest sensation, the **Potatomen** did, to find an eager crowd of at least 20 glazed donut eaters waiting for them.

The Potatomen, a three-piece semi-acoustic outfit whose members are all employees of one of the East Bay's better known punk rock



The Amazing Potatomen

record labels, have been astounding, annoying, and amazing audiences all over town of late. Their shows are usually unannounced, short (they don't know very many songs), and might take place on the sidewalk or in the Gilman store or anywhere you'd expect not to see a show. One place they have never played is on a stage. Some of their songs are already local classics, especially "Davey" ("Davey's got a skateboard and he rides it everywhere; he lives in Berkeley, and he's got purple hair") and "Punk Rock Boy" ("You can see him down at Gilman Street and ABC No Rio; he comes from Oakland, Berkeley, Brooklyn, Jersey, or even El Cerrito"). Oh, and of course there's "Aaron Went Shopping", about (who else?) **Aaron Detroit** and his favorite sport (besides chain smoking and chain guzzling Pepsi).

Oh well, enough about the Potatomen, except to mention that they've already broken up, but don't worry, their reunion tour is even now being mapped out. Watch your local bus stop, convenience store, or auto parts yard for details.

One of the more tedious sights at Gilman in recent months was the aggregation of Sassy punks who turned out for the **Nation of Ulysses** show. The Nation boys have quite a reputation in both PC and alternative circles, thanks to their cutesy rhetoric about "destroying"

America and their fashion layouts in various teenzines. Having been thoroughly underwhelmed by their first west coast visit a couple years back, I wanted to give them the benefit of the doubt, since so many of my friends spoke highly of them.

But no go; not only had the music failed to improve, but the band's image, which seems to be its major selling point, had taken a grave turn for the worse. At their first Gilman appearance, the Nation had come across as geeky nerds who had spent maybe a bit too much time hanging around arty Georgetown coffee houses but were otherwise harmless. Not this time; NOU came across as incredibly contrived and pretentious. The singer (I'm not sure; is he the one voted "the sassiest boy in America"?) spent as much time preening as he did singing. What I found most remarkable was that his constant pursed-lip pouts, delivered with a tongue that never even strayed near a cheek, owed more to Stephen Tyler than to a more obvious androgynous rubberfaced source, **Mick Jagger**. Another reference point might have been the Clash's **Mick Jones** somewhere between the time he started headlining **Bill Graham** shows and the formation of **B.A.D.** As for the "music" of the Nation Of Ulysses, I can only say that if they spent as much time learning to play their instruments as they do on their grooming, they might have something.

Actually, what I found more offensive than the Nation Of Ulysses itself (Gilman has survived legions of bad and/or pretentious bands without visible damage) was their elitist entourage, which

reminded me of the designer-label underground that emerged out of the post-Warhol Studio 54 scene of the early to mid-70s. There was an incredible degree of smugness attached to being enough in the know to sport the right look and attitude, and it appears that little has changed in the intervening decades. Oh, all right, I admit it. I'm not in the clique and I'm bummed. I don't even know where you go to get one of those neat hairstyles or to meet all those nice rich girls whose latest version of slumming is to cruise the alternative rock scene.

One of the biggest jokes about the alleged East Bay-West Bay rivalry thing is that almost nobody takes it seriously except for poor clueless West Bay types who think everything is serious. It's kind of out of hand, though; I can hardly set foot in San Francisco without people asking me, "What are you doing here?" A question I often ask myself, although I did have an excellent time at the anti-Operation Rescue benefit at the Women's Building in July, which featured **Spitboy**, **J-Church**, **Jawbreaker**, **Tribe 8**, and someone else who played before we got there and who will probably be doubly mad at us now for not only not showing up on time but also for forgetting who they were even though they're our friends.

Didn't get to see **Tribe 8**, either, because we had to catch the last BART train to Berkeley (12:13 am from 16th and Mission), but we understand their new record on "Lickout" Records (a split with **Blatz**) carries the inscription: "Tribe 8 will never appear on Lookout Records... ...proud supporters of scene hierarchy." Everyone at Lookout wishes to convey their thanks to Tribe 8 for saving us the trouble of fending off all those inquiries about "When's the new Tribe 8 CD coming out?", but what's this "scene hierarchy" bit about? It's true that Lookout does have this odd habit of wanting to put out records by good bands instead of bad ones (a habit we don't always keep to, granted), but then good-looking boys and girls go out on more dates, too, don't they? There are plenty of other labels who specialize in putting out stuff that nobody wants to listen to, but most of them are subsidized by rich parents or big fanzines. Our records have to pay for themselves.

Anyway, a word of warning to "Lickout," (which is apparently yet another pseudonym for the ever vague and mysterious Jux): if you're going to have your PO Box at the same office as ours, it's probably best not to use a name similar to ours, since the Berkeley post office people have a habit of putting anything that sounds weird into our box, let alone something that sounds a lot like our name. Case in point:

we've already received half a dozen orders addressed to Lickout Records, which, nice guys that we are, we didn't throw away; instead, we kindly sent the people **Brent's TV** records to help them upgrade their musical tastes.

Anyway, back in Frisco: it so happened one otherwise salubrious July day that the whole **Lookout Records** crew (**Larry**, **Chris**, and **Pat**) got stranded in the West Bay for a few hours. For want of anything else to do, we wandered into **Epicenter**. For some reason, the arrival of any of us in that hotbed of West Bay culture seems to provoke giggles and whispers, so you can imagine the reaction elicited by all three of us together. The Epicenter staff all gathered in a corner pointing at us and obviously wondering if we were there on some sort of espionage or search-and-destroy mission.

Finally **Matt Shred of Dignity** approached us, he being the bravest and friendliest of the bunch (brave in light of the barbs he's tossed at us in his ads over the past year, and friendly considering what a hard time we gave him). We went to considerable lengths to assure him that we were merely there as part of the worldwide unified punk scene and certainly not to promote inter-regional factionalism or to harsh on our West Bay brothers and sisters. But an air of suspicion persisted, I fear, especially when we couldn't help smirking slightly about his busy schedule of visits to his tattoo specialist and his piercing consultant. But still, one can't help getting the impression that WB types spend a disproportionate amount of time in matters that seemed, shall we say, a bit superficial by East Bay standards.

Through all this Matt was the soul of friendship, charm and wit, and we have nothing mean to say about either his tattoos or his piercings, even if he did sneer at Pat's homemade Nuisance tattoo ("Yeah, I used to do those, but I was sorry later because it took forever to get them fixed up.") And is it true that despite being so punk, he did wuss out to **Tribe 8** when they demanded that he redo the cover to their **Outpunk 7**" because it had black transvestites on the cover and there are no black transvestites in the band? Which means, I suppose, that **Led Zeppelin** should get a new cover to **Houses of the Holy** since there are, as far as I know, no naked five-year old girls in that band.

Meanwhile the Epicenter staff was torturing the air with the demented screams of a horse being systematically and brutally put to death, a very painful death, I would surmise, since it seemed to take nearly half an hour. As it turned out, though, there was no real horse involved; it was actually a record of some band called **Crash Worship** playing a "song" called something like "Support Animal Rights and Stop Vivisection Now or I Will Pierce My Scrotum With A Railroad Spike." By this time, we were able to leave, and while we appreciated our East Bay home more than ever upon our return, we did have a new appreciation for the strange, bizarre, and, dare I say, colorful aspects of the culture they practice over there in the mysterious west.

Speaking of thin-skinned regionalists, we have the marvelously incestuous and inbred Olympia, Washington scene, much beloved of **Gina Arnold** and as a result much hated by nearly everyone else. For better or worse, though, Olympia has been making some connections and inroads into California culture, which might be seen as a plus for them or a minus for us, depending how charitable we're in the mood to be. All right, we can put up with them sending us smarmy little poplite bands with no bass players and thirteen tons of attitude, but now they've gone and snatched up one of northern California's greatest resources, the inimitable Quitty, late of such Arcata luminosities as **Brent's TV**, the **Dukes of Burl**, and **Fifty Foot Hesher**. Not only has Quitty taken up permanent residence in the pretentiousness capital of the Pacific Northwest, he's gone to work in the offices of **Satan** himself, aka **Calvin Johnson**, the last of the red hot playboys, who runs a megabux music conglomerate called **K Records**.

Calvin was recently in Frisco for a couple days touring with the Scottish band **Heavenly** (cute, very cute, though not necessarily in an entirely complimentary sense) and signing up a few more bands that just happened to have cute girls in them.

(By the way, I'd like to answer the charge being bandied about

in some quarters, namely by my associates here at Lookout, to the effect that I'm just like Calvin except that I only sign up bands with cute boys, to which I only need say: have you taken a close look at the "boys" in most Lookout bands? Aside from being a bit long in the tooth to even qualify as boys, most of them are downright homely. I know we could do better in the cute department; it's just that, unlike Calvin, we sort of like people in our bands to be able to play musical instruments. It's sort of a weird fetish of ours.)

Anyway, Calvin was hanging out at the side of the stage at Frisco's Chameleon aggressively chewing bubble gum and practicing his disco dancing, the likes of which I haven't seen since... I know you thought I was going to say *Saturday Night Fever*, but actually what I had in mind was *Urban Cowboy*. Or maybe the *SNF* sequel, *Stayin' Alive*. Didn't see that one? Neither did anyone else; life contains some small mercies. Which reminds me: unfortunately I missed it, but the final show at the now-defunct **I-Beam** featured the long-awaited return of the **Village People**. I hear it was most triumphant

Am I having a hard time sticking to the story here? Doubtless. The point is that none of us here really know Calvin or that much about his record label and we don't really bear them any ill will. But we heard that, based on rumors and an item in the last *Lookout*, they were very concerned that we here in California were out to destroy them. Thus, as a result of his California connections, Quitty very nearly didn't land his plum of a K job. So, as should be obvious by now, here's the plot: we keep spreading these dastardly rumors about all things Olympian (like for instance did you know that the famous Oly Beer is liberally flavored with horse piss? Yeah, "it's the water," all right) and they'll get so freaked out that they'll end up sending Quitty back to us.

But in the meantime, Quitty got himself a band up there in Oly-town, they're called **Honey Bucket**, and they're quite good. Quitty plays bass, which you'd think would be enough to rouse the suspicions if not the outright ire of other Olympia bands, since bass is considered a kind of *outré* item in that oh-so-self-consciously quirky town. Anyway, I'm going to see them in Eureka tomorrow night. Wonder if Calvin will be there.

Well, he said later, no, Calvin wasn't there, and for that matter, neither was Honey Bucket. In fact word came floating down the interstate that the band had broken up just prior to leaving for California, a profound disappointment to not only me, but to **John Denery**, Quitty's former band mate in **Brent's TV** and the **Dukes of Burl**, who came all the way from the lovely Silicon Valley for the occasion.

All was not lost, however, as the evening saw the reunion of John with another of his bands, Arcata's **Ne'erdo-wells**, made up of **Chris** from **Brent's TV** (and most other Arcata bands of that ilk), **Jess of Judy and the Loadies**, and East Bay expatriate and internationally renowned executive producer **Al Sobrante**. The Ne'erdo-wells have been playing as a three-piece since John went south for the year, so it was a real treat to see them with their full lineup again. Look for a 7" or maybe a CD from them on Chris' **Old Thumb** (write "old thumb" on your knuckles and then cross your wrists to see what it spells) label, and a Pacific Northwest tour after Christmas.

That was the last show I saw at Eureka's now defunct Power Station, worse than defunct, actually, since it's been turned into "The Country Club," a redneck watering hole featuring guess what kind of music. During its short life, the Power Station helped transform Eureka from a cultural wasteland into a veritable hotbed of a punk scene. For the first time in at least a century, young people are actually moving to Eureka instead of waiting desperately for the day when they'll be big enough to get the fuck out of there.

As of now there's no reliable place for shows in E-town anymore, and the two main bands, **Sister Placebo** and **My Name Is Chris** are both temporarily out of action as **Brian** from Sister P and **Utrillo** from MNIC have taken off together on some sort of Kerouacian odyssey to find themselves and/or America. Good luck, boys, and we hope

you're still speaking when you get back. But Eureka is still full of punks galore, enough, in fact, to get up the noses of the merchants and chamber of commerce types who have been trying to transform the colorful Old Town district from a skid row into a tourist trap, only to see it taken over by steadily increasing numbers of refugees from *Suburbia* (the movie, not the place).

As a result of the rising tensions, the Humboldt Mediators (don't ask, it's one of those northern California things) arranged some meetings between the "punks" and, for want of a better term, the grownups. I attended the second one, held at the Humboldt Coffee Company, a principal hangout for Eureka's new punk scene. It was pretty impressive, at least 75 punks and no more than one or two of them exhibiting visible signs of brain damage, which was a better score than that racked up by the adults.

But many of the business people were remarkably conciliatory and helpful, too, and you got the feeling that a real sea change is taking place in Eureka culture, one not limited to the punk scene, but cutting across many aspects of life there. It's a town that finally, after so many years of being little more than a labor camp and dumping ground for rapacious industry, seems to be coming alive and reaching an awareness of its own potential. Now if they could only stop that darned graffiti from mysteriously appearing on downtown buildings, everything would be just about perfect.

One variety of graffiti that's unacceptable to just about everyone is the "White Power" slogans and stickers that have been popping up in Eureka and to a lesser extent in Arcata. This seems to be primarily the work of one new arrival in town, an old-fashioned 80s style skinhead. Now that neo-nazis have been laughed or chased out of nearly everywhere else in California, he apparently thought that little old Eureka might provide fertile ground for his wacko doctrines. Most of the local punks are none too happy about this, but like punks everywhere, are too nice to come right out and tell the guy where to get off. Eureka's growing population of black and brown people, some of whom already have an understandable chip on their shoulder from their experiences in larger urban environments, are not inclined to be so tolerant, however. If the punks are smart, they'll just point any hostile African-Americans or Latinos in this guy's direction and give him his chance to stand up and do battle for white pride. If he's smart, though, he'll swallow his prejudices and learn to get along with his fellow human beings the way most other people have. It seems like a pretty obvious choice to me.

The things we get in the mail... here's a cutesy postcard from those rad scenesters, the BMG Music Packaging Corporation, complete with removable cartoon stickers of that lovable pop-rock band the **Pooh Sticks**. If I can manage to get through it without gagging, I think I'll reproduce it for you here:

Dear Gang,

I know you, but you might not know me yet! I'm Trudi (*please note, if you can do so without being ill, that the "i" in Trudi is dotted with a little heart, which our computer, being more tasteful than the cretin who wrote this piece of shit, is unable to reproduce*) from The Pooh Sticks, and this is a note to tell you that our new album will be released by Zoo Entertainment on April 28th.

It's an exciting time, what with so many people telling us we're going to be big stars, like the people who wrote those wonderful reviews in *Spin*, *NME*, and *CMJ*. But it's also a little worrying - what if we let them down? We're just making records to please ourselves, afterall!

Anyway, now it's time for you to join the fun: will American boys and girls run to their record shops and then keep coming back for more? We certainly hope they will, and we certainly think they should!

And now there's Lou's idea that the album should sell at a cheap price. This lets our fans keep some dollars left for a Sassy

Magazine subscription!

April 28th. Can't wait!

Love,
Trudi

Looookout readers will of course be aware that the Pooh Sticks are the sleazy scumbags who ripped off their friend and supporter **Long Gone John of Sympathy For The Record Industry** by selling the album that he had already released to a major label and then slapping him with a court injunction ordering him not to sell any of the discs he had already pressed up, meaning a big loss for him, and a permanent place in the Rock Hall of Dirtbag Losers for "Trudi with a heart over the goddam 'i'."

But for those unfamiliar with the Pooh Sticks saga, the *Lookout*, being far more versed in the semantics of rock and roll hype than you laypersons, herewith offers a translation of "Trudi"'s mass-produced personal-type postcard:

Dear Suckers:

I know a lot of you are pathetic, unimaginative, and uncreative losers who will print anything that comes to you with a Hollywood postmark because it makes you feel as if you are part of something bigger than your own empty and worthless lives. So how about printing up this press release as if it came from a real person and help us hype this new product, and maybe someday when I'm really famous, I might mention your name to somebody, or at least I won't tell them what an asshole you are.

Anyway, I'm Trudi! and you might think I'm a cute, exuberant young lady who just wants to make fresh, unaffected music for herself and a few close friends, but in reality I'm a cold-blooded slut who would put your grandmother through a meat grinder and feed her to my pet piranhas in two seconds flat if I thought it might advance my career as a rock star. So don't get any ideas about fucking around with me, all right, buster? (I mean, !)

So look, all the big mags already fingered us for stardom, so what are you waiting for, give us a good review so we'll have credibility with the "alternative" scene or else you'll be like totally left out and you might not get invited to the press party for our next album release.. And if you don't think I'm serious, look how we fucked over that hippie dork who put up all the money to get us started in show business. "Sympathy For The Record Industry," my ass. Can you believe that guy, he actually thought we were his friends! I mean, we're just making records to please ourselves, afterall? Oh, and I guess making a few million bucks wouldn't hurt, either, and if we have to put his pathetic little record label out of business to increase our chances, well, that's show business, isn't it, tee hee!

So look, get on the bandwagon and hype the new LP, got it? You better, if you know what's good for you, you two-bit little fanzine editor who only dream you could be as hip as us.

Love™,
Trudi

Those E-town punx ain't got no respect. Earlier this year they even took to crank-calling **Maximum Rocknroll**. One fun-loving prankster claimed to be representing **Fux-U-Up** fanzine from Idaho and demanded to talk to head honcho Tim Yohannan, but instead found himself chatting with staffer Suzanne Bartchy who flew into a righteous snit when he casually referred to her as "Mama" and "Babes" (common Eureka terminology, as those who dwell in the shadow of the pulp mill will sadly assure you).

"Your fanzine's never going to be in MRR," she snarled, a prophecy that unfortunately proved false only a month later, when I, casting about in vain for the name of a really stupid fanzine to illustrate a point about really stupid punks, somehow ended up mentioning **Fux-U-Up** in my monthly column. I swear it was just a Fraudian slip or something, honest. I was six thousand miles away at the time, and I'm too bashful to make crank calls.

Riot Frrrumps

The increasingly visible and vocal faction of punk neo-feminists known as riot grrrls is in full media hype, already reaching the pages of the *New York Times*. Since this publication has often been called the punk rock version of the *Times* (whether for its dullness or its pompous professionalism, I'm not sure), it seems incumbent on the *Lookout* to present its own take on the phenomenon.

I don't claim to be an expert on the subject, or even knowledgeable for that matter, but my impression is that riot grrrls are the kind of girls who didn't make it onto the cheerleader squad in high school and decided to start their own club that was cooler. I realize that their intentions were nobler and that they've accomplished a bit more, but the long term effects seem much the same: it's just that a different clique is now getting the attention and, most importantly, the boys.

This is probably the worst heresy I could publish, and will probably result, as I've been warned by one female friend, in my getting banned from the scene, but as I've long since become a statistical irrelevancy in relations between the sexes, what have I got to lose? Viewed charitably, the riot grrrls are young females who've previously been rejected and put upon, only to find things suddenly turned inside out and themselves the object of both attention and desire. Put less kindly, the grrrls could be seen as petulant frumps who've hit upon a great gimmick for picking up cute if confused young boys who are willing, even eager to do as they're told.

Am I getting too jaded or cynical if I've reached the point where I interpret any and all youth movements as new strategies for getting laid? Probably. I remember how shocked I was to discover at the age of 19 or 20 how many of my fellow antiwar protesters were moved more by their libido than their political principles; perhaps part of my shock was occasioned by the uncomfortable realization that my own motives were not nearly so clear and unidirectional as I had liked to imagine.

Yeah, it's good that girls, or women of any age are encouraged to see themselves as strong, independent human beings capable of setting their own agendas and not needing male approval for their validation. If the riot grrrl movement were capable of providing that, I would be an unabashed supporter, but simply creating a different standard for female beauty (the dowdy, fake nerd look in exchange for the perfectly coiffed and made up standard American beauty) or reordering the in and out crowds doesn't accomplish anything.

And pardon me if I bring up the word sexism, but riot grrrls appear to be seizing upon the fatuous logic employed by some black "thinkers" (Harry Allen and Spike Lee come to mind) who claim that only the "oppressor" can be racist. Excluding males or relegating them to second-class status may provide a satisfying measure of revenge for all the abuses women have suffered at the hands of the male gender, but it's hardly progressive. And besides, this anti-male thrust seems suspiciously selective. When male sex objects like K Records honcho Calvin Johnson (who by the way stands to make not a few bucks off the riot grrrl hype) or Sassy pinups Nation of Ulysses heave into sight, I've personally witnessed riot grrrls behave like the same sort of slavering groupies who besieged the backstage during the depths of the retrograde misogynist 70s.

At any rate, cultural phenomena which get picked up on by the mass media at such an early stage of their life tend to have more commercial than sociological impact. In other words, look for some of the more notorious riot grrrl bands to go major label and make hell

of money, and for the rest to disappear fairly quickly in the dust of next year's trend.

Talk about cruel and unusual punishment: the inmates at San Quentin, one of California's harshest lockdowns, were "treated," (as *BAM* magazine puts it), to a concert from the likes of Gregg Allman, Greg Kihn and Narada Michael Walden. Geez, isn't doing 20-to-life bad enough already?

Also: Dan O'Mahony, who has apparently moved to northern California and decided to become a Smart Punk (he's attending UC Davis) may be hooking up with Chuck ex-Monsula and Dave EC to form what we can only presume will be one hell of powerful guitar-based assault on all the forces of worldly unrighteousness. There's some other big name involved in this group, too, but it escapes me at the moment. Maybe someone from 7 Seconds?? (Who's 7 Seconds? They used to be big in the 80s.)

Chuck, by the way, parted with Monsula under less than the best of circumstances. He essentially got booted out of the band while they were touring on the East Coast last summer. Sounds kind of ruthless, no doubt, but the rest of the band claim they just couldn't deal with him anymore. Too bad for all concerned they couldn't have figured that out somewhere a little closer to Berkeley, but apparently things are more or less patched up now, and Monsula is forging ahead (instead of breaking up as they'd planned) with Lance J-Church (ex-Cringer) taking over on guitar. No, Lance has not yet

decided to go straight edge. We're waiting, but not too patiently.

What else is Lance up to? Well, in addition to J-Church, he's half of the team responsible for a box set of 7" records intended to showcase the scene that's supposedly centered around the Mission District in San Francisco (where, none too coincidentally, Lance himself lives). I think calling it a "scene" might be stretching the point slightly, since the only consistent all-ages venue in the Mission is Klub Komotion, which tends to emphasize politically correct eclecticism over straight-ahead punk rock (now, now, I didn't say that was bad, did I?). Mission District bands mostly play (if they play in their neighborhood at all) at the Chameleon, which as bars go, is not so bad, but it's still a bar, with all the baggage that entails. Anyway,



Leumas in Old Town

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Eureka's Chris Gambin and Berkeley's Thadicus ex-Bumblescrump: a touching display of inter-regional scene unity or another attempt by Thadicus to restore his Humboldt cred?

it's a cool box set and Lance can't help it if he lives in San Francisco, so do him a favor and check it out. Some of the bands include **Jawbreaker**, **Steel Pole Bathtub**, **Bedlam Rovers**, and (surprise, surprise) **J-Church**.

Some of the same bands also appear on a new CD "tribute to REM" and other than "why?" I have nothing to say about that except to use it as a lead-in to an item about the **Mr. T Experience**, who also participated in said exercise in futility. Item being that MTX very nearly broke up after their European tour, part of which is chronicled elsewhere in these pages (and no, I didn't have anything to do with it). But they didn't; instead longtime rhythm guitarist **Jon Von Zelowitz** departed and Mr. T will continue as a three-piece (but now who will exchange the world's worst jokes with **Dr. Frank** in between songs?). It's my bet that Jon Von, who contributed such gems as "End of the Ramones," "I'm In Love With Paula Pierce," "What Is Punk?" and "Surfin' Cows" to the band'd repertoire, will be missed.

Also splitsville, though no one noticed at first: **Filth**. The band had been on a long hiatus (there's a word to give **Jake** fits; he's probably even now on his way to the drugstore to get something for it), vowing not to play again until they had some new songs. After a while, people got tired of holding their breath, and then guitarist **Jim** (the one who

for a number of years held the West Coast record for most prodigious mohawk) took off to join **Dogma Mundista**. At press time, no word yet on what other members might be doing. We can, however, assure a nervous listening public that there's no truth to rumors that last summer's **Blatz** reunion would be permanent. Word on the street, in fact, is that **Jesse** is looking to spark a reunion of the **Gr'ups**, who've been broken up now for all of two months.

The other blond **Jesse**, the one who used to be in **Operation Ivy**, has been making news of a different sort. It seems he entered a Zen monastery last summer, but apparently you can't keep a media star down, because a recent issue of *Harper's* (or some similar national glossy mag) featured a story on the Zen movement illustrated by a photo of the as always photogenic Mr. J caught in a meditative pose, "contemplating the meaning of life," or something like that.

Also kaput: **Bumblescrump**, who apparently ran out of people to annoy. They're releasing a posthumous 7" split with San Diego concept band **Rice**. A couple members have landed in the **Locals**, a



It's the Ne'er Do Wells!

quixotic project aimed at replicating the early 60s surf sound (as with the tribute to REM, I can only mutter, once more, why?), which also features **Marshall** ex-**Blatz** on 12-string Rickebacker and occasional fanzine publisher **Cyrus** on... what? I just realized I don't know. Probably guitar, I don't think they have timbales or a xylophone.

The biggest buzz on the street is reserved for **Raool**, who I have yet to see, but who have the great advantage of being rad girls who are very young. Now you may not immediately understand why that is such an advantage, and I'm not sure I do either; all I know is that of everyone who has raved about this band, not one has ever bothered commenting on whether they knew how to play their instruments or had good songs or any of that stuff. Sometimes attitude is everything, and sometimes lack of attitude is even better.



B.C. By Johnny Hart