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Spring 1977

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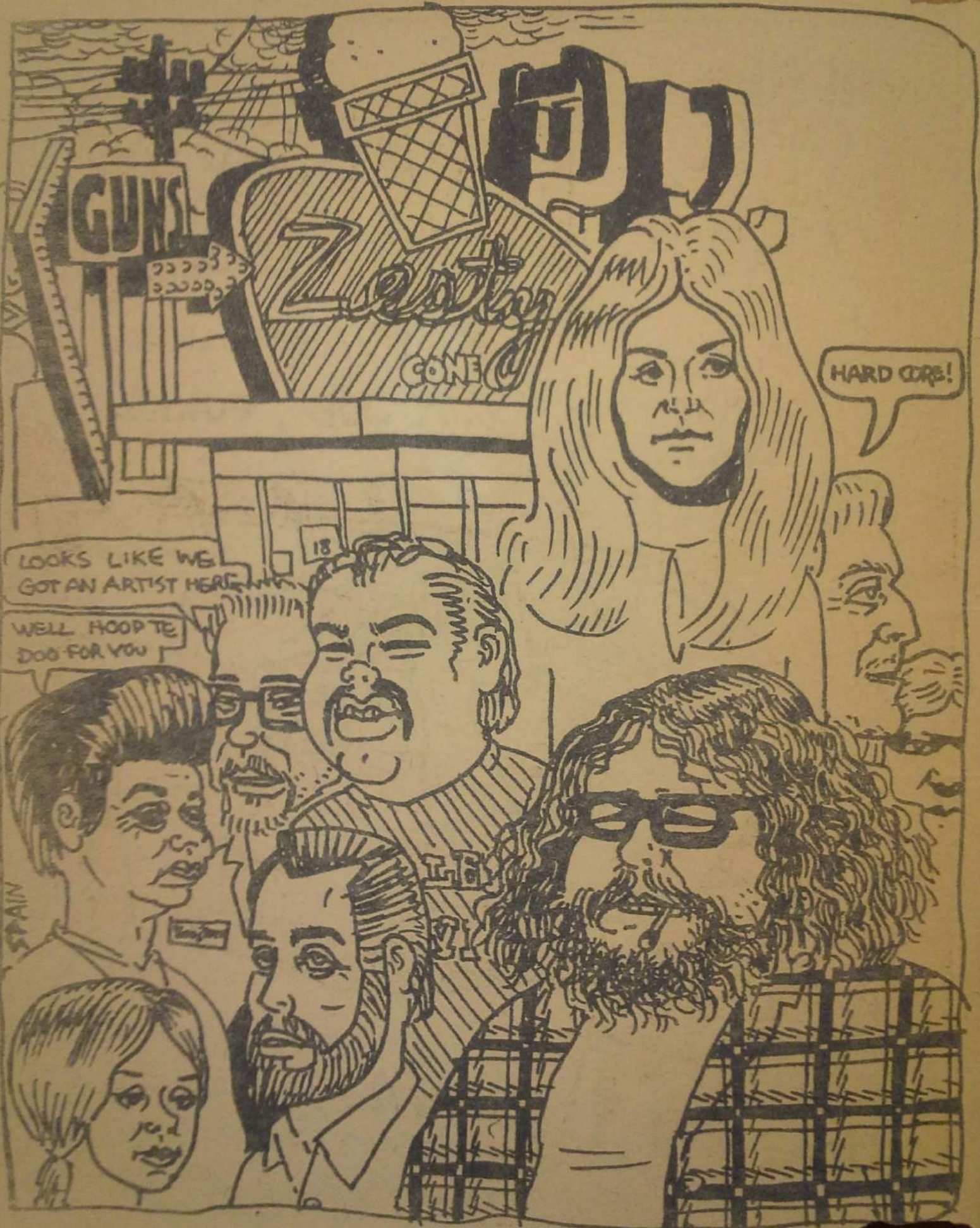
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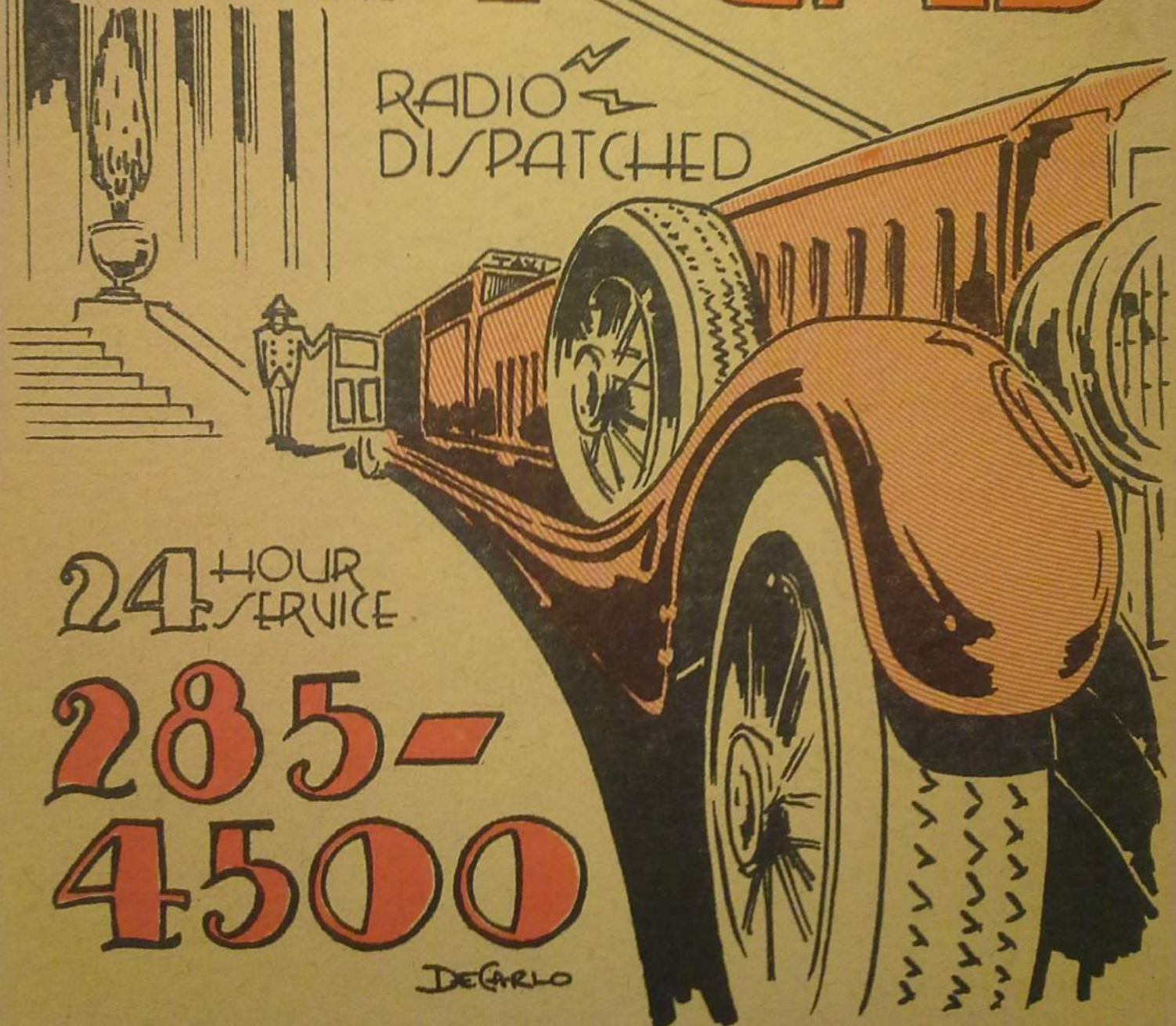
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vol.3 no.1 spring 1977



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THE NEW DEEP CITY PRESS
is published a few
times a year by a few
San Francisco cab drivers.

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BY THE AUTHORS; Address
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San Francisco, Ca. 94101

STATE-OF-THE-ART LUXURY @ 75¢!

Our ancestors carved their image with blunt instruments, indeed. We carve ours with the arc of an electronic stencil imager and the ink of a stencil duplicator. It appears, however, that sophisticated tools don't necessarily imply a sophisticated society. It is an oddity of our times that our children go around shooting people. Mark Joseph's story, *Death on Watchman Way*, reveals an absurdity and tragedy as peculiar to our times as cancer. *Something's* wrong. You don't have to watch T.V. to see that. On the one hand, emotion demands atonement. On the other, reason says there is none. It is as big a frustration as the crime itself. What *do* we do with adolescent murderers?

David Bolton's *HEROIN: a view from the front seat* examines another peculiarity of our day, heroin addiction. Times are tough and lots of people feel better nodding out. The trouble is, the rest of us have to pay the high price of every junkie's habit. As long as we treat the heroin enigma as a crime rather than as a disease, Bolton argues, we are going to continue picking up the tab.

On the lighter side, Max Diamond gives us a flat rate tour through Hollywood, David Frankel's *SUPER-CLEAR* comes to the aid of the City's stranded local people, Steve Holly lets us compare notes with Sam Ambrose, a cab driver from St. Croix, Jamie's got Maxie scaling the Pyramid for his next NO-GO, the Duck is Bionic this issue and solving some heavy equations, and the Glove bares it all to become his own pin-up. All in all, it's a bon-a-roo issue and still only 75¢.

LETTERS

Thanks for the latest copy of the Hack City Rag, better five years late than never. A very impressive contribution to the cab drivers' international movement, to be sure. I'm looking forward to the day when a shutdown might be Topanga Canyon, and an airport Moscow International. A cabbies' world. Forbidding a blow out, it may come to pass.

Morton Stahl
København, Denmark

I am interested in subscription information on one poetry magazine discussed a few weeks ago on C.B.C. Thank you in advance.

Kathleen Tuttle
Lubec, Maine

Sorry, but we don't have subscriptions, Kathleen. People who were meant to get a copy usually do. That's why we sent you this one.

Re David Frankel's essay ("On Tipping"):

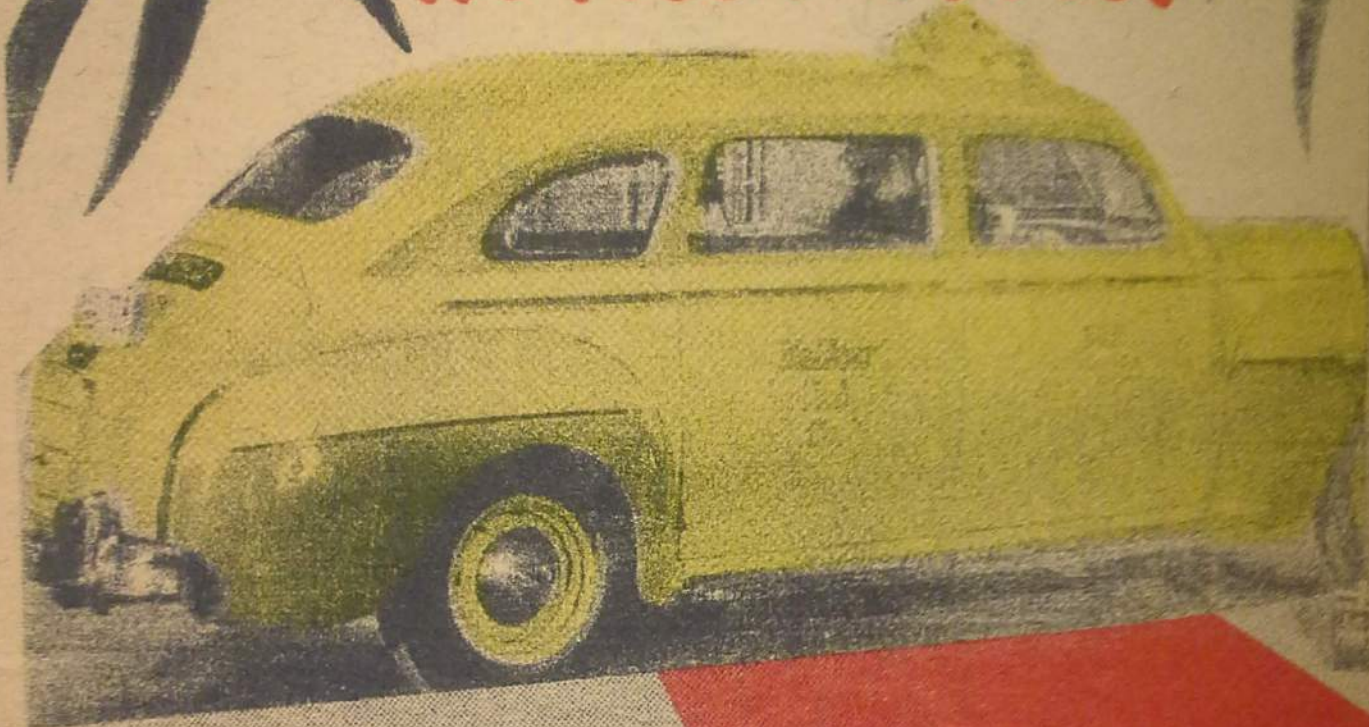
Of all the words
a load could arrange,
The gladdest these: Keep the change.

Alfred, Load Tennyson

Most magazines hit the stands a month before the date on the cover. How come yours hits the stands a season after the one on the cover?

Phillip Clarke
San Francisco
Because we don't make any money.

Taxis In The Movies



by MAX DIAMOND

For the past sixty years, the commercial American cinema has projected a shifting view of big city life. The down and out comedy of Chaplin, the corporate comedies of the 50's and early 60's, and the variants and mutations of these forms being produced today focus largely on the cities and their multitudes. And inevitably, the cabs are there, always in the right place at the right time, poised and ready to play their part in whichever secret of the city is to be unfolded.

Though the image of the cab driver has shifted with the fashions of film, certain

elements have remained constant, caught within the public image of the cab driver, and forming that image at the same time. The portrayal of cab drivers in movies runs the gamut from faceless non-entities defined by the vehicles they drive to full fledged characters almost as human as their customers. Generally, though, the cab driver is the third party - an audience, welcome or unwelcome, for whatever adventure climbs into the back seat. The cab driver, with some notable exceptions, is almost always acted upon, a fact which often has a great deal of influence over his or her responses to life.

In one scene from *City Lights* (1927), Charlie Chaplin tries to flag a cab for a blind flower girl only to have a huge line of cabs zoom heedlessly by, splashing gutter water on his trousers. Here the drivers are not even seen; the seemingly endless line of cabs, shot from the rear, slips by the helpless hobo like links in a chain - irrevocable. They go by without hesitation, as though already "dispatched" on unknown orders. The motif of the independence of cab drivers (you can never stop one when you need one) became a comedy convention.

In the 30's the gangster film dominated the urban palette, and the cab driver began showing a new face. In films like *Taxi!* (1932) and *The Roaring Twenties* (1939), both starring James Cagney, the taxi is seen as a cover for illegal activities, in this case bootlegging, the main activity of 30's movie gangsters. In *Roaring Twenties*, Cagney returns from WWI to find his old job at the auto shop gone, and goes into the cab busi-

ness with his longtime friend. Through a chance acquaintance in the cab, he becomes involved in delivering booze for the mob. Gradually he claws his way out of the cab, and into the highrolling milieu of decadent underworld bit city life. When the inevitable crash comes, he is "reduced" once again to hacking.

Here the taxi is seen as a beginning and an end, a place to start over and a place to wind up. It is also a metaphor for the bottom. Cagney starts in the cab when he can't find a job, and ends there again when there's nothing left.

Roaring Twenties also illustrates a motif which becomes a major archetype in the 40's and remains part of the public consciousness - the cab as cover. Cagney is introduced to bootlegging when a fare asks him to deliver a bottle to a speakeasy, casually handing over an inordinately large tip in the process. Cagney and his partner soon find that their cab is an excellent headquarters for their expanding operation: highly mobile, well connected and well covered, providing the presumption of an honest purpose to their movements.

The image of the sophisticated big city cabbie with mobility and cover proliferated with the popularity of private eye films in the 1940's. An infinite variety of detectives can be seen in the films of this period leaping into conveniently placed taxicabs and exhorting the driver to "follow that car". These cab drivers seem to accept the tail job as a normal part of the trade, and readily take off given no further destination than the rear fenders of a car a

(Continued on page 53)

DAVID FRANKEL'S

SUPER CLEAR



"City Cab for the Outer 3rd. Lakeview calling back for the second time. City Cab for Silver & Bayshore. 1215, that's Charter Oak. No John, not Magna Carta, Charter Oak. It's a street there off of Silver near Bayshore. Wants you to take him to Arleta. Check. Pick-ups at the Boarding House. City Cab for 16th & Dehon. That's off Sanchez, near the Island there. Dehon. D-E-H-O-N. As in 'A bird at Dehon'. Yes, 2-4 it's better than two inner Bush. City Cab for Grove & Placentral. Hurry! The woman's gonna have a baby. 3-1, why don't you go down the wharf and see if you can find a good lobstetrician. Airport Report: Partly moving; Anticipation Probability about 10%. Lakeview calling back for the third time. Who'll go? There's stick-ups at the Greyhound. A pair at 23rd & Bartlett. 5-3, another veritable bingo, huh? The Outer 3rd calling back. Who's on 3rd? Yeah, you're right, 1-6, it's who's on 1st, I don't know is on 3rd. City Cab for 49th & Geary; a diver coming in. What's that about Potrero Hill, 4-5? A DeHaroing experience, huh? City Cab for California & Mason. 0-9, that's 1001 California. I'll call. Pick-up at Fisherman's Dwarf. Looks like a short haul. City Cab downtown O'Farrell & Jones. 4-8, make the double Shannon off of Post, and pick up two misogynists at Boccaccio's. Lakeview calling back for the fourth and last time. Matching fund on that one. The Western ten times.

Mission and Excelsior at least a dozen apiece. The Outer 3rd, San Bruno Avenue, the Richmond, Sunset avenues, the Lakeview. We need en routers, Riders! Pedestrians !! Crawlers!!! KRO 357 City Cab time 11:58 PM. THE BOARD IS BURSTING!"

It was time for SUPERCLEAR.

O. Henry Winston was a mild-mannered collector for a major metropolitan loan shark. His spare time was spent at the Paradise Cafe, an east Broadway gin mill, a.k.a. the Parasite Cafe, where he specialized in harrassing waitresses, writing illegible graffiti, stealing quarters off the top of the pool table, and listening via his supersonic two-way two-piece pool cue for dispatchers in distress. (Does the name Pavlov ring a bell?) Winston was known to a handful of old and trusted dispatchers as SUPERCLEAR. He was paid a tithe, as he called it, 10% of "the box" per run, and was on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

While "Deep Throat" was freak-ing out, Henry Winston was calmly stretched over the 4x8 felt table, about to apply right hand running English to his cue ball and consequently sink the last solid while playing hanger position for the 8, when the unmistakable 3 shorts and 1 long reverberated in his right ear. There was no time to waste. Henry purposely scratched, drained the last of his ice cubes on the rocks, laid down a deuce, and excused himself to the bathroom. There, following his standard operating procedure, he bent the iron bars, climbed out the window into the alley, (bent back the bars), jumped into his battered '58 V. W., and headed for the secret natural gas hose under the Bay Bridge.

There, while propaning up, he peeled off his car cover to reveal a 1977 Orange and Cream Plymouth Fury reading City Cab #00, propped up the collapsable meter and dome light, turned his special computerized tape recorder to "unscramble," and headed south on Bayshore Blvd.

Winston's tape recorder spewed out his itinerary with the precision of a supermarket shopping list. The 96 addresses on his list, counting both pick-up and delivery, were arranged according to area and block down to details such as one-way streets and synchronized stop lights. The rides were, as usual, practically all locals, with the few inter-districts skillfully used as carryovers. The proverbial piece of cake.

Bayshore to Silver. Along San Bruno. Out Paul to 3rd. 3rd & Fitzgerald to Cameron. Back to 3rd & La Salle. A short haul to Oakdale. A ride to the Mission. 15 Missions. 12 Excelsiors. A half dozen Lakeviews. Back along San Jose/Dolores to the Western. Fell & Octavia to Hayes & Laguna. A few west of Divis. Grove & Scott. Golden Gate & Steiner. And finally (and poetically) THE PINK PALACE.

"Double O in."

"Check."

"Mission Accomplished."

"Check."

"Western, Excelsior, Lakeview, and Outer 3rd too."

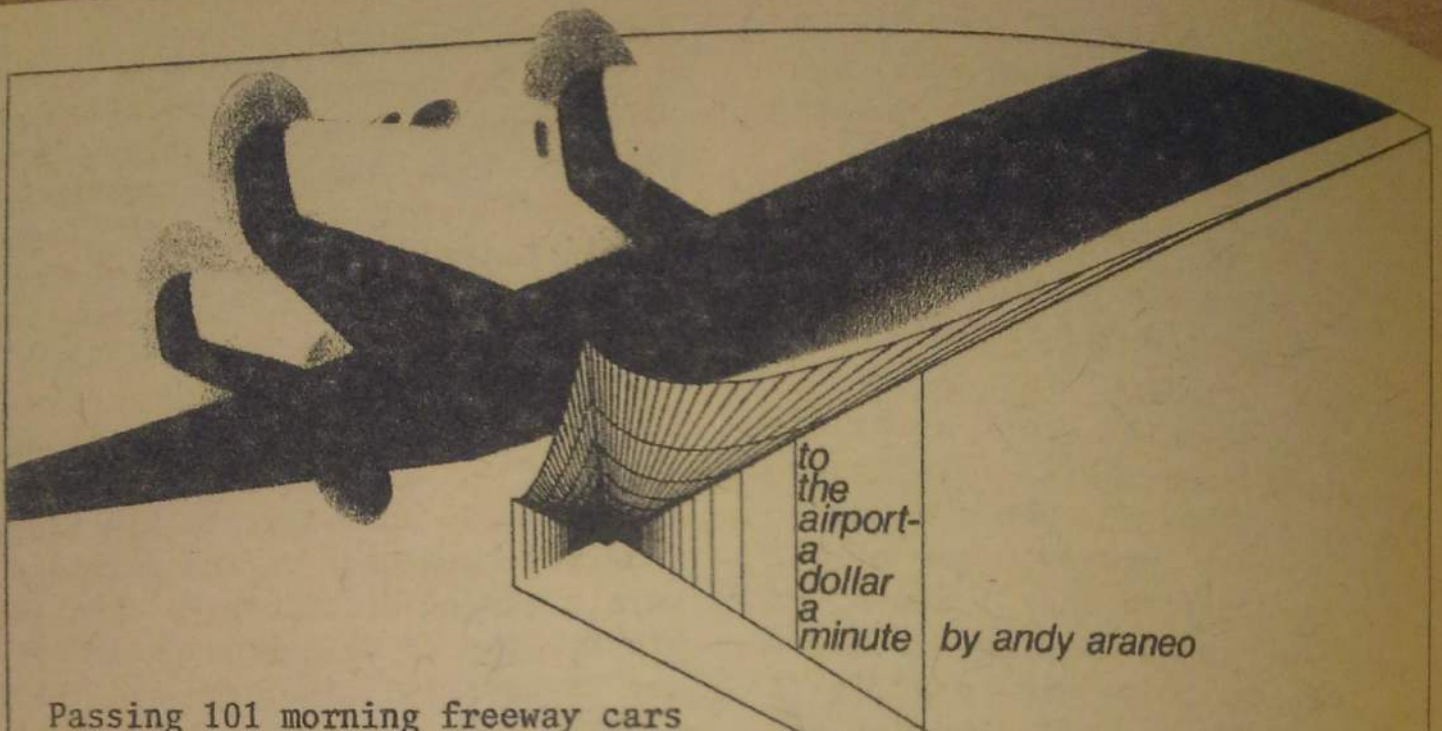
"Check."

"The Sunset and Richmond get scoffed up?"

"Check."

"Double O returning to the 'dise'."

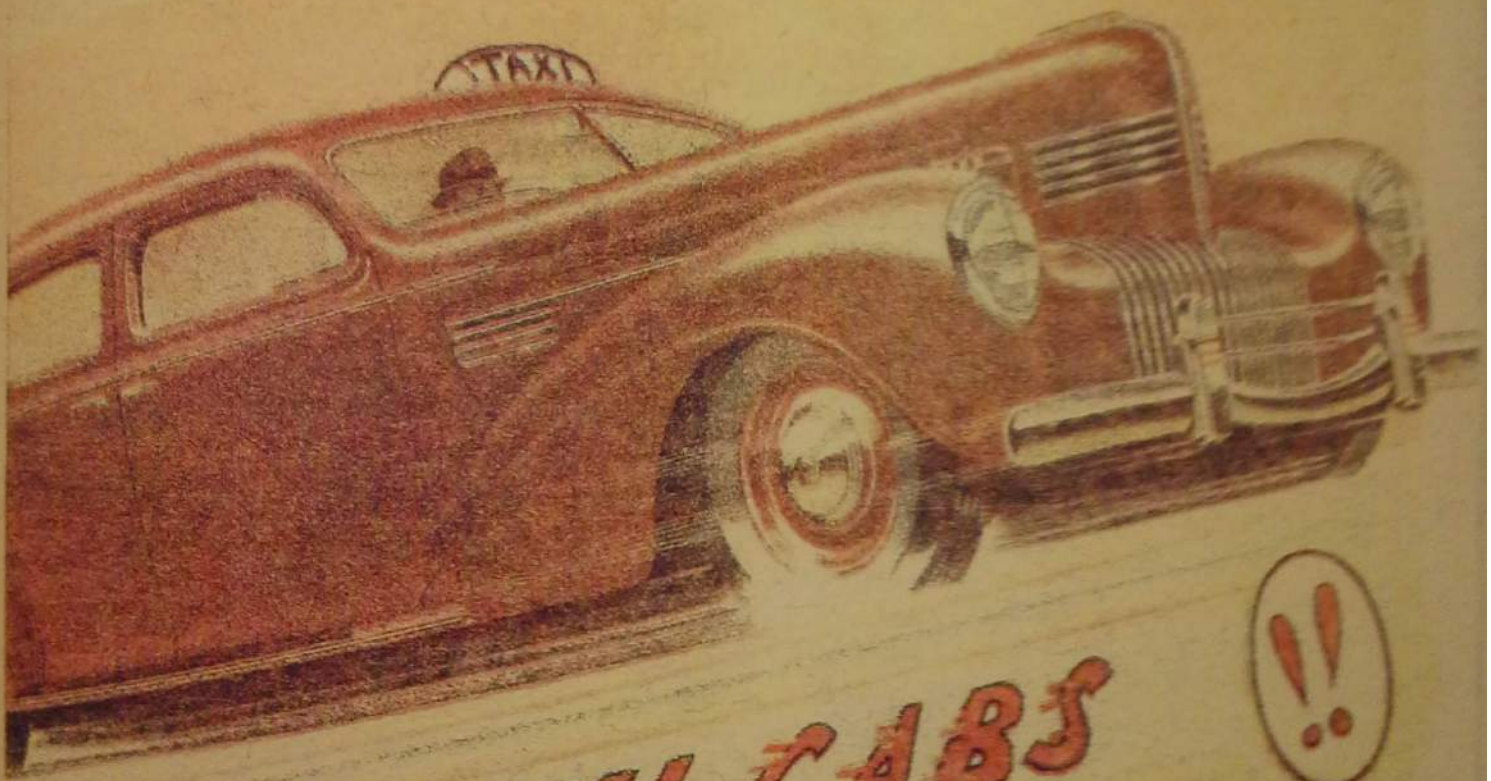
"Check. KRO 357 City Cab time 12:01 AM. The board is clear. Good morning gentlemen."



to
the
airport--
a
dollar
a
minute by andy araneo

Passing 101 morning freeway cars
Passing the calm and sparkling bay
Notions passing thru my head this morning
about Capitalism-- "the Royal Scam."
There's a lot of weather to talk about these days,
convenient for passing time with the customers--
how our winter storms are flattening Buffalo.
"Oh, about \$16 to the airport..."
Frank the dispatcher singing
"City Cab in the sunset" to the "red sails" melody
as I flip off the radio and settle into passing the next 20 mins.
at 60 mph, in a freeway interview.
The guy in the back--
regardless of which clothes or attitude he's wearing
--is a mirror
and this one's a big-jawed lawyer from Chi-town.
"Really," I ask in my best California accent,
"they named the city of Chicago after an Indian chief?"
"For sure," he replies
"well they named your city after a *saint*."
And I'm drifting off into a thoughtless meditation
with the taximeter clicking off my mantra--
I see the towering hotel at Geary-Powell
as brown-robed St Francis himself
stooped over Union Square
playing at the pin-ball game of Taxi
and *me* one of the balls
going for 10 hours in surprise directions.
I often go for rides on my day off--
it's hard for a motion junkie to kick cold.

STREAMLINE ACTION with



TAXI CABS



THE CITY AND OTHER FRAGILE CREATURES

by Sandra Katzman

This is your classic, one-roomed, bay-windowed city dwelling. The paint is peeling off the off-white walls onto old bold redandyellow-andblue patterned rugs. It has the fastest roaches in town, who, being native, don't type.

Promptly at 8:30, 10:20, 12, and 3:15 children play below my window. One little girl shrieks incessantly. The playground director wears a crewcut and dark glasses and yells until he has silenced everything, even the birds. "Now, PLAY!" he admonishes his young charges.

Through my window I see the Egyptian Consulate looming pointedly as if it would puncture the clouds. It is dwarfed, however, by a closer red dome, the great breast of the cityscape.

Outside, kids sit on skateboards. They have never seen a surfer. Nylon wheels spin down the sidewalk through the Dogshit Slalom. The whores on the corner smile.

You want me to write something for the Deep City Press. I am flattered. I am humbled. No editors, no money, no guidelines. Only the legacy of amazing wheeling writing cittiecabbies.

Deep-hearted Ralph is jovial. "So, New West rejected your story on the

DCP? That's okay, we don't need them. Wanna drive a cab?" There's something similar in the lives of cabbie and freelancer, a driving force. Fare, please.

A scream in the middle of the night wakes me. Human or dog, ecstasy or murder? "What is that?" I mumble. "An hysterical woman," comes the dark answer. My lover and I return to our dreams.

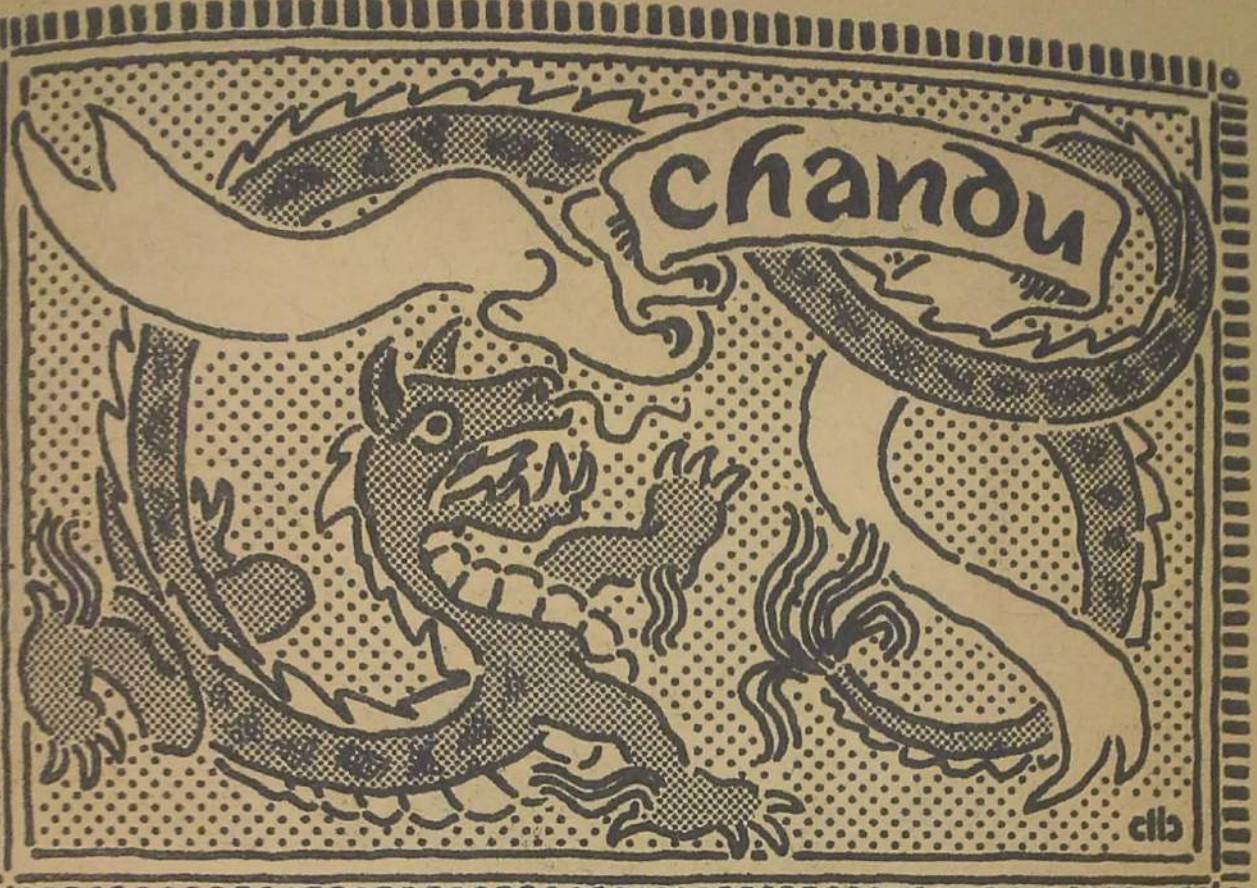
Dogs howl in communion with fire engines. Birds take off, out, over the city, cruising the cement trees. Guilty, sunny days. The seasons are confused, earth dizzy.

After the rain, we will return to waiting for the quake. Everyone wants to be in town for the Big One. Hell, that's why we're all here, isn't it? Visions of violence pale before natural catastrophes.

Acacia trees blooming now. The air smells yellow. A hummingbird darts through the window, confused, wings beating to exhaustion. The Spanish name means *footless bird*.

The deep sound again, again, again. Foghorn or ship? I suppose it doesn't matter. The warning calls of civilization are the same: This is the City, a fragile creature. Be careful, or you'll knock down the bridges.

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Bobby Johnson
Bartender



Interview with a cab driver in St. Croix, V. I.

Some things cannot be communicated with words or external symbols. My interview with Sam Ambrose consisted of my questions, his answers, and his tourguide lecture. But, in between the sentences were subtleties of manner and expression. There were flashes of intimacy and insight that perhaps only cab drivers can share as they talk side by side in the cab on the road.

We talked about the honesty and the freedom we experience as taxi

professionals, about the great things that happen, and the shit we endure.

The strongest impression I came away with was the feeling that I was in the presence of a genuine ambassador, honest and proud, with a keen eye on the dollar.

Naturally enough, my first question was:

DCP: How's business?

AMBROSE: Well, the winter season is just starting. It will last for

about three or four months. After that it's very quiet.

DGP: Can a man make a living?

AMBROSE: Well, let me say one is contented... now, you want to know something about St. Croix. St. Croix is the largest of the Virgin Islands. It's about 2½ times the size of St. Thomas and is 84 miles square. We have two towns, Christiansted and Frederiksted. The most eastern part of the island is the most eastern part of the United States. Seven different flags have flown over St. Croix since it was discovered by Columbus in 1492 on his second voyage. I'll name you the different flags according to how they fall. First, when it was discovered, it was belonging to Spain, second: Holland, third: England, fourth: France, fifth: the Knights of Malta, sixth: Denmark, seventh: the United States. There on the right is one of the old sugar mills. Another on the left. They were placed on hills to take advantage of the trade winds. Sugar was the main industry of the islands, but in the last ten years it has been replaced by oil refining, light manufacturing, and tourism.

DGP: How is tourism doing?

AMBROSE: Well, it's coming back to life. We're expecting to have quite a good winter season.

DGP: How many cabs are there on the Virgin Islands?

AMBROSE: Well, on St. Thomas there are over 1000, but they have the business. On St. Croix we have close to 600 cabs, but some of the plates have been taken back.

DGP: Why is that?

AMBROSE: Well, recently we have compulsory insurance which is very high. Some of the drivers decided they were not making enough so they surrender the plates to the local government. Here the plates are not like a medallion; if you are not going to use them solely for yourself you have to turn them in. You can't transfer them.

DGP: How do you become a cab driver on St. Croix?

AMBROSE: The Department of Public Safety gives you a test and then they issue you a badge and a permit. The Department of Commerce has a voluntary six - week course in which they teach you all about the island, the history, the important landmarks, and what is currently happening. Now, I've heard that taxi drivers in other places only drive a taxi and know very little about the island or city they are in, but I feel that a taxi driver is a member of the Department of Commerce and should be able to inform and educate the visitor about the island. The taxi driver is often the first and the last native that the tourist has contact with and in this respect he becomes an ambassador.

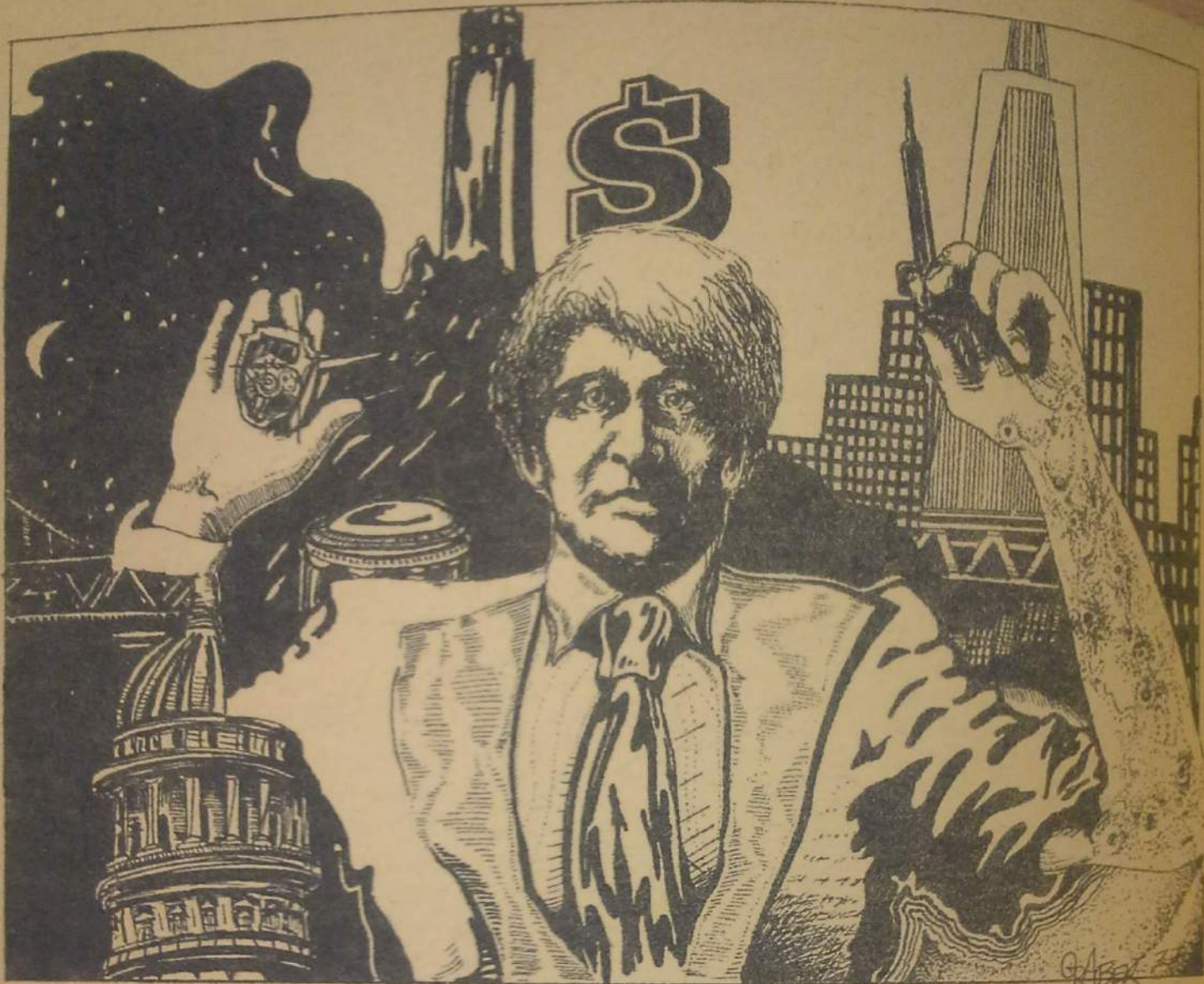
DGP: Do any of the taxis here have radios?

AMBROSE: There is a taxi association here that uses C.B. radios, but that is not sufficient enough. There is talk about installing radios but that is a very expensive thing to do.

DGP: What about robberies? Do they occur here?

AMBROSE: Yes, it's becoming a problem. Just recently a driver got

(Continued on page 50)



HEROIN: a view from the front seat.

By David Bolton

I guess I felt sorry for those kids. Big brother and little brother standing at the curb trying to hail a cab. No one would stop. The oldest couldn't have been over thirteen. The wind had picked up and they huddled together for warmth. What the hell, I thought. I'm having a good night. I'll take them to the Western. I can nab a

Haight-Ashbury while I'm there. So what if they stiff me.

From the back big brother's crisp words chilled my spine. "Third Street." Was I overreacting? They were so young. Calm down, I told myself. Now you've even got the boy scouts after you.

"Where on Third?" I asked, assessing them from the rear view.

Illustration by Kurt Graber

"Hudson," big brother replied in his smooth tone.

"I don't go out that far," I said. "Not on a Saturday night. Too much action downtown. You'd better take the bus."

"Take us as far as you can," big brother said with a smile, handing me a five.

What could I say? Should I open the door and tell them their money is not good enough? What kind of way is that to treat a kid?

We headed out toward Third. Though I wasn't exactly a green pea I hated not trusting people. Most were just trying to get along and I liked to take a person on his word. Even when they ran out on me I did not get too angry. That was their problem. Besides, I used to teach English to kids this age. At a light I caught a glimpse of little brother's profile as he stared out the window. He looked angelic and I decided to take them all the way to Hudson and keep the doors locked.

At that ominous intersection I was more concerned with what was outside the cab than with what was inside. The meter read four-eighty and neither made a move to get out. "Can you take us up the hill?" big brother asked. "It's just a little ways."

"I don't go up there," I said, looking the boy in the eyes. "You know why."

"I understand, mister. It's just that we're scared to go up there alone at night. You know, gangs."

I took a deep breath. No, I wanted to say. No! Get the fuck out of my cab! But something made me say yes. Maybe it was the other kid, the angelic one. Maybe big brother really was on the level.

Minutes later a razor pressed against my throat and I bargained with big brother's frantic demands with a roll of bills. Had I a gun, I would have shot them both when they crossed in front of the headlights. Looking back, I'm glad I didn't have that gun.

II

Junkies, the cabdriver's plague. When you're unlucky enough to land them in your cab, your stomach turns to knots as they direct you down a dangerous street, where they order you to stop and wait, exposed and vulnerable under a streetlamp, as they disappear into some enclave to see about their pressing need. William S. Burroughs calls them ghosts for good reason. Rabid beasts cannot choose but to bite.

III

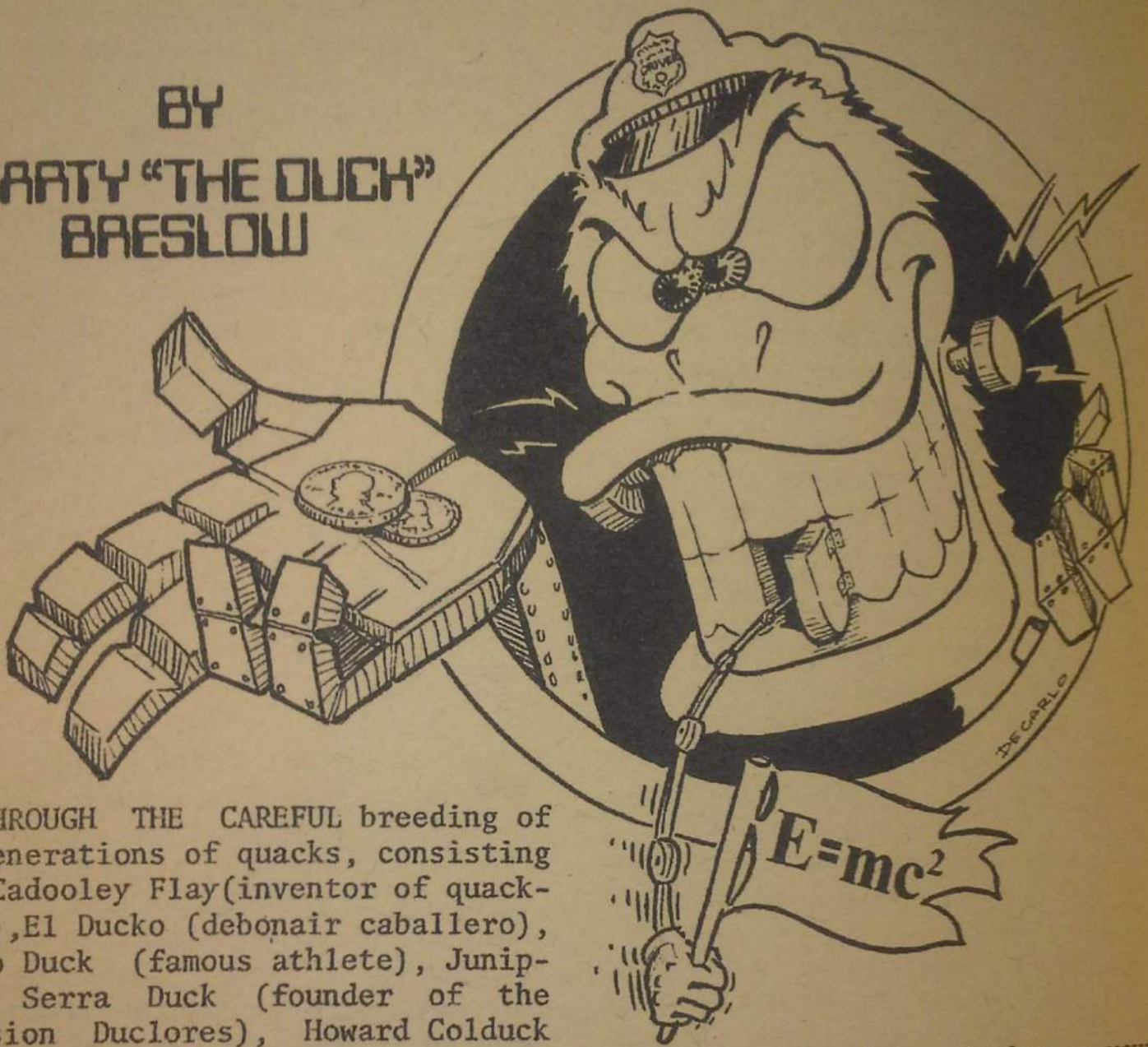
When heroin first entered someone's body in 1898, American doctors were hailing opium as a general tonic for everything from cholera to parasites, the country was shooting or snorting morphine at a rate of twenty thousand ounces annually, and cocaine ran around anyone's brain if he or she had the pause that refreshes, Coca-Cola. The official remedy for the Hay Fever Association? None other than cocaine. Feeling low? Try a concoction called Coca - Cordial, ready made for a quick injection. Guaranteed by medical practitioners to add zest to your life.

Mering and Dreser, heroin's German creators, told the world they had discovered a non-addictive potent analgesic. Derived from morphine, this white colorless bitter

(Continued on page 56)

THE BIONIC DUCK

BY
MARTY "THE DUCK"
BRESLOW



THROUGH THE CAREFUL breeding of generations of quacks, consisting of Cadooley Flay (inventor of quackers), El Ducko (debonair caballero), Elmo Duck (famous athlete), Junipera Serra Duck (founder of the Mission Duclares), Howard Colduck (ace pilot and sportscaster), and H.P. Lovequack (writer misterioso) comes last but not least, the BIONIC DUCK. A psychic phenomenon, the Bionic Duck turns Bionic Hack when he transcends human capabilities to read the minds of those other extracelestial beings, taxi dispatchers.

Meanwhile, at the San Francisco International Airport inside THE LOT, the Bionic Duck is demonstrating one of his many powers to the onlooking Eagles.

"Now put this chicken on your lap," he says, "and stroke its neck ten times rapidly. Presto! A medalion!"

Each Eagle attempts this astonishing feat only to obtain an obscure menu.

"Next lesson begins tomorrow at 6:00 P.M. Class dismissed."

Bionic Duck gets behind the wheel of his Gran Turismo Lemmo and contemplates Maxwell's equations, written for the fields in vacuum, in the presence of electric charge

of density ρ and electric current
of density J :

$$\text{curl } \vec{E} = -\frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \vec{B}}{\partial t}$$

$$\text{curl } \vec{B} = \frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \vec{E}}{\partial t} + \frac{4\pi}{c} \vec{J}$$

$$\text{div } \vec{E} = 4\pi\rho$$

$$\text{div } \vec{B} = 0$$

Mind beams begin to radiate. The electroencephalograph scribbles its free form graffiti transmitted from brain motors to charged neurons. A Lazar-like electromagnetic wave radiates out toward the Airline Terminal in the distance. Exploding with terrific force, the building does not disintegrate but melts into a mushroom-like form at the stratospheric level.

The Bionic Duck converts the throttle of his amazing Lemmo from REG. to NAT. and hovers above the suspended terminal. He engages the specimen sampler which snatches each passenger just arriving in San Francisco, and presses the scanning button reading "Potentials." This is how the specimen sampler determines who is coming into San Francisco either by cab or bus. The entire process is as easy as picking spores off the mushroom-like terminal. The other cab drivers watch in awe as the Duck loads his passengers in a huge crater shaped dish connected by a life line to the Turbo Lemmo. The craft makes a

180° turn and heads back to the City. An observer on terra firma squints to make out the insignia on the air bus: "Apollo IX, Turkey Express."

The Bionic Duck's remaining problem is a spatial one: where to land and drop his fares. Immediately the Duck supercharges his brain creating an immense electric field, E , the flux of which,

$$\int \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{a} = 4\pi \sum_i q_i = 4\pi \int \rho dv$$

through his brain produces a red Lazar beam directed toward the apex of a phallic-like structure high atop a San Francisco hill. The powerful beam hollows out this tube into a silo. Through the air shaft beneath the Gran Turismo Lemmo each passenger is gently lowered into Coitus Tower. In a matter of hours, The City must designate taxi stands to accommodate the new arrivals at Coitus Terminal.

As night falls the Bionic Duck is back on asphalt again. The radio is slow but a strange scent is being picked up by sensory radiators attached to the front of the Lemmo. Wave forms set off heart throbbing beats received by the interceptor antennae at the rear of the bionic cab. As the beats speed up and increase in volume, infrared pictures take shape inside the Duck's memory banks. The pictures are fully developed and it is clear from where the yet-to-be-broadcast radio calls will originate. Bionic Duck begins to make a clean sweep of these locations. First stop is McCarthy's where a customer is just about to ask the bartender to call a cab.

(Bionic Duck)

"You guys give the best service in town," he says, "but I just ordered this whisky. Let me buy you a drink."

Bob & Guido's, Ton-Jo's, the 20-Val Club, Bob & Aggie's, the 3300 Club, Kotter's Korner, and the Cozy Corner persist in Bionic Duck's memory bank and he declines the offered drink. Before the Duck can thank him, the customer jams the whisky down Bionic Duck's throat. Virtually all of his bionic powers are destroyed. All the remaining bars that were stored in Bionic Duck's lost memory bank are soon broadcasted by the taxi dispatcher and given out to other drivers. Bionic Duck is hopelessly drunk, his wires short-circuited, leaning over the rail at Original McCarthy's. ★

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MALVINA COFFEE

Where other coffee shops shop
Union at Grant Tel. 392-4736

RACHAEL

by George Benet

My grandmother ran the show
imprisoned by language
burdened by petticoats
partially immobilized by a stroke
she beat the drum,
the family danced to
my recurrent dream
a black bowling ball, rolling and
picking up speed
my anguished cry, only to be caressed
as I begged her never to let me die
never to let me be taken away
no, you will never die,
never be taken away
it sounded so beautiful
in her baltic tongue
so reassuring, so placating
I knew I was never to die, for I was
her streak of sun, her bloodline
beyond the grave.

AUNT LUCY

by Andy Araneo

i woke up suddenly
before my alarm
with thoughts of your death
six months past
on my birthday
aunt lucy
of the summer times you took me
up the hudson valley
in your great new car
with all of my life laying before me
like a new road
and me tucked safe inside
a shiny black buick roadmaster
free
escaping the aging confusion
and agony
of a dying brooklyn neighborhood
bursting with excitement
at your side
as we drove along

The New Yellow Cab Cooperative

AN APPROXIMATE CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- Dec. 1 - Yellow Cab insurance dropped; Yellow off streets; 1000 drivers out of work.
- Dec. 15 - New Yellow Cab Cooperative formed. Over 200 pledges.
- Dec. 18 - Yellow Cab receiver announced the \$6500 medallion sale; \$1000 deposit required.
- Dec. 20 - Nassau Insurance filed claim for medallions held; auction sold 13 medallions at \$17.500 - 18.500.
- Dec. 21 - Yellow Cab - fearing the inevitable - filed bankruptcy Chapter 11 protection. This protected all assets.
- Dec. 31 - Harold Dobbs, SF attorney, former supervisor, mayoral candidate, Moscone law partner, entered bids on behalf of LA liquidation.
- Jan. 6 - New Yellow Cab Cooperative made drive for membership.
- Jan. 8 - New Yellow Cab Cooperative held Taxi Dance at California Hall.
- Feb. 18 - Everyone primed for sale; Dobbs still only bidder; hearing set for Mar. 18, 77.
- Mar. 18 - Dobbs bid accepted as only bidder; auction of medallions halted after police commission refusal to transfer medallions to individuals. New Yellow Cab Cooperative aligned with Dobbs to set up cooperative.
- Mar. 25 - Judge Herbert Katz rejected all offers; set hearing for April 18th.
- Apr. 18 - Hearing postponed to May 12th, 77.
- Apr. 19 - Final effort launched by New Yellow Cab Coop; new spirit.
- May 11 - Over \$500,000 deposited New Yellow Cab Cooperative.
- May 12 - San Diego court hearing; Dobbs bid, New Yellow Cab Coop bid; reviewed by Judge Katz; major creditors back New Yellow Cab Coop proposal.
- May 13 - Judge Herbert Katz awards bid to New Yellow Cab Cooperative.

From the beginning it was apparent that the task of forming a cooperative and purchasing Yellow Cab would be difficult. Had I known the historical drama would take six months, and not six weeks, I would not have gotten involved. Yet once the ball was rolling, dedication and determination led to Judge Katz' decision on Friday the 13th of May, 1977.

Time will test the cooperative idea. There will be a new era of progress and cooperation in San Francisco's cab industry.

We will have to work hard to pay for our company. Our business will be competitive and our attitude cooperative. It is in this sense that we will all work together toward this common goal.

—DON FASSETT

PORTILLO & SCHROEDER'S ENGLISH-TAXI TAXI-ENGLISH DICTIONARY

ENGLISH-TAXI

bald (bôld), *adj.*, [ME. *balled.*] No tread on tires.

break[˘]down (brāk[˘]down), *n.* A mechanical failure ceasing the operation of a cab.

bin[˘]go (bing[˘]gō), *exclam.* Reply by driver indicating that he or she is exactly at the location of the radio call.

break[˘]ing up (brāk[˘]ing up), *adj.* Distorted radio sound caused by being out of range.

dead[˘]head (ded[˘]hed), *n.* Traveling a distance empty so as to be where the action is.

drop[˘]ping (drop[˘]ing), *v.t.* Letting a fare out of the cab.

en[˘]route (än root[˘]; F. äN). [F.] On or along the way to a destination.

fare (fâr), *n.* [AS. *faru* journey.]
1. Passenger(s). 2. The price of a cab ride.

fast me[˘]ter (fâst mē[˘]tēr), *n.* A meter that operates faster than the set rate.

flat rate (flat rāt), *n.* [OF., fr., L. *ratus flatus.*] A set rate for out-of-town trips.

gas (gas), *n.* Gasoline.

gates (gāts), *n.* [AS. *gaet, geat, gat, gate, door.*] The Rental charge paid by drivers for the use of the cab.

TAXI-ENGLISH

Your condition if you got lucky last night.

What you experience after your 7th no-go.

See NO-GO.

What will surely happen if she is a day driver and he is a night driver.

A type of necrophilia.

Proof that birds have no respect for windshields.

French for "cooked in roots."

What policemen aren't.

A meter that does on the first date.

How often you have to change tires.

Results of a burrito.

A place where horses go in and your money goes out.

grease (grēs), *n.* [L. *crassus* fat.]
Tips given by cab drivers.

load (lōd), *n.* [ME. *lode*.] Passen-
ger(s); fare.

(stealing a load), *colloq.* Taking a
fare that does not belong to you.

no-go (nō gō), *n.* Radio order at
which no one appears.

per'son'al (pûr'sun'al), *adj.* [OF.
personel.] A phone message or order
for a specific driver.

pushing a hack, *slang* Driving a cab.

pick'up (pik'up), *n.* A non-radio
fare.

ra'di'o call (rā'di'ō kôl), *n.* A
phone order called by the dispatch-
er

rid'ing (rīd'ing), *pres. part.* Trav-
eling a distance.

(riding the radio), *colloq.* Travel-
ing a distance for a radio call.

screw'driv'er (skroo'drīv'ēr), *n.*
Tool often needed to open the trunk
of a cab.

stiff (stif), *n.* [AS. *stif*.] Exact
fare; no tip.

stretch'ing (strech'ing), *v.t.* A
driver announcing that his or her
location to a radio call is closer
than it actually is.

T.C.ing, *slang* Short for completing
a trip.

tip (tip), *n.* [ME.] Gratuity.

way'bill (wā'bil), *n.* Log of cab
fares.

What you apply to a doorman.

What you really have to do just as
you get an airport.

Some people will do anything for
their organic gardens.

What you say when asked to go to
Hunter's Point. (Bingo-that's Bing,
he'll go to Hunter's Point.)

Rick, come home. All is forgiven.
Ethel & Mort

When your day is so bad you try to
sell the cab.

What you do when you drop your
change.

No-go's called by the dispatcher.

Working on your novel.

What everyone will be doing when
Yellow returns.

Might as well, lady, can't fix the
tire.

A strange load to a funeral parlor.

What every other driver does.

Into a Chinese movement.

Numbers 4 and 5 on the exacta.

A statement of how many times you
picked up at the St. Francis and
dropped at the Airline Terminal.

MAXIE the TAXI

MEETS
THE

MYSTERIOUS
DR. NOGO



SURPRISE!



THINK I'LL
GO DOWNTOWN...



EAGER EARS & EAGLE EYES ARE ALERT AS THE MODERN "KNIGHTS-ERRANT" PURSUE THEIR MOTLEY "NIGHT-ERRANDS"



CONFRONTED WITH EVERY IMAGINABLE TEMPTATION, THEIR SWORDS ARE SHARPENED BY THE SURPRISE IN EVERY TURN AND "RETURN" OF THE "MEETER"...



AS EACH NEW FARE "BLOWS" HIS MIND A LITTLE MORE, HE LEARNS TO BE READY FOR ANYTHING....



STREETS OF STEEL

A CONTINUING HALLUCINATION

This is my florescent noon!

Sitting in the allnight Doggie Diner with The Faithful Companion, like leftover beatniks we spout poetry that proclaims our despair. Our lives are like the steam that rises from our styrofoam cups.

The Doggie Diner shines so! Grease from a thousand midnights polishes the counters, the tiles, the windows. The faces of the black-amooors and Aztecs reflect the edgy boredom of a night of pills and long ghetto busrides. The Faithful Companion stares into the revolving closed - circuit television camera and says, "This is civilization as we know it."

The city lurks black all around us for the lights of the Doggie Diner do not extend beyond the shadows of the gutter. Across the street the dismal neon of a bar and grill announces: Paradise, Paradise, while we, the deranged children of television and the auto-movies, discuss the state of the nation.

"It is a world broken into alien and unconnected fragments," says The Faithful Companion, by way of explanation. "The city has become a

surrealist's nightmare. Thieves and fakirs rule the streets."

"And what," I ask, "Makes you think it has not always been so?"

"Lies, all lies." The Faithful Companion is reduced to incoherent mumbling. "We, the people," she blurts, "are a collection of cockroaches and bureaucrats. Asskissers and ambitious thugs, show them no mercy."

Night after night we sit in the Doggie Diner and talk. We carry no State Identity Cards, our minds are elsewhere. Expatriots in the heart of the city, enraged, disenfranchised and disillusioned, we no longer try to cloak our poverty in the mantle of dignity. We appear young and strong but we are old.

I stare into her face, she into mine. Without her I would have surrendered. No one else ever freed me from the prison of my imagination. No one else can match me fantasy for fantasy, cruel truth for cruel truth. Night after night we talk into the little microphone. Without it, our lives are dust and steam.

"Oh Willie," she says, "you're a real gone cat. How did you get

(Continued on page 38)

BY WET WILLIE



Huasoanqui's
cantina b.c.

WIZARD



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(Streets of Steel cont'd.)

stuck in 1959, anyway?"

"Well, kid, it was like this: me 'n the geek was down Havana way when in busts the reds. We was holding and about to blast our way past Panic City when we noticed all them cats was smoking cigars. Quick as coke, we grabbed some purple Havana wrappers and made hootch stogies. Now you know why old Fidel is always smiling. Made us Heroes of the People."

"Olé," says The Faithful Companion, flashing her eyes like a cape.

"Recollect the time I was working a scam down Ensenada way. Ran away to Mexico as all true outlaw must. Holed up in Hussong's Cantina only saloon in the known galaxy with a police station in the back room. Perfect place to wheel and deal. The bite was on, la mordida, as if you didn't know. Split the take with the sergeant of police. One afternoon the joint was full of dizzy gringos and drunken sailors, the usual fare, when a minor riot started. Sound of flying beer bottles and breaking faces. Suddenly the back door opens and a posse of cops wheels into the bar, my pals, and the mandatory dozen bodies were swiftly spirited into the starchamber. Directly in front of me the sergeant was manhandling a wasted swabby.

"Buenas tardes," I said.

"Buenas tardes, Señor Willie," he replied, wresting with the sailor's dead weight. He was trying to pick him up by the ankles, in order to shake him loose, but he dropped him; then he tried to sling him over his shoulder, but the sailor woke up and puked. Finally the sergeant decided to search him there on the barroom floor. After a tho-

rough inspection of the sailor's clothes, he stood up in disgust. 'Thees focking saylorz spended all hees mohnee weeth hoars and dope. Pinches cabrones maricones gringo marinero ai chingar.' Those were a lot of dirty Mexican words, you understand, I'm sure. I decided not to wear out my welcome, so I ran away to Frisco, as all true outlaws must."

Slowly the night ticks away our lives. Cadillacs and taxicabs vamp down our streets of steel. Enter Everett Flowers in creme-colored suit and Borsolino, the blackest man in black Oakland, a city that is itself without light. He orders a big lemon coke, joins us and says, "Ah."

"There have been one thousand four hundred thirty-seven assaults in the city of Oakland so far this year," says The Faithful Companion. Flowers chuckles and sips his lemon coke. His lips droop and his eyes squint in the bright light. He focuses on The Faithful Companion's heavily made-up face and asks in a deep growl, "Are you for real or what?"

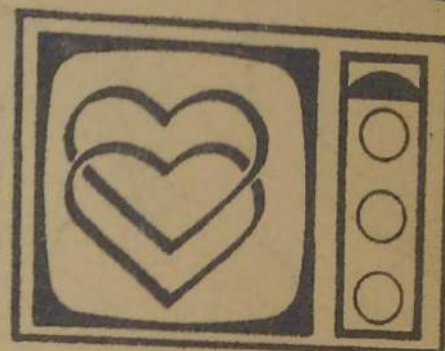
"I'm from Mars," she states.

"Don't mind her none," I tell him. "She lives in a trance and is perfectly harmless, unless you listen to her. Poets are always dangerous."

"Well, I am The Nigger of the Apocalypse, so she don't scare me none."

At this The Faithful Companion grins, hugs and kisses Everett Flowers and welcomes him as a fellow poet outcast. "Welcome," she says, "welcome to The Art Rimbaud Society of Literary Pirates and Thieves which meets Tuesdays and Thursdays

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People Productions
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at two a.m. in this very Doggie Diner."

"Ladies and gentlemen, may I present the newest associate of our deadly revolutionary organization, The Nigger of the Apocalypse."

Applause and huzzahs all around. The patrons of the Doggie Diner are amused. *

FADING THE MAIN

Jimmy with THE GLOVE



THE PROPOSITIONS and The Pass & Don't Pass Lines

wherein THE GLOVE clearly demonstrates that the odds favor The House

WHEN WE FADE THE MAIN we are gambling among ourselves. There is no house. All wagers are made among the players and any odds given or taken are done so by the players themselves. The casinos in Las Vegas (Lost Wages), Tahoe (The Lake), and Reno (The Biggest Little City in the World) make the odds and they make them decidedly in their favor.

If you play the PASS LINE you are betting with the shooter and it can be shown that you have a percentage (P.C.) of 1.4% against you. If a 7 or 11 is thrown on the first toss of the dice, the pass line



(Fading the Main)

or the right bettors win their first bet. If the shooter throws a 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, or 10 on the first roll then this is called his point and this point must be thrown again before a 7 is thrown in order to be a PASS LINE winner. If the 7 is thrown before the point then this is a PASS LINE loser or a DON'T PASS LINE winner.

If you play the DON'T PASS LINE you are betting against the shooter and you also have a P.C. of 1.4% against you. If a crap three with an ace-deuce or a twelve with two sixes is thrown on the first roll of the dice the shooter craps and loses and the DON'T PASS LINE wins. If the shooter throws a point first (4, 5, 6, 8, 9, or 10), then in order for the DON'T PASS LINE to win, a 7 must be thrown before the shooter throws his point.

If two aces (snake eyes) are thrown first, all of the PASS LINE bets lose but the DON'T PASS LINE bets do not win - it breaks even. You will notice that on casino crap tables they have two aces or two sixes barred on the DON'T PASS LINE. This gives the house its 1.4% edge.

The propositions are generally found plainly marked in the middle of the dice table. There are two kinds of propositions: one roll propositions and the

hard ways.

On one roll bets you can bet that on the next roll of the dice the shooter will roll snake eyes (1-1) or boxcars (6-6) which the casinos pay off at 30-1. True odds are 35-1. You can wager the shooter will throw a three (1-2, 2-1) or eleven (5-6, 6-5) at 15-1. True odds 17-1. You can bet he will throw craps; snake eyes (the two bad boys from Illinois), a three or boxcars (midnight). The casinos pay 7-1 but the odds are 8-1. You can always put your money on a natural, a seven which can be rolled six ways (1-6, 6-1, 2-5, 5-2, 3-4, 4-3) which pays 4-1, less than the true odds of 5-1. The house P.C. on a natural is 16.67%.

If the shooter throws an even
(Continued on page 55)

BLUES, BOOZE & FLOOZE



1353 Grant North Beach

THE COFFEE GALLERY

Tail Lights

by David Frankel

All the king's horsepower
And all the king's graft,
Couldn't keep the banana
From its well-deserved shaft.

They stripped away the layers one at a time. First the cab stands, then the airport, and finally the \$30,000 medallions, purchased for \$1 per back in '41, three wars and many swindles ago. The once mighty and invincible banana ruled the city's thoroughfares no more.

With privileges gone,
All that remained
Was battered equipment
And a tarnished name.

They stripped away the layers one at a time, and like an onion it was enough to make you cry.

AIRPORT REPORT

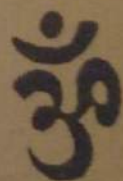
If only from a position
of pure aesthetics,
How much nicer a rainbow salad
Than a lot of wilted lettuce.

-David Frankel

Your friendly old cab driver bets 95% of you have never noticed the numbers found on the poles below almost every street light. These numbers refer to the number of the block and the nearest address. If the first number is "3" it's the 300 block; if it's "33" it's the 3300. The last number will tell you if it is the *odd* or *even* side. Try it. A tip from,

Sutter Cab #48

WELCOME TO AMERICA, SATHYA SAI BABA
WELCOME TO AMERICA, SATHYA SAI BABA
WELCOME TO AMERICA, SATHYA SAI BABA
WELCOME TO AMERICA, SATHYA SAI BABA
WELCOME TO AMERICA, SATHYA SAI BABA
WELCOME TO AMERICA, SATHYA SAI BABA
WELCOME TO AMERICA, SATHYA SAI BABA

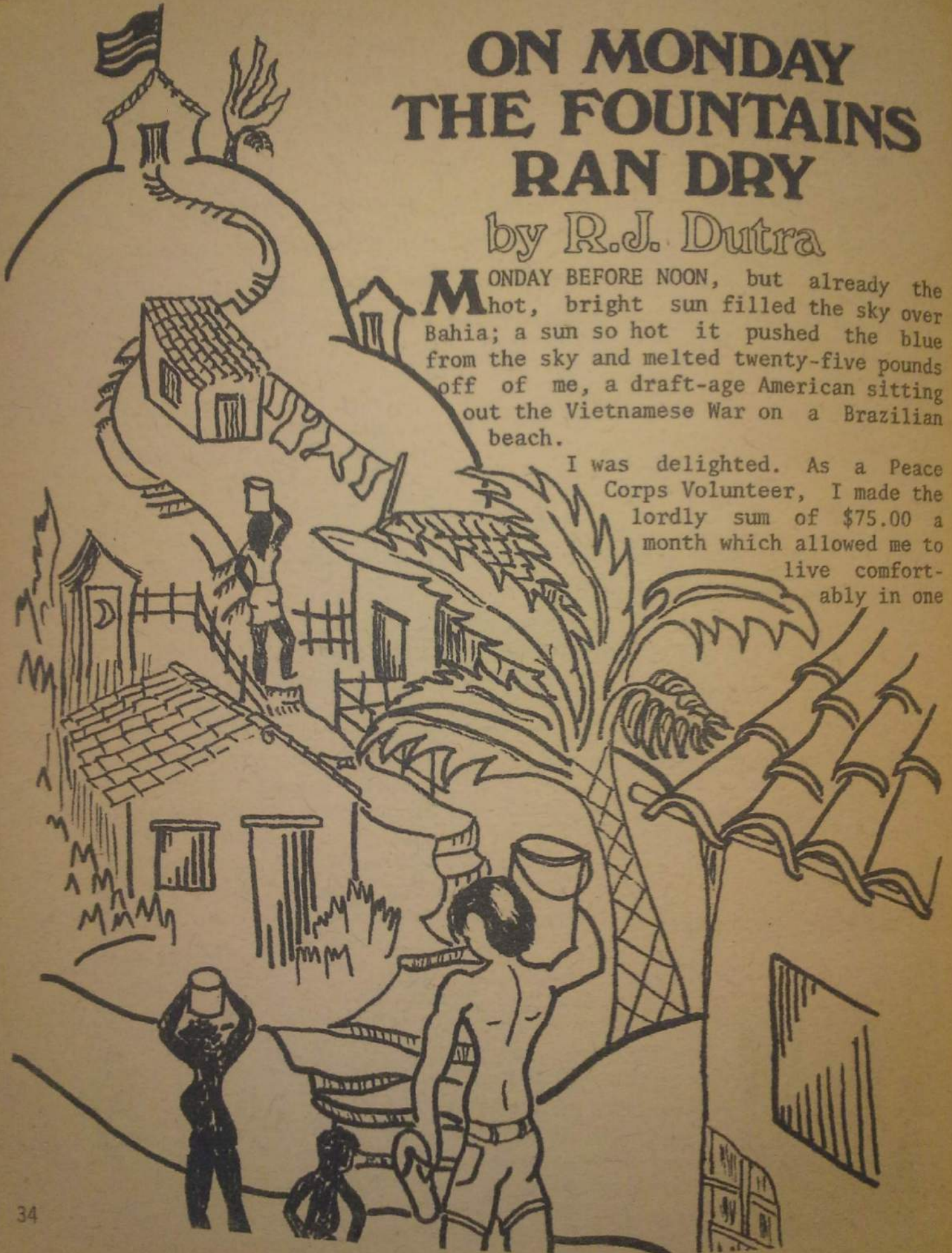


ON MONDAY THE FOUNTAINS RAN DRY

by R.J. Dutra

MONDAY BEFORE NOON, but already the hot, bright sun filled the sky over Bahia; a sun so hot it pushed the blue from the sky and melted twenty-five pounds off of me, a draft-age American sitting out the Vietnamese War on a Brazilian beach.

I was delighted. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, I made the lordly sum of \$75.00 a month which allowed me to live comfortably in one



of the poor, working-class districts of the old colonial city, now a state capital of nearly a million people. I lived in Pernambues, a district of ten thousand people, mostly black, and mud and stick houses with tiled roofs and pastel plastered walls. Two of three people were under eighteen; two of three died before their first birthday.

Pernambues had electricity, dirt roads and two public fresh water fountains. For a few cents, my old, black washerwoman filled a fifty gallon drum in my mud and stick, pastel plastered house. Fifty gallons of water lasted a week. It was Monday and I was ready for a refill but the fountains had been shut down without an explanation from the city water department.

I was disappointed since one of my favorite pastimes was sitting in the shade with the other young men watching the women carry water on their heads. Beautiful women and girls in all shades of black and brown let cooling drops of water trickle over their faces and down their bra-less and panty-less cotton shifts.

Four hundred years after the Portugese brought over the first African slaves, Bahia, black capital of Brazil, preserves much of its African heritage: birthplace of the Samba, home of an African religion that uses the Yourba language and music, and remnants of the cultures of the Sudan, the Congo, Angola, Mozambique, Nigeria, the Slave Coast and the Slave Trade surrounded me.

I stuck out like a sore white thumb. In a society without TV, where life was still lived in the

streets, I provided, sometimes to my embarrassment, a new form of entertainment.

Pernambues accepted me as a refugee from military service. The people wondered why "rich and powerful" America was fighting a war "so far away" with such a small and poor country as Viet Nam. "Are you worried that the Vietnamese will invade you by canoe?" they asked. I had no answers. I often felt useless, getting more than I could give. I could do a few favors, pass out worm medicine and bandaids, occasionally arrange to deliver a couple of hundred sacks of cement at half the usual cost, and socialize a lot.

Today was Monday and I needed a bath but my washerwoman confessed she was too tired to fetch water from the well, much farther down the hill than the now non-functioning fountains. I paid a young man to haul up a bucket of water for bathing and drank soda pop.

Later in the afternoon I spent hours downtown searching for a government official who could tell me why the water was shut off and for how long. Back in Pernambues I told my neighbors the waterline was undergoing repairs, but as for how long, "Quem sabe?"

On Tuesday I started rationing the rust-laden water at the bottom of my big drum. On Wednesday I broke down and bathed in the parasite infested creek that ran down the hill where women washed clothes. Everyone peeked. On Thursday I didn't have enough water to brush my teeth or make coffee.

My neighbors were exhausted from hauling water and I couldn't buy a cup to boil. Finally I was told,

"Senhor Americano, if you want water you have to get it yourself."

I looked out the window down the hill which already looked like a mountain. Stripped to shorts with rubber sandals on my feet, I grabbed a five-gallon plastic bucket and began walking down the steep, dirt path.

Reaching the well sweaty and tired, I rested while others filled their buckets and cans. Women boiled, scrubbed and dried their laundry around the well. Children with distended bellies bathed naked at the well's edge.

All stopped to watch me fill my bucket with the green, brackish water. Some giggles escaped as I gracelessly heaved the bucket to my shoulder, spilling several cups in the process. The water splashed over my body and mingled with the sweat and dust, making the rubber sandals slippery on my feet. After a few

clumsy steps my toes were tangled in the muddy sandal straps increasing the mirth around me and my own feeling of inept foolishness. I stepped out of my sandals and was handed them by a grinning child.

Everyone watched the Americano and grinned as I spilled precious drops with each awkward step. I looked up the hill which now struck me as a cliff.

For the first third of the way up I exchanged the mandatory "good days" and "how are yous" and "I'm fines" but it wasn't and I wasn't and exhaustion soon forced me to quit these polite pauses and I trudged up the hill in silence.

So much sweat was pouring off me I was convinced it would take the entire bucketful to replenish my dehydrated system. My breath was coming in gasps and I was convinced my amused neighbors could see my heart pounding in my chest.

All the while cool, dry, dark-skinned Baianos gracefully passed me by, water containers perfectly balanced on their heads, smiling in sympathy at my struggling efforts. When I finally reached my house a friend snatched the two-thirds full bucket from my shoulder and I collapsed into a chair amidst the laughter and applause of my neighbors. Recovering from my fatigue and embarrassment, I acknowledged their congratulations and shared their anger at the city water department.

I boiled and filtered a couple of quarts for drinking; heated some more, washed with it, shaved with it, did the dishes with it and managed to stretch the remaining three gallons until the fountains reopened in a couple of days. *

BENT

Had my heart bent in a taxi cab
by a woman with eyes
that spent themselves across
the lip of my
rearview mirror
my mouth fell open
my heart shot out an open spout
and the rain bounce-bent
against a tin roof

-Joshua Hassel

Two policemen
searching for a man
who did not have a vision
of his own
scraped a mind-print
from a booth in the
allnight cafe
and
as the cook
who made the phonecall
picked his teeth
with an exclamation
point

the red wagon
crept away

the jury
seated in the bottom
of his cup debating
how it might feel
to get drunk
verdict:

GoAway! birds
pecked around
pecked a few holes
in the applause

(he threw his mind
across the backseat
smiled on the inside
of his face
and asked
to ride
in the rearview
mirror)

-THE MORT

DYNAMIC ZEN

SHINTAIDO

a New Art of Moving Meditation

Designed to
respond to
urgent
contemporary
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expression,
vision, and
communication

A synthesis
of Zen and
Christian
traditions

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751-5449

THE BRIEFCASE

Directed by RUTH J. FARRAH
with

Max Diamond

Meg Metler

Hesh Rosen

Lisa Stranger

Video Taping at Viacom Studios June 14

by Gene Fowler

June Opening
Performance at
Studio Eremos
401 Alabama St.
San Francisco
June 17-18

IN LOVING MEMORY



**VAN HOUTEN'S
RED & WHITE #47**

Codename PHOENIX : 1938 *Plymouth Deluxe Original*

The Murder of a Cab Driver

On February 5, 1977, Michael Albert, 29, a cab driver, was murdered on Watchman Way in San Francisco. The murder, apparently, was the bizarre end of an aborted robbery, for \$112 was found in the victim's vest pocket. Witnesses reported seeing two young men fleeing the scene.

On the 28th of February the San Francisco police arrested a seventeen year old youth and charged him with the murder. In the State of California it is illegal to print the name of a juvenile suspected of a crime. In the story that follows, the suspect is called Donnie R., not his real name.

On the 28th of March, 1977, Donnie R. was released from custody. On a motion by the public defender, the evidence obtained against Donnie during an interrogation at police headquarters was suppressed. The police took Donnie in for questioning at eleven in the morning and booked him nine hours later. The judge of the juvenile court ruled that the entire interrogation was illegal because Donnie was not properly informed of his right to have counsel present. Donnie R. is free and loose on the streets of San Francisco.

The police have been unable to find any clues that might lead them to a second suspect or any further evidence against Donnie R.

Eds.

DEATH ON WATCHMAN WAY

by Mark Joseph

*Up on housing project hill
It's either fortune or fame.
You must pick one or the other
Though neither of them ought to be
What they claim.
If you're looking to get silly
You better go back to from where
you came...*

Bob Dylan

THE SCENE

Only natives and the very best cab drivers know Potrero Hill, an odd lump of earth isolated from the rest of San Francisco, a thumb on the hand of downtown. Marred by steep cliffs and hidden ravines, the streets of Potrero Hill form a twisting, confusing maze of dead-ends, sudden drops and missing blocks.

Many cab drivers will never go to Potrero Hill, ever, under any circumstances. Some will go to an address on the northern slope but

not into the housing projects on the southern slope. Others ask for the fare in advance and a few will go only with a police escort. The San Francisco police receive so many reports of robberies and assaults on cab drivers on Potrero Hill that they don't keep statistics.

For many residents, the northern slope of Potrero Hill is a pleasant neighborhood rich in tradition and legend and old Victorian houses. One of the oldest sectors of the city, the district has the aspect of an inner-city village. People on the hill are proud of their gardens and their quiet and their self-contained existence. O. J. Simpson grew up there.

On the southern slope, the side that faces away from downtown, project buildings spill down the hill like discarded cigarette boxes. The Potrero Hill Projects are one of some three dozen housing projects maintained by the San Francisco

Housing Authority. A unique feature of the San Francisco Housing Authority is its ability to use the odd geography of the city to hide its projects in obscure corners like Potrero Hill where they will be noticed by neither the tourists nor the residents of more affluent neighborhoods.

1976-77 was a winter of drought, the second winter of drought in a row for California and the city was beginning to suffer water cutbacks. The meager water supplies allotted to the project grounds were among the first to go and the barren tracts of land between the project buildings turned to dust. The few trees on that part of the hill withered and died as did all the ground cover and the wind scored the earth with fresh grooves of neglect and decay.

The buildings themselves were thrown up as temporary housing for shipyard workers during World War Two and have been battered and torn by two generations of city immigrants. The roofs sag, the porches are broken, holes gape through the stucco, the windows are unglazed, covered over with plywood. The projects on Potrero Hill seem by design to be an ominous Desolation Row, a city jungle.

Donnie R. lives here in a building a few hundred yards from Watchman Way, a blind alley that twists down the hill from Missouri Street for one short block that ends in a parking lot. A broken - down '68 Chrysler, stripped of its motor and wheels, rests in a corner on its rusting frame. Beer cans, broken bottles, racks and paper wrappers litter the asphalt. A dirt track leads from the parking lot between

two buildings to Dakota Street. Another building is perched up the hill facing down onto the parking lot.

Watchman Way, remote, ignored, decayed, is a grim disappointment to the dream of civilization. Children are not nurtured into adulthood on Watchman Way, they are abandoned to survive as best they can.

THE VICTIM

To live outside the law you must be honest," was a notion of Bob Dylan's that Mike strongly believed. From the day he left his hometown of Fresno until the day he died, he lived under the strictest outlaw's code. Michael Albert is not his real name, only the long-lived of his many aliases. When he first came to San Francisco in 1966 and 1967 and was hanging around with the Diggers in the Haight, some of his friends knew him as the Nashville Ryder. Sometimes he was Al or Albert or even Alberto, but to most people he was simply Mike.

Partly because he was a very private person and partly because a federal warrant had been issued for his arrest, he never talked about himself much. Much of his life was secret and eternal except for the poems and fragments of ideas he wrote into journals.

A draft evader from the Viet Nam war, Michael Albert was a revolutionary without a revolution, a man displaced in time trying desperately to learn to live in the present. For years he lived completely underground, shielded by the silence of a few friends, always afraid of the police and the entire bureau-

(Death on Watchman Way)

cratic structure of the state. He carried no identification papers. He couldn't register his truck. He couldn't go to school. He couldn't apply for a social security card. His status was that of an illegal alien, a man without a country.

As an anti-hero, he found some happiness. He found a community of others like himself in the radical and bohemian districts in and around San Francisco in the 1960's. In the Haight and North Beach and Berkeley he could move anonymously through the crowds of students and hippies. When the war ended, however, the punch went out of the radical movement. The feeling of being united in a great cause dissipated and the masses who crowded the streets for the demonstration melted away, leaving those who had staked their entire being on the great cause to become terribly lost. The Haight became a haven for junkies, North Beach a tourist trap and Berkeley was reclaimed by engineering students and fraternities.

Michael Albert was trapped in San Francisco, still underground, living behind a false identity but receiving no communal support. The revolution he so strongly believed in was not going to occur. The great wrongs of the world were not going to be righted. Life would continue as it had for a few millennia. It was hard to accept and harder to adapt. With every turn the world seemed bent on popping all his illusions and destroying all his hopes, as it had been doing since before he left Fresno.

In 1964, when he was in high school, Michael Albert experienced

a terrible personal injustice that changed his life. He was a star athlete, a middle distance runner. That year he won the 880 at the California Relays, a championship track meet for the best highschool athletes in the state. He believed he was on his way to the Olympics and he might have been had not a fanatical coach caught him puffing on a cigarette and kicked him off the team. He was barred from all competition at his school and it broke his heart.

The trauma caused Mike to become a more thoughtful young man. Deliberate malice was outside his experience and he had to stretch his mind to understand it. As a by-product of this incident he discovered that flexing his mental muscles using his mind and imagination was a wonderful feeling. The world began to open up, not in the way the teachers and schools tried to explain it, but directly, through experience.

When Mike graduated from high school and started Fresno City College, his heart was already taking flight. There were great things happening in the world. President Kennedy looked like he was really trying to change things. First there was the Peace Corps but Mike believed it was up to us to solve our own problems first, and the biggest of those problems was racism. When he quit City College, the draft was suddenly after him. This new war was heating up in Viet Nam and he didn't want to go. At the draft board they told him if he joined Vista, the domestic Peace Corps, he would be draft exempt. He joined.

He spent a year and a half work-

ing with children and editing a neighborhood newspaper in the ghettos of Birmingham, Alabama. He married a co-worker, a black woman, but the marriage ended shortly after they returned to California.

On his return to Fresno he was greeted with the second great shock of his young adulthood. He was drafted. He stormed down to the draftboard and reminded them that he had spent a year and a half in the service of his country in Vista and that he had been led to believe such service made him exempt from the draft. "Sorry," they told him, "you were exempt while you were in but not now that you are out."

Michael Albert never appeared at the Oakland Induction center for his draft physical. He had no intention of going into the army and within a few days the FBI was asking his family where he was. For a long time they had no idea where he was, only that he left Fresno with the vague notion of heading for Canada or Europe.

For years he drifted through Berkeley, the Haight and North Beach, living in a spirit of communion with the thousands of others who shared his rejection of the nation's dominant culture. He saw the war in Viet Nam as an extension of America's racist, genocidal policies. The only place Mike could be found for sure was any Bay Area Grateful Dead concert for the Dead was the only band he trusted. Occasionally he slipped into Fresno to visit his family, but they were never quite sure where he was going when he left.

In those years of wandering, Michael Albert became a poet, and began publishing broadsheets called

"Michael's Penny Papers" that contained his own poetry and that of anyone who gave him some copy. 1968 found him working behind the counter at the Minimum Daily Requirement coffee house in North Beach, a place where no one asked for your social security card before you went to work. He was running around in an old, beat-up Volvo 444 with a missing headliner and a sick ignition switch, making an occasional weed-run to Fresno and hanging out. For the first time since the California Relays he was happy. He baked his Trucker's Bread, put out the Penny Papers and lived the life of an outlaw poet. He never borrowed money; somehow he always made his own way. A friend, Paul Vane, another poet, said, "You could give your lawnmower to Mike to store for a while, forget it, not see him for twenty years and then run into him. He would drag the lawnmower out of the basement, having moved it with him the twenty-eight times he moved and swear at you for having burdened him with it, but he would have kept it, and kept it in good working condition. That's how honest he was."

Another poet, Earl Strout, was hanging around the MDR when Mike was working the counter. Some nights, at closing, Mike's Volvo wouldn't start and "Electric Earl" would give him a lift home. They became friends and eventually Mike confessed his dilemma: he was an outlaw and without identity papers he couldn't get a decent job. His bread customers were mostly starving hippies so Mike gave it away. The pittance from the MDR hardly held body and soul together, but what could he do? Earl suggested he

(Death on Watchman Way)

alter his birth certificate and apply for a driver's license and a cab driver's permit. The FBI might be looking for him in Fresno but they were so burdened with a heavy caseload they would never get around to checking the fingerprints of everyone who applied for a driver's license.

It worked and Mike started driving an Eagle Cab. The Wongs, proprietors of Eagle Cab, liked Mike so much he drove the prize of the Eagle Squadron, a VIP Plymouth with electric seats and windows, factory air and an honest meter.

Mike took to cab driving like he was born to it. He was a street person and the cab put him right out on the streets. Eventually he took a job at Veterans, which gave him a radio cab. With regular money coming in he rented a house in the Sunset near the beach and began to live a settled life.

Even though the outward aspects of his life appeared to stabilize, his mind continued to ferment. The ideals which drove him underground in the first place still nagged at him. The racial injustice which drove him a little crazy was very obvious in the streets. Despite a great deal of federal and state legislation, nothing changed very much. The ghettos were still ghettos. There was still a tremendous gap between rich and poor. In 1971 he stopped writing poetry and lost contact with many of his old friends. He continued to write a journal and his writing took on an astrological bent while he let his mind drift through the many ideologies and theologies that constantly float through San Francis-

co. Over the years he became more and more depressed. Things just didn't change enough, if at all. When he wasn't working, he stayed in his house, smoked a lot of dope, listened to the Dead and Waylon Jennings, and baked his bread.

In 1975 his father died. As Mike prepared to go to the funeral, he was informed of the FBI's presence at the funeral home. He was enraged and so upset he stayed in a funk for weeks.

By 1977 he was asking not what was wrong with the world but what was wrong with himself. He was no longer so sure of his ideals. The War in Viet Nam, forgotten by most, still tortured him. The city, he felt, was becoming a human garbage heap and he wondered if he were part of the refuse. He was always tormented by racial guilt and, to escape it, delved deeper and deeper into more and more obscure philosophies, the last being the ponderous teachings of the Urantian sect, a group that contends that we humans, or some of us, come from the planet Uranus.

On Friday night, February 5, 1977, Michael Albert picked up his cab as usual around six o'clock. He had a regular shift in a regular cab, Veterans 209, and was known around the garage as a steady, hardworking, especially honest cab driver.

Unlike most Veterans drivers, who work downtown or at the airport or the "safe" neighborhoods, Michael Albert worked the Mission. Veterans ordinarily runs about seventy radio cabs but only a handful of drivers

play the radio in the Mission.

San Francisco's Mission District, named for the Mission Dolores, built by the Spanish in 1776, is that part of the city which grew up along the old King's Highway, now Mission Street, in the Valley between Twin Peaks and Potrero Hill. The Mission is San Francisco's Bronx, a city within a city.

Driving a cab in the Mission means driving in and out of "dangerous" neighborhoods all the time: Potrero Hill, Hunter's Point, the Bayview, the Lakeview, but it also means dealing with the down-home inner-city people rather than the tourists or flashy crowds on Union and Polk Streets. Michael Albert preferred "The People," as he called them. He liked the incredible ethnic variety, the whole human circus that paraded through his cab every night. The Mission is Spanish and Irish and Italian and Filipino and Black and Michael Albert taxied them all.

Cab drivers make a living all week but on Friday night they make money. On Friday night a driver in the Mission can stay busy all night hauling folks from bar to bar to bar and finally back home. There are always trips downtown and to the more distant neighborhoods, and even the occasional out - of - town ride.

Michael Albert arrived at the Veterans garage at the same time as his co-worker and friend, Bill Vartnaw. Their conversation was the perfunctory small-talk that passes between men going to work.

"How's it going?" Bill asked as they walked to their cabs.

"It looks like another night of the same old shit," came the reply.

Bill noticed that Mike was a little down, perhaps more than a little. Mike was just coming out of a very difficult period in his life. In December his girl friend and her baby moved out of the house they shared near the beach and his life seemed to fall apart. He couldn't stand to live alone so he moved out of his house into his truck and spent a month roaming the city, a haunted, shadowy figure. During that month he quit his job at Veterans and his friends had no idea where he was or what he was up to. Finally he tired of drifting, moved back into his house and went back to work.

For years Michael Albert baked a special bread he called Truckers Bread. At various times he tried to sell it but it was much too small an operation to afford him a living. He ground the grains himself according to his own recipe and baked his bread in small loaves which he gave away to friends. At Veterans, he gave loaves to the dispatchers in place of the usual cash tips. When he moved back into his house he bought a lot of new baking equipment which indicated to his friends a renewed interest in life.

Nevertheless, Michael Albert lived under a cloud of despair that ran much deeper than his recent troubles. In his life he suffered many grave disappointments and disillusionments from which he never fully recovered. He felt that his city and his country were rife with injustice, that the human condition was a continual struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed, and that the oppressed would never win. His basic sentiments, forged

(Death on Watchman Way)

in the civil rights movement of the 1960's, were so noble and pure they were quite detached from reality. He hated racists yet, to his horror, he felt that he harbored racist feelings deep inside his soul.

On this Friday night when Mike told Bill he faced another night of "the same old shit," he meant another night of the war that raged inside his mind every time a black person entered his cab.

Michael Albert believed that every American is conditioned to the circumstances of racism and that a condition of undeclared race war rules the streets. The war was not always a howling inferno, as it was in the sixties when the ghettos were aflame, but it was always there, a psychic saboteur of the domestic tranquility.

His struggle only increased his feelings of helplessness and despair. All night long, in the face of raw experience in the cab on the streets, he encountered blacks and whites who seethed with racial hatred. The white racists, no matter how much he hated them, did not threaten him, unless he remarked on their outspoken attitude. Black racists, however, did threaten him and in their presence he was forced to confront his own fear. He tried as best he could to act in a non-racist fashion. He rarely, if ever, turned down a fare. Yet every time he took a fare into the projects, his skin crawled with fear and revulsion. He constantly provoked his confused feelings by being one of the few Veterans drivers who would go after orders in the projects. When a trip was a success, the fare paid and even a tip given, he chas-

tised himself severely for being anxious. On those occasions when a passenger skipped without paying, he felt hurt, more confused and furious with himself. Driving around all night every night in this highly - charged state of mind made Michael Albert a very vulnerable, lonely soul. His taxicab had become his torture chamber where he was at the mercy of his own, conflicting emotions.

The city that night was the way cities everywhere have always been. Running loose in the street were a number of crazed children, uncivilized enfants terribles, who, somehow, missed out on the process that tames the beast in all of us. Two of them found Michael Albert and they had a gun.

THE CRIME

It wasn't really busy for a Friday night. Tommy Bright, the swing shift dispatcher at Veterans, had two more hours to go on the board but he was already thinking about leaving. Every few minutes or so the calls would come in bunches and he would take orders zap zap zap, "221, you get the opera, 230, you get the opera, I need a Veterans at Hyde and Union, in the Sunset," but most of the time he had time to talk to the people who called if they were at all interesting.

At around eleven o'clock Tommy took a call from Rosie's Cantina on 24th Street near Harrison, three blocks east of Mission Street. For ten or fifteen minutes he called over the radio for a cab on 24th Street but no driver responded. Apparently no Veterans cab was available in the Mission.

At eleven-fifteen, he got a call from a voice he identified as that of a young, black woman, a teenager.

In the phone booth at 24th and Mission a seventeen-year old boy was deliberately disguising his voice. As he talked, he knew he was fooling the dispatcher.

"Can I get a cab on Mission Street? At twenty-fourth?" he asked.

"No, I don't think so," Tommy said, thinking he had been calling for a cab in the Mission and believing there wasn't one.

"Aw, please," begged the high, feminine voice.

Tommy felt sorry for her so he decided to try. "Anyone around twenty-fourth and Mission?" he asked over the radio.

To his surprise, a driver answered, "Hey, I'm right there, Tommy." It was Michael Albert, probably on his way toward Rosie's.

Tommy asked into the telephone, "Do you see a cab?"

"No."

"Do you see a girl there on the corner at twenty-fourth and Mission?" he asked Mike over the radio.

"No," came his answer.

Tommy, like all dispatchers, was continually trying to pry accurate addresses out of people over the phone. A corner is really four corners. "Where are you?" he asked, "At the Macdonald's? At the Bart Station? Where?"

"I'm like across the street."

"Are you across Mission? Across twenty-fourth?"

"Well, it's kind of..."

"Are you catty-corner from the Macdonald's? Across the intersection?"

"Yeah, in the phone booth."

"209, Mike," he said over the radio, "do you see her in the phone booth catty-corner from Macdonald's?"

"No, I'm just getting to it."

Tommy spoke once more into the phone, "Do you see the cab? He should be just pulling into the intersection now."

"No," said the girl's voice, "wait, yeah, yeah, I see him." The voice trailed away in excitement and the line went dead. Michael Albert said a curious thing. He said, "I see her."

The boy with the girl's voice and perhaps a disguise hailed the cab.

"Will you take me to eighteenth and Connecticut?" he asked. Michael Albert was already filling in his waybill, a cabdrivers record of his trips. There are neat little spaces for each trip, its points of origin and destination, the number of passengers, and the times the trip began and ended. Michael Albert's waybill, as always, was up to date and accurate. He probably wrote down the time, the location, "24th & Mission," and the number of passengers, "1," before anyone got in the car. Next he wrote, "18th & Connecticut," which is on the northern slope of Potrero Hill, away from the projects and a reasonably safe place.

Two people got in the car and neither was a girl. In the space where Mike wrote in the number "1" for the number of passengers, he pencilled over it the number "2."

Somewhere around Eighteenth and Connecticut Streets, the young man who was the second passenger pulled out his gun, a twenty - two caliber pistol, and announced a robbery.

(Death on Watchman Way)

He told Mike to drive over the hill to Watchman Way. The youth who disguised his voice lived in the projects around Watchman Way and was familiar with all the back streets and alleys that comb Potrero Hill. Michael Albert drove his cab nose first into the blind alley, a thing no sensible cab driver would do unless forced.

Michael Albert had one hundred and twelve dollars in the zippered breast pocket of his down vest, a few dollars and some change in his pants pockets and not much else. At midnight on Friday night, Watchman Way is not completely deserted. The lights from the project building above the parking lot cast some illumination down onto the cab. When the robbers asked Michael Albert for his money, they were in a hurry. They knew they could be discovered at any moment. Michael Albert was in a state of shock, trying desperately to understand what was happening to him. He never gave them his money.

For reasons as complex as the entire bloody history of America, the youth sitting behind Michael Albert pulled the trigger. He shot Michael Albert in the back of the head at very close range, twice. The other youth, terrified, broke and ran. In the project building overhead a woman who was up tending a sick child heard two crashes. She looked out her window and saw a youth racing away through the dirt alley that leads to Dakota Street.

The killer got out of the car, opened the driver's door and pulled Michael Albert's body halfway from the cab. He was seen bending over the body, going through the pockets.

He was not very thorough or else he didn't realize the vest had a pocket; in any case, he never found the money. In a very few moments he disappeared down the alley, leaving behind on the back seat of the cab a baker's box that contained a chocolate pie. The box, a perplexing part of the puzzle, had no fingerprints.

The woman who noticed the first youth running away while the other bent over the body called the police. A few minutes later the police received a second call from a man who reported that "a man was down on Watchman Way." In a very few minutes Watchman Way was aswarm with police vehicles, an ambulance and a tow truck.

At twelve-twenty Tommy Bright got a call from police headquarters. An officer said, "Look, uh, we're going to send a tow truck for this cab."

"What cab are you talking about?" asked the startled dispatcher.

"The guy that got shot."

"What are you talking about?"

"Up there on Watchman Way."

"One of our guys? How is he?"

"He's dead. He's dead."

"What's the cab number?"

"Wait a minute...cab 209."

THE WHEELS OF JUSTICE

The next day a cab driver, Ken Van Houten, circulated a petition among cab drivers urging the city to post a reward for the capture of the killers. The city responded by posting a \$5000 reward. Homicide inspectors David Toschi and Frank McCoy, assigned to the case, began knocking on doors on Potrero Hill,

trying to piece together a curious puzzle. There are hundreds of fingerprints in a taxicab but not a one could be directly connected to any suspect. A chocolate pie in a baker's box was found on the back seat of the cab, but the box had no clear prints. The baker could not identify the purchaser.

Since 1969 San Francisco has had one cab driver murdered every year. Of the seven between 1970 and 1976, six suspects were arrested and tried. Five were convicted of first degree murder, one convicted of second degree murder, and one acquitted by a hung jury. The unsolved murder of a Yellow Cab driver in October, 1969 has been attributed to the notorious Zodiac killer.

Inspectors Toschi and McCoy deduced that because the killers were familiar with the terrain of Potrero Hill, at least one of them lived there. As the weeks went by they talked to dozens of residents of the hill. As word of the reward got around, they began receiving phone calls from persons offering tiny bits of evidence. They came up with many names before an informant brought forth the name of Donnie R., a student at Mission High School.

At eleven in the morning on February 28 the inspectors went to Mission High and took Donnie R. in for questioning. They took him downtown to police headquarters and interrogated him off and on all day. They were very busy. While they were holding him, there was another homicide in the city which they had to investigate and other duties they had to look after. Donnie R., nervous but cool during

the investigation, gave up enough evidence to implicate himself in the crime but did not actually confess. He admitted he was in the cab that night and admitted he was with someone else. The police concluded his was the disguised voice on the phone but that his accomplice pulled the trigger. Late in the afternoon they formally arrested him and booked him for murder.

Donnie R. was then transferred to the Youth Guidance Center, the children's jail. Under a new law in California a juvenile aged sixteen or seventeen charged with a felony goes before a referee who decides if he is to be tried as a juvenile or an adult. It was determined that Donnie R. should be tried in juvenile court, whose sessions are closed to the public and the press. A second hearing was held to determine if there was enough evidence to try him at all. There was, but most of the evidence came from the interrogation. The trial was set for the twenty-eighth of March. It was hoped by the police and the District Attorney that Donnie R. would be frightened enough to give up the name of the other killer, but he never did.

A few days before the trial the defense entered a motion with the court to suppress the evidence from the interrogation. The motion was granted, the interrogation was declared illegal. When the trial came up, the case was dismissed.

Donnie R. is back on the streets having suffered no more atonement for the death of Michael Albert than an uncomfortable month in the children's jail. Under the law of the land he is innocent.

So was Michael Albert. *



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(Interview continued)

a fare to a remote area and he was forced at gunpoint on one of the back roads where his money was taken from him as was his taxi. These things don't happen often. Progress brings on these things. There is always somebody who is trying to get something for nothing.

DGP: I notice that you drive on the left hand side of the road. Does this cause much of a problem for the newcomer to the island.

AMBROSE: At times it does, but here the driver is very cautious. He restrains himself from taking chances. Now here is a nice spot. It's called Salt River Bay and is the place where Columbus first anchored his ship. On a clear day you can see the neighboring islands. And there on the roof is an iguana in case you have never seen one.

DGP: Do you drive your cab all day and let someone else drive it at night?

AMBROSE: No, I usually take it easy unless I have some evening appointments. Here only one drives the vehicle and he knows the wear and tear on it.

DGP: What does gasoline cost?

AMBROSE: Not too bad, sixty-five to seventy cents a gallon. They claim the cost of living here is 35% higher than on the mainland.

DGP: What's the best thing that ever happened to you in a taxi?

AMBROSE: Well, it's hard to say - you know, driving a cab you have all sorts of experiences - meeting with different people - like we have a saying here - some are wise and some are otherwise. There are some people who, because they are paying a fare,

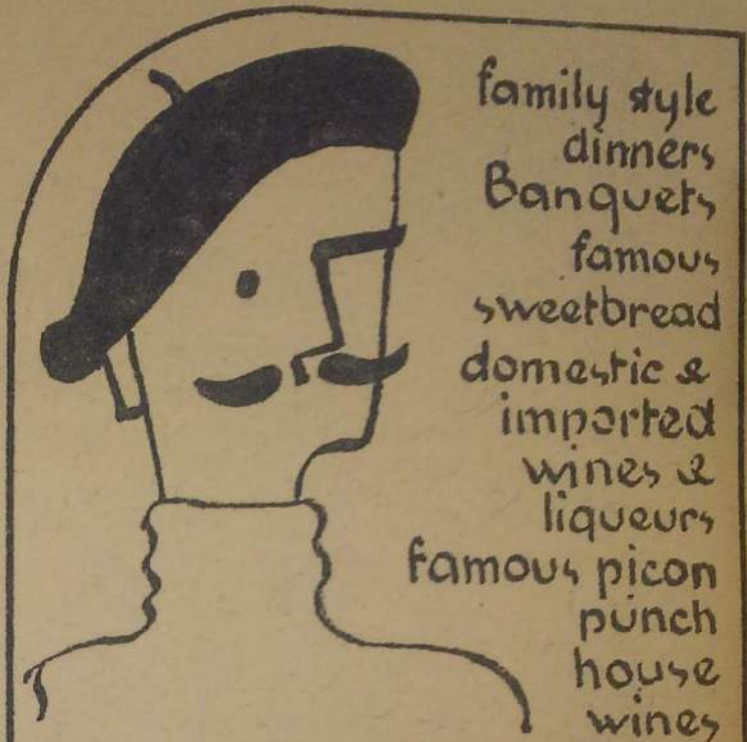
are so demanding, and some people that you would never be able to please irrespective of how hard you put your back to it. But I personally feel that all one has to do is do his best. And that is how I go about my work. As a matter of fact, if you are familiar with *Fielding's Guide to the Caribbean* - a few years ago the author for the book was here going about research, and I happened to drive those people not knowing who they were. About a year later one of the front desk staff of the Bucaneer calls me up and says, "Ambrose, there is a new *Fielding's Guide* with your name in it." So I picked it up and there it was, and I never knew that the people were the author and the publisher.

DGP: It goes to show that many times you don't know who your passenger is. What else do you like about driving?

AMBROSE: Well, to me it is an honest livelihood. It's not easy, but there is a lot you can learn about people's attitudes and their culture. One has many opportunities to exchange ideas and talk about life in general.

DGP: Well, Ambrose, it's been a pleasure. Now how about you show me how a man gets some of the finer pleasures here on St. Croix? ★

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(Taxis in the Movies cont'd.)

few yards ahead. Indeed, some even specialize in tail jobs, knowing how not to get too close yet not fall too far back. The more prominent detectives always had their own personal favorite drivers for such assignments (a possible derivation of the "personals" we enjoy today). In the *Maltese Falcon* (1942), Sam Spade engages his driver, Joe, for a personal to Burlingame to rescue his client. It turns out to be a wild goose chase, and Joe gets a round trip out of the deal. In another Bogart film, *The Big Sleep* (1946), Bogart as Phillip Marlowe uses a cab to track down a killer on a dark street, and in another scene goes on a tail job with a female cab driver who gives him her number and indicates that he may contact her on her day off as well.

Are we to assume from all of this that such goings on were part of business as usual in what veteran drivers like to refer to as the "good old days"? Whether a fantasy of Hollywood screenwriters or derived from fact, the image of tail jobs, undercover deals and other shady doings remain part of the public image of the cab driver.

In other films of the 40's, other drivers follow the example of Cagney's character in *Roaring 20's*, taking advantage of the cover of their occupation. In *Dark Passage* (1947), we see Bogart again, this time playing an escaped convict, recognized by a cab driver who, instead of threatening to turn him in, provides the services of an underworld plastic surgeon. In *Body and Soul* (1948), a cab driver pretends to help John Garfield solve a murder which he (the cab driver)

committed himself.

As for the filmed portrayal of the cab business itself up to this time, it is invariably shown to be almost omnipotently efficient. There are always great lines of cabs on downtown streets. When the hero attempts to flag a cab, one always appears as if by magic to propel the plot in the appropriate direction. No detective ever blew a case because he couldn't get a cab.

In comedies, however, the opposite tact is often used - jokes and side gags based on the difficulty of getting cabs, or characters who meet during angry arguments over which of them is going to take the only available cab. These meetings show a marked tendency to develop into romantic entanglements. Such became staples in the Wall Street comedies of the 50's and early 60's. Fortunately, these usually hackneyed scenes do not generally pay any attention to the drivers, focusing instead on the main characters while the drivers remain silent robots. (This is also true of any film taking place outside the United States. Cabs all over the world are driven by nameless drivers plunging crazily down narrow crowded streets, barely avoiding several accidents per block, speaking pidgin English, cursing and sweating their way through traffic in battered cars.) In a scene from one film of this period, though, we get a glimpse of what these drivers are thinking. In *See and the Single Girl* (1967), Henry Fonda jumps into a cab driven by Stubby Kaye, telling him to drive to the airport and indicating desperate hurry. This brings Kaye's latent desires to the surface, and

(Taxis in the Movies)

he begins raving "Just give me a chance to show what I can do, that's all I ask! This is it! My big break!" etc., etc. This image of the cab driver as frustrated stock car racer is another that has continued to implant itself in the public eye, although not, it must be admitted, without a certain amount of reinforcement through real life observations.

The later 60's and early 70's seem almost devoid of strong references to taxis and taxi driving, at least in my viewing experience. In 1975, however, one of the few films to actually focus on the cab world itself was produced. This was *Taxi Driver*, starring Robert De Niro in the title role as Travis Bickle, a high strung, sexually and emotionally frustrated New York Cab driver who, unable to cope with squalid urban madness, begins to contemplate violent solutions, one of which is assassinating a presidential candidate. Most real life drivers have the sense to quit when job frustrations and occupational hazards reach this level, but Travis makes the dangerous mistake of taking on *more* hours behind the wheel instead of less, and winds up precipitating a blood bath which finds several people dead at the film's climax, and paradoxically makes him a hero. Whether or not this activity actually brings Travis any relief from his tensions is left open to question at the end of the film, where he is seen snubbing the woman who rejected him earlier, which might be interpreted as some kind of renewed confidence. On the other hand, he doesn't look real relaxed in the final freeze frame, which suggests that Travis is still out

there seething. This film is notable for a fine performance by De Niro, who projects some finely tuned observations of the physical nuances bred by constant cabbage. However, as an analysis of the taxi world, the film is a disappointment, saying more about one particular individual than the milieu in which he travels. In one of the few sequences which show Travis asking his colleagues at the Cab Co. for help, a local cab guru, the Wizard (Peter Boyle), exposes his "cabbie wisdom" as stale bullshit. The only other help Travis gets from his fellow drivers is a connection to buy unregistered guns which he pursues without delay.

The fares we see him with are all at least as deranged as he, adding to the unbalanced quality of the observations. But this is really no more unbalanced than most of the other images that have developed over the years. So the question still remains: What is the relationship between cinematic images of cab drivers and the present reality of cab driving? The movies take small truths about our lives and exaggerate each of them into consuming passions or overwhelming obsessions which seem to dominate us, but which are only a tiny part of the real picture. The composite image forged by these fragments is a crude distortion of the view from behind the meter. *



(Fading the Main cont'd.)

numbered point, 4, 6, 8, 10, you can wager that he will make his point the hard way: by throwing the appropriate double, a pair of deuces to make a four, a pair of treys to make a six and so on. Making four or ten the hard way pays 7-1 but the true odds are 8-1. Making a six or eight pays 9-1; true odds 10-1. To figure the odds on four: four can come up three ways: 1-3, 3-1, 2-2. Add 1-3 and 3-1 to the six ways you can make a seven and there are eight ways you can lose and one way you can win.

On the one roll bets the house simply offers less than the true odds to keep the odds in their favor. On the hardways the house is a little trickier. By offering 8 for 1 or 10 for 1 it takes your unit bet and returns 8 or 10 for a win. This means you've gotten back only 7 or 9 on a hardway bet. Hence, the house has an 11.1% edge at 8 for 1 and a 9.1% edge at 10 for 1. Stay away from all hardway bets. The P.C. is too high.

Next issue: COME LINE, FIELD BETS, BIG RED SIX AND EIGHT.

SPORADIC

If someone gets in your cab and immediately asks, "How's business?" say "sporadic."

If you say you're doing well, he might rob you figuring you've got bucks, or stiff you thinking you don't need any.

If you say you're doing poorly, he'll probably think you're full of shit, 'cause everyone knows that cabbies are high rollers.

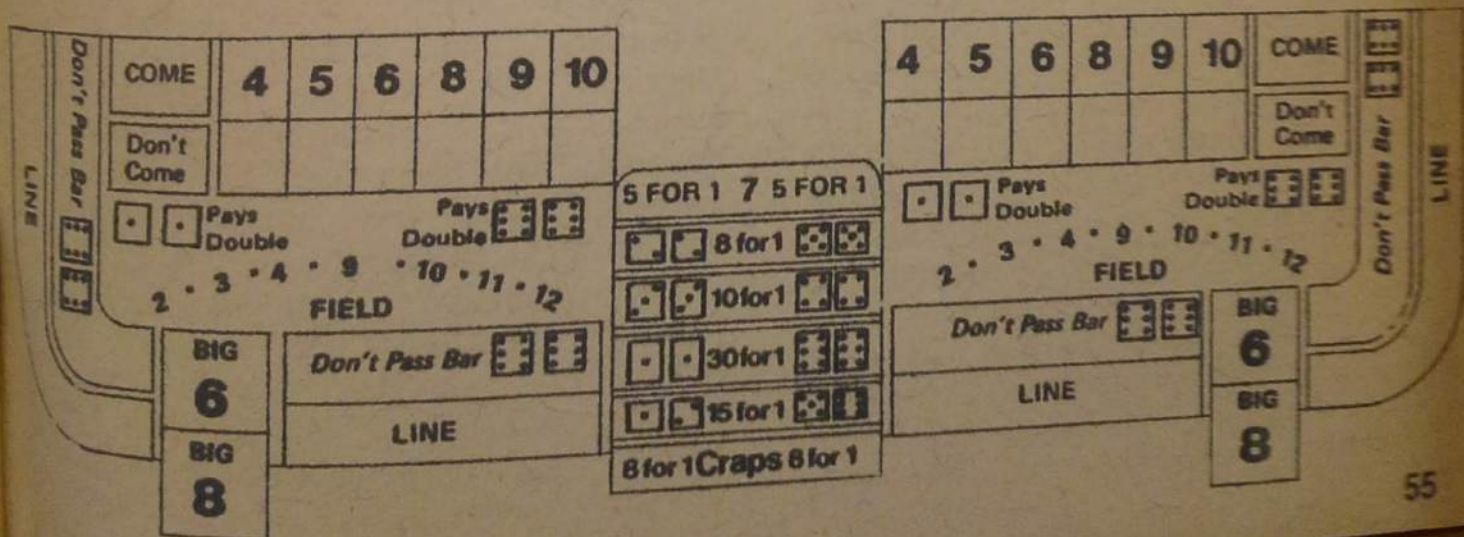
So say "sporadic." He might confuse it with a rare communicable disease, and who knows, maybe even refuse the contaminated change.

-David Frankel

The DCP welcomes contributions. Unsolicited manuscripts and artwork will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Eds.

A typical Craps table layout.



(HEROIN continued)

crystalline compound quickly became a popular treatment for withdrawal from morphine. Addiction to heroin is an impossibility, wrote many scientists. The alchemists finally had their gold.

In 1914 President Woodrow Wilson signed the Harrison Act into law and created a monster. Attempting to regulate drug traffic, the bill outlawed any treatment for drug addiction by private doctors and hospitals. Only the courts, the state and federal government had this power. Suddenly the addict was classed as a criminal.

Contrary to popular belief, drug useage does not automatically result in a moral degradation. Addiction itself is a nebulous term. Not all people who experience heroin become addicts. "Chipping" commonly refers to occasional use. Addiction involves a physical dependency. Until 1919, when enforcement of the Harrison Act began, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics estimates that 75% of all heroin addicts in America had employment. Quite often creative artists will be attracted to drugs. One only has to think of Coleridge, DeQuincy, Baudelaire or any number of jazz musicians. Entire Indian cultures have based their spiritual revelations on hallucinogens. However, socio-economic factors do play a large role in heroin addiction.

By the late 1920's, Federal records show a vast concentration of drug users in the urban slums, where racial and ethnic minorities live. A 1962 survey indicates over half of America's heroin addicts are black. In an addictive society like America's where alcohol, tobacco, and barbiturates are con-

sumed at a frenzied rate, inevitably a percentage of the population would succumb to drug addiction. The urban poor are particularly susceptible. Everyday the media blitzes them with messages of the good life, that the key to happiness is consumption, the more the better. Since they are denied this happiness, heroin becomes the ultimate substitute, the ultimate escape.

The quality of heroin sold on the streets today vastly differs from what was sold during the jazz age and the depression when an ounce, 87% pure, went for twenty-five dollars. World War II lowered this purity to thirty or forty percent. Today's users buy a supermarket quality of a mere two percent, the bulk being usually quinine and sugar milk. When they encounter anything close to the clout available in their father's time, they die of an overdose.

Until the midsixties, few in the upper strata of American society worried about heroin addiction. As long as it stayed confined to the ghettos, they couldn't care less. Then suddenly the drug moved out of housing tenements and into the split levels of suburbia. Mom and Pop heard junior flushing the toilet a whole lot more often while over in the Vietnam jungles, big brother was snorting the pure stuff through the barrel of his rifle to gather courage for another search and destroy mission.

Not long ago I spent an intense Sunday afternoon interviewing two prisoners at San Quentin State Prison. One man, let's call him Harry, was a drug addict. Because of his addiction, he has spent

eighteen of his thirty-five years behind bars. If anybody would be deterred from heroin, surely Harry would be the man.

Harry thought otherwise. "I know I'll get back on it," he said with a bitter smile. "I'm not the sort to stay away from it. As soon as I hit the streets, it'll be on my mind. Pretty soon I'll fuck up and be back here."

If Harry lived in Great Britain, he would not have to spend his life in and out of prisons. The British treat drug addiction for what it truly is, a disease, thus giving the addict an entirely different status legally and medically. Granted their system for dispensing heroin through doctors has its flaws, (every midnight addicts line up in front of twenty-four hour drug stores to fill their prescriptions and some do peddle the drug to others on the streets) but this is a problem of management. The United States could learn from the British experience and set up a more efficient system for dispensing heroin. The American government treats the addict's deviant indulgence more harshly than any other form of behavior. Think of a diabetic denied his insulin or someone suffering from pernicious anemia denied B12 injections. While the analogy may be weak, it still holds true that only heroin can relieve the addict's withdrawal symptoms. Once a person becomes an addict, heroin itself is not so much the danger as the lack of it, though a number do die from overdoses and hepatitis. An addict denied his drug can enter convulsions within eighteen hours. During three years of cab driving I was robbed twice,

both times by adolescents. I blame heroin for those robberies and the system that drove these youngsters to such extremes. The professional thief would scorn such amateurism. He can wait a day or a week to make his risk worthwhile. The heroin addict cannot. Their habit costs fifty to a hundred dollars a day to maintain. Each time you are ripped off, more than likely you are paying for someone's habit. I've known heroin addicts who were cab drivers. They usually don't last very long because they have to drive seven days a week just to keep body and soul together. He has to make his daily quota. A flat tire can become a catastrophe. If a little old lady hands over a twenty thinking it is a five, the addict can't afford the luxury of honesty.

Instead of dealing with the crisis directly by giving these addicts the drug so they can function with some degree of normalcy, the American government chooses to skirt the issue by offering a poor substitute, methadone, a legacy from the Nixon years. This technological fix is even more addictive and dangerous than heroin. Withdrawal from methadone can last up to eighteen days, three times longer than heroin withdrawal. Why create another monster? Most heroin users wisely scorn methadone. If America adopted the British approach it wouldn't cost the taxpayer a single dollar. The money saved trying to curb heroin traffic could be diverted to the hospitals where it would be wisely spent.

Heroin traffic itself is practically impossible to curb. There's too much money involved. Estimates from the Bureau of Narcotics indi-

(HEROIN)

cate there are well over a half million drug addicts in the United States and 10 to 12 tons of heroin are smuggled annually to take care of these users. Half of these people live in New York city. In 1970 the Undercover Unit of the Narcotics division made over 4,000 arrests. Only eight ounces of pure heroin were confiscated.

A nineteenth century morality saddles America. In Texas earlier this year a jury acquitted a former professional football player for killing his twenty year old son. The father in a tearful defense said he shot the boy, once a star athlete in high school, because the boy was on drugs and he couldn't stand to see him suffer. After shooting his son, the father called the police and handed over the weapon when they came to his door. The jury sanctioned this blind righteousness. This type of rationale prevents any sanity from being brought to the heroin epidemic.

America's narcotic laws are designed to punish, which makes about as much sense as applying leeches to a man suffering from pneumonia. Living under these obsolete laws encourages a disrespect for all laws. Narcotic agents often are the worst offenders. Rarely do they worry about search warrants and the people they do bust are usually addicts. The big suppliers of heroin never touch the stuff.

America's morality gave us Prohibition, one of the greatest failures in government regulation in history. Government is not meant to control behavior. To allow government to establish modes of conduct is to allow fascism. The people themselves must assume responsibi-

lity over their lives. During Prohibition, those who drank clung resolutely to their vice. The inevitable result of this fierce independence was the birth of a highly efficient smuggling ring that grew in proportion to the demand as drinkers in this country defied the law en masse, graduating from bathtub gin to the speakeasy. The gangster replaced the cowboy as the true American hero. When Roosevelt recognized the absurdity of the situation and reopened the bars across this land, the gangsters had no recourse but to find other markets for their talents. The sale of contraband drugs today is one of the most lucrative of markets. Simple to make, heroin is expensive only because of its illegality. Consequently the criminal elements will do everything possible to keep heroin on the streets and out of the hospitals.

A new wave of repression sweeps this country. People want solutions to the rising crime rate and they grasp the most simple ones available - more guns, stricter laws, more police. Naively many feel that by "cracking down on the pusher," the drug problem can be solved. In New York the state legislature passed a law making it an automatic life sentence for anyone convicted of selling heroin. No politician ever wants to be accused of being "soft on crime." Very few seem willing to scrape beneath the surface to find the cause behind the crime wave. It's much easier to fan the moral flames of America by proposing tougher drug laws. In the meantime addicts clog the courts and prisons. Organized crime must be delighted. Business has never been so good. *

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