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The Final Issue

The Realist

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COURT JESTER

Swan Song

Norman Rockwell's paintings on the covers of the *Saturday Evening Post* were always synonymous with saccharine wholesomeness. But recently, his son, Peter, speaking at the National Press Club in Washington, mentioned that his father's longstanding ambition was to visit an opium den. Ultimately, he was dissuaded from taking that trip by advertisers in the magazine.

When I saw that on C-Span, I immediately assigned Kalynn Campbell to capture the venerated artist's secret vision. I thought that such an under-the-surface image of American culture would serve as an appropriate metaphor for the final issue of *The Realist*.

To all those who have helped nurture *The Realist* — from Lyle Stuart (who jump-started me) to Lynn Kushel (who's handled the subscriptions), from all the writers to all the readers — I'm unspeakably grateful. I've appreciated your feedback immensely.

And so this little publication comes to an end, neither with a bang nor with a whimper. Just a deep sigh of satisfaction. *The Realist* has been a way of life for me, but, of course, old editors never die, they just run out of space.

Dan Rather, Harry Shearer and Me

I shared a cab with my old friend and fellow satirist, Harry Shearer, during the Republican convention in Philadelphia, where everything was for sale. Even our taxi receipt provided ad space for CBS News, with a photo of Dan Rather under the slogan, "Experience You Can Trust," which Harry — a master impressionist — stated in a perfect rendition of Rather's precisely clipped style of speech.

I mentioned that Rather, anchoring the convention from a sky booth, had referred to "60 Minutes man Ed Bradley" reporting from the floor.

"That's racism," Shearer observed. "He would never refer to Morley Safer like that."

We proceeded to compare our respective encounters with Dan Rather. When the Museum of Radio and Television honored Rather, he personally invited Shearer to attend. Shearer wanted to talk about issues, but Rather wanted to discuss *Spinal Tap*. As for me, I had been invited to perform at the 135th anniversary of *The Nation* magazine. It was held at the posh University Club in New York. I wore jeans, a red Bread & Roses T-shirt and a tuxedo jacket, but the gatekeeper informed me that I didn't meet their dress code.

"But I'm an entertainer," I explained, "and this is my costume." He then instructed me to go around the corner, through the employees' entrance, past the kitchen and up the elevator to the ballroom where the \$600-a-plate dinner would be. Milling around were liberal celebrities — Phil Donahue, Nora Ephron, Harry Belafonte — and, sitting at a \$1,000-a-plate table was Dan Rather himself. He has very good posture, which he maintains even when he laughs.

"Mr. Rather," I said from the dais, "you ended your broadcast the other night by saying, 'If you like the CBS News, be sure to tell your neighbors,' and I just wanted to take this opportunity to tell you personally that I went around recommending it to my neighbors, but they kept chasing me away because they mistook me for a census taker."

McKenna's Brain

It was karmic irony that Terence McKenna, who died of brain cancer, had one of the most vibrant minds I've ever encountered. He had a tumor he described as "the size of a quail egg" three inches behind his right eye. It had to be cut out immediately, under local anesthetic, so he was conscious during the operation.

"Guys," he joked with the doctors, "let's keep the 'Oops' factor to a minimum here."

Two weeks later, McKenna kept "looking into my mind trying to see what difference" there was. His son had asked the surgeon, "So this tumor, it's thinking?" The doctor thought a while and then he said, "Oh, yes, it's thinking about something." McKenna mused, "And I'm trying to figure out what it was thinking about that I'm not thinking about any more."

Ah Sordid Announcements

• I'm overflowing with false humility to be included in *Who's Who in Hell*. Compiled by Warren Allen Smith and published by Barricade Books, it's a six-pound international directory for humanists, freethinkers and rationalists, and should be in your local library.

• The shortest piece ever to be published in *The Realist* was Tom Wolfe's review of Norman Podhoretz's book, *Making It*: "Norman who?" Now the second shortest is Michael Ochs' critique of the Abbie Hoffman biopic, *Steal This Movie*: "A flyer has more depth." And the third shortest comes from Nancy Cain: "It behooves every cow to be mad."

• A carpenter's memoir by Jody Procter, my friend and an occasional contributor to *The Realist*, has been published posthumously by Chelsea Green. Kurt Vonnegut's blurb: "Toil is an American cousin of Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*."

• My latest CD, about the presidential race, *Campaign in the Ass*, has just been released by Artemis Records, and can be found in stores and on the Internet. The following books are available directly from *The Realist* at Box 1230, Venice CA 90294: *Sex, Drugs and the Twinkie Murders: 40 Years of Countercultural Journalism*, \$22; *The (Almost) Unpublished Lenny Bruce*, \$10; *Pot Stories For the Soul*, \$15; and *Psychedelic Trips For the Soul*, \$15 (to be published in January). Issues #131-#145 of *The Realist* are available for \$30.

• I'm currently collecting material — funny, bizarre, poignant — for *Magic Mushrooms For the Soul*, about anything you've taken to get high besides marijuana and LSD. Send your true story to the above address or pkgrassner@earthlink.net but please include your snail-mail address so I can send you a copy of the book when it's published, and be sure to mention if you wish to remain anonymous.

An Interview With Myself

Q. Why are you ending *The Realist*?

A. Well, if I may quote from my stump speech, when I started publishing in 1958, I was really a lone voice, and now irreverence has become an industry. But *The Realist* has served its purpose — to communicate without compromise — and other voices are following in the same tradition. Also, there are a few novels I'd like to work on. The first was inspired by my association with Lenny Bruce, as a friend and editor of his autobiography, *How to Talk Dirty and Influence People*. The novel began to evolve after his death. I kept wondering, what would a contemporaneous Lenny be saying and doing? So I've been developing material on stage that will be put into the mouth of my protagonist. But I find myself resenting this imaginary character for stealing my material. It's a very schizophrenic process. And it's a challenge to write fiction because you have to make stuff up. I've been making stuff up all my life, but that was journalism.

Q. What's the favorite thing you've ever published?

A. What kind of softball question is that? You make Oprah Winfrey look like Mike Wallace. Anyway, it was "The Parts Left Out of the Kennedy Book" in 1967. Jackie Kennedy had authorized William Manchester to write *The Death of a President*, but now she wanted portions of the manuscript excised. Unaware that I was utilizing an established literary form, apocrypha, I tried to nurture the utterly incredible in a context of credibility. Imitating Manchester's style, I began with a true item — during the 1960 primaries, Lyndon Johnson had attacked JFK on the grounds that his father, Joseph P. Kennedy, was a Nazi sympathizer while he was U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain. Then I improvised on stories — one involving Marilyn Monroe — that White House correspondents knew to be true but which

had remained unpublished, peeling off layer after layer of verisimilitude, getting closer and closer with each new paragraph to the climactic scene on Air Force One where Jackie walks in on LBJ, who is leaning over a casket and fucking the throat wound in Kennedy's corpse. This was not merely casual necrophilia, though. It had a serious purpose — to change the entry wound from the Grassy Knoll into an exit wound from the Texas Book Depository in order to fool the Warren Commission. Well, it fooled a lot of *Realist* readers too, if only for a moment, but a moment in which they believed that the leader of the western world who had been escalating the war in Vietnam so severely was actually totally insane. That issue reached a circulation of 100,000. Recently I met a 25-year-old who told me about that LBJ-JFK encounter. She believed that it actually happened. What I had originally intended as a metaphorical truth has become, in her mind, a literal truth. Thanks to current realities, that piece of satire is now a credible urban myth.

Q. In 1974, you received the Feminist Party Media Workshop Award, yet in 1978 you were publisher of *Hustler*. How do you reconcile such a blatant contradiction?

A. It was a bizarre experience, fueled by mystical rationalization. Larry Flynt had been converted to born-again Christianity by President Jimmy Carter's evangelist sister, Ruth Carter Stapleton, on a jet plane, which, when it belonged to Elvis Presley, had been painted red, white and blue, but was now painted pink. I had been assigned to write a profile of Lenny Bruce for *Hustler*, and was invited to their Christmas party, where Flynt addressed the staff in his Kentucky twang: "Will you people please shut the fuck up so I can talk. . . I'm happy to be able to announce tonight that Ruth Carter Stapleton is gonna allow Flynt Distributing Company to distribute her new magazine, *The Christian Woman* . . . and the new publisher of *Hustler* is gonna be a fellow by the name of Paul Krassner." This was the first I'd heard of it. I had been wondering how *Hustler* would change, and now it turned out that I was the answer to my own question. For Larry Flynt to bring me in as redeeming social value for a porn-again magazine was an offer too absurd to refuse. Besides, he had already passed my test. When we met, I asked, "Do you believe that Christianity is the one and only true spiritual path?" He answered, "I believe that Jesus was not a more important teacher than Buddha, and that neither Jesus nor Buddha is more important than any individual." The first thing I did was change the cover of the April issue, the one that would not feature a woman. Instead, it was scheduled to have a teddy bear wearing a negligee. I changed it to an Easter bunny nailed to a crucifix, and assigned a staffer to write a piece on "The Commercialization of Easter." Then I went through Flynt's final publisher's statement and removed every male reference to God. I assigned articles ranging from abortion rights to the murder of Malcolm X. I appointed science-fiction author Theodore Sturgeon as *Hustler's* book reviewer. I felt privileged to be reaching this otherwise neglected blue-collar audience with informative, anti-establishment material, even if other pages of the magazine would undoubtedly

become stuck together by several hundred thousand dried-up sperm cells that had mistakenly assumed they were heading toward the Fallopian tubes. I was at *Hustler* for only six months. When Flynt got shot, his wife Althea took over and fired me. All my feminist friends had understood my motivation from the start and were supportive the whole time. A few even wrote pieces for *Hustler*.

Q. There's a new, \$75 photography book, *The Sixties*, by Richard Avedon, of countercultural figures from that decade, and you're in it. Would you describe that photo and how it came about?

A. In 1969, I met Jada Rowland, an actress in the soap opera *Secret Storm*. I fell in love with Jada, but I hated soap operas. Still, she maintained a sense of integrity. Once, the script called for her to put down her little daughter by referring sarcastically to her imagination, and Jada refused to say the line. Avedon had invited me to be included in a photo book, and I accepted on the condition that I could choose the pose with Jada. What we had in mind was a takeoff on the *Two Virgins* album cover, where John Lennon and Yoko Ono stood nude, holding hands. Jada and I would both be naked, smiling, with our arms around each other. But, she would also be holding a patriotic cup with stars and stripes, and there would be arrows pointing to her breasts and crotch, and I would be holding an American flag. And I would have an erection. If *Two Virgins* was about anatomy, this was about physiology. And Jada was willing to risk losing her \$1,000-a-week job to participate just for the fun of it. I ingested a capsule of THC powder for the photo session. We were standing before the camera, and the only thing missing was my hard-on. I had heard that THC was actually an elephant tranquilizer, and I would soon find out if that was true. Avedon asked what music we wanted in the background. I asked for the Beatles' "Hey, Jude," but he didn't have it, so instead we put on Bob Dylan singing "Lay, Lady, Lay." Jada and I began to kiss. "This is obscene," she whispered. "No," I whispered back, "it's very pure. But you're right, it is kind of goal-oriented." We continued kissing. Dylan was now asking the musical question, "Why wait any longer for the world to begin?" My penis rose to the occasion and the crew cheered us on. I signed a release, assuming the photo would never be seen, because the publishing of an erection was so taboo. However, late last year — three decades later — my bluff was called: Avedon's book was published. A review in the *Los Angeles Times* said that I looked "sheepish" and "sustained" an erection. Little did they know.

Q. Can you explain what the Yippies were?

A. That was the name I invented to describe a phenomenon that already existed — an organic coalition of stoned hippies and political activists. There had been an adversarial relationship between them. The politicians thought that the hippies were irresponsible, but came to realize that their marijuana smoke-in at the park was an act of civil disobedience to protest an unjust law. The hippies thought the politicians were playing into the hands of the government by demonstrating against the war, but came to realize that there was a linear connection between getting busted for smoking pot in this country and dropping napalm on the other side of the globe. It was the ultimate extension of dehumanization. More and more, you'd see the hippies at civil rights demonstrations and antiwar protests, and you'd see the political activists getting stoned and dressing colorfully. Protest became guerrilla theater. Folksinger Phil Ochs, the Yippies' troubadour, said, "A demonstration should turn you on, not turn you off." Our activities — from tossing \$200 in singles down from a balcony inside the Stock Market, to exorcising the Pentagon — served to publicize our plans to celebrate an alternative lifestyle during the Democratic convention in Chicago that summer, 1968.

Q. What are your thoughts about the current political scene?

A. The rhetoric is awesomely superficial, and they can't even get their sound-bites right. George W. Bush intended to say, "John McCain is riding his high horse by taking the low road." Instead, it came out, "He can't take the high horse and then claim the low road." And Bush is against abortion, except in the case of rape, incest, or his pregnant daughter. It all stinks of decaying hypocrisy. The Stepford Pundits analyze whether Al Gore and Bill Bradley display enough



From Walt Kelly's "Pogo" strip, November 3, 1968

animation during their debates, as if we're voting for Daffy Duck and Goofy. On second thought, they *are* Daffy and Goofy. And so are their positions. They're for the death penalty and *against* decriminalization of marijuana. When President Clinton requested the Director of National Drug Control Policy and the Secretary of Transportation for recommendations on drug-testing for minors applying for drivers' license, they reported back: "First-time driver's license applicants under 18 must be tested. The states may choose to test others as well. For example, states could test all first-time applicants, regardless of age (this would increase costs only slightly, since most first-time applicants are teenagers, and it would reduce litigation risks based on charges of age discrimination)." And it's trickle-down fascism. When California Attorney General Bill Lockyer went to Washington to try and talk sense about the drug war to General Barry McCaffrey, the drug czar actually threatened to jail him. And when Lockyer convened a task force to draft legislation to provide for distribution of medical marijuana — a right that already existed under Proposition 215 — Governor Gray Davis' staff warned that he would veto it, no questions asked. Judge George King murdered Peter McWilliams by not allowing him to smoke his medicine while awaiting trial. Meanwhile, in Kingman, Arizona, a severely disabled woman with no arms or legs has been sentenced to a year in prison for possession. The same week, in Augusta, Georgia, a man who's been in a wheelchair for 35 years, unable to do more than raise his shoulders, began a seven-year prison sentence for possession. Conversely, there's a devastating report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* documenting the alarming rise in the prescription of stimulants and antidepressants to children under the age of five, but members of Congress in both parties refuse to speak out because the pharmaceutical companies are such huge contributors. It's true insanity in the guise of pragmatic career moves.

Q. What exactly is your own spiritual path?

A. Attempting to avoid getting a headache whenever I think about the infinity of time and space. Viewing reality through a filter of absurdity. Being in awe of nature and technology and the human spirit. Marveling at the process of coincidence. Meditating on the concept of evolution in every aspect of civilization. Relishing the miracle of consciousness. Playing with my ego instead of attempting to get rid of it. Developing an intimate relationship with the deity I don't believe in. That's my religion. According to a recent survey by the Barna Group, an independent market-research company, about one out of five self-described atheists and agnostics (19%) pray to God during a typical week. I know I do. For example, before I go on stage to perform, I always pray, "Please, God, help me do a good show." And then I always hear the voice of God, booming, "SHUT UP, YOU SUPERSTITIOUS FOOL!" My favorite metaphor for God comes from Krishnamurti. A disciple asked him, "Why is there evil in the world?" And he replied, "To thicken the plot." My working philosophy comes from the comic strip, *Mary Worth*: "When in doubt, do the kindest thing." I believe that existence has no meaning, and I love every minute of it. The only thing to do is enjoy the mystery. I mean, if life is not a mystery, what the fuck is it?

Checkmating With Pawns

It was a hot day at the chess tournament in Phoenix, Arizona — 103 degrees, to be exact — and 14-year-old Nathaniel Dight was elated over his custom-made chess set. Those carved wooden pieces had been weighted precisely for the smooth moves he liked to make. Each one had been lacquered and, for this extreme heat, carefully protected by matte acrylic spray. But before the game could begin, young Nathaniel was ordered to take a urine test.

"I know why you're doing this," he snarled. "It's because I've won three tournaments in a row, isn't it?"

"No, son, that's just a coincidence. This is a random drug test."

"I don't do any drugs. I mean like when I get a headache from playing chess too long, I won't even take an aspirin."

"Look, here's a cup. I need you to go fill it, right now. . . ."

All right, I confess, I made all that up, but consider the implications of something that I *haven't* made up.

America's drug czar, Barry McCaffrey, wrote in an article published in the September issue of *Chess Life* magazine: "Research proves that mentoring youngsters and teaching them games like chess can build resilience in the face of illegal drug use and other destructive temptations. Drug testing is as appropriate for chess players as for shotputters, or any other competitors who use their heads as well as their hands."

Accompanying the television image of a couple of eggs sizzling in a frying pan, the phrase "This is your brain on drugs" has always carried negative connotations, but apparently General McCaffrey has changed his mind about that. He now seems to believe that drugs can actually *improve* the way your brain functions.

Robert Anton Wilson told me about an infamous chess player named Alexander Alekhine who held the world championship longer than anybody else. His games often had superb surprise endings, known in chess circles as "brilliances." For instance, he would checkmate with a pawn move that no sane and sober mind could ever imagine. However, he was a notorious alcoholic, and McCaffrey is only referring to illegal drugs.

"Just when I thought I'd heard it all from McCaffrey," was the reaction of Allen St. Pierre, executive director of the NORML (National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws) Foundation. "Drug testing for chess players? What's next from this over-reaching drug czar? Drug testing for tiddly winks players? How about bingo players?"

Moreover, McCaffrey's proposal smacks of subliminal racism. Social psychologist Walli Leff told me, "I think most of the movement to involve young people in chess is directed toward the African-American community, and the assumption is, if the kids are black they're going to be drug users. I think white middle-class suburban parents would have a fit if their kids had to take drug tests for their extra-curricular activities. Or am I out of it and am I missing a new white middle-class suburban submissiveness?"

McCaffrey had been influenced by Chesschild, a group sponsored by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). Chesschild is a substance abuse prevention program conducted in libraries and schools, promoting a combination of drug-free lifestyles and chess. "Policy recommendations like this one from ONDCP," said St. Pierre, "demonstrate a deep and disturbing pathology that goes well beyond opposing drug-law reform efforts."

Maybe the drug-law reformers should follow the example of gay-rights activists by having celebrities come out of the pot-smoking closet. Already, veteran stand-up comic George Carlin — in an interview by the *Daily Show's* Jon Stewart following Carlin's HBO special — admitted that he smokes a joint to help him "fine-tune" his material. "One hit is all I need now and it's punch-up time."

At the Shadow Convention that took place while the Democrats were in Los Angeles, Bill Maher revealed to the audience, "I'm not just a pot reformer, I'm a *user*" — something which ABC forbids him to say on *Politically Incorrect* — then quickly added, "Just making a light remark there, federal authorities." Woody Harrelson has stated, "I do smoke." And on KRLA radio talk-show host Michael Jackson's program, actress and former member of the Mamas and the Papas, Michelle Phillips, said that she still enjoys smoking marijuana.

Just as Ellen DeGeneres appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine saying, "Yup, I'm gay," there might come a day when a presidential candidate will appear on the cover of *Newsweek* saying, "Yup, I'm stoned." Isn't that what young pot-smokers need — good role models — so they won't be ashamed of their private pleasure-seeking?

Meanwhile, drug czar McCaffrey will continue his crusade, not only against illegal substances, but perhaps also against certain food supplements, such as a popular herbal mixture with a reputation for aiding memory and concentration. Who would ever have dreamed that chess players could get in trouble for using ginkgo biloba as a performance enhancer?



A View From Another Window

Stan Mack's Dispatches appear monthly in the *Sunday New York Times*, but this particular one — about the loss of Janet Bode, his longtime companion and creative collaborator (also my friend and an occasional contributor to *The Realist*) — resulted in a great deal of controversy.

"There is a world, invisible to many, of terminally ill people being cared for full time by a loving family member or friend," Mack explains. "These caregivers are living with burdens and pressures that even regular visitors can miss. For years, Janet and I have used the power and immediacy of the popular art form, the 'strip,' to illuminate serious issues. This is certainly one of them."

We Shall Overlap

In the '60s, "We shall overcome" became the musical mantra of the civil rights struggle. But, in Philadelphia this year, the phrase was co-opted by George W. Bush in his acceptance speech. Such incongruity inspired my Presidential Campaign Academy Awards — the Kafkas — published in the *Los Angeles Times* and leading off with: "The Roseanne Multiple Personality Award goes to Eddie Murphy for his magnificent portrayal of all five African-American delegates at the Republican convention."

In 1968, during the protests outside the Democratic convention, Hugh Hefner was walking home to his Playboy Mansion in Chicago when he got whacked on the butt by a police billy-club for no particular reason. This year, his Playboy Mansion in Los Angeles was considered an inappropriate venue for a Latino Democratic fundraiser because Party officials were afraid that their Gore infomercial at Staples Center might be tainted by the image of stapled centerfolds. This time, Hefner — a contributor to the Democrats — was really radicalized.

In August 1968, a couple of weeks before the Democratic convention took place in Chicago, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and I — co-founders of the Yippies (Youth International Party) — met with Tom Hayden — representing Mobe (the New Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam) — in order to establish communication lines between the Yippies and the Mobes. We decided to buy some walkie-talkies. We were standing in an open field in Grant Park. Several yards away, a ridiculously obvious undercover cop was pretending to read a newspaper. Whenever we moved, he would move along with us, remaining several yards away.

A few months previously, Yippie leaders had gone to Chicago and were in the office of Mayor Richard Daley's assistant, David Stahl. To loosen the tension, I explained to him, "We're here to get a permit for the revolution." "Come on," he replied, "what are you guys really planning to do at the convention?" I asked, "Didn't you see *Wild in the Streets*?" In that youth-cult movie, teenagers put LSD into the water supply, lowered the vote to 14 and took over the government.

"*Wild in the Streets*?" Stahl repeated. "We've seen *Battle of Algiers*." In that movie, a guerrilla hides a bomb under her *chador*, plants it in an ice-cream parlor, and the camera pans around to show the innocent faces of children who are about to be blown up. What was to happen with the Chicago police, then, would be a clash between *our* mythology and *their* mythology. The violence reached a peak on the third day of the convention, during speeches in Grant Park. The *Chicago Tribune* later reported that Bob Pierson — a police provocateur posing as a biker and acting as Rubin's bodyguard — was "in the group which lowered an American flag" — the

incident which set off what *The Walker Report: Rights in Conflict* would describe as "a police riot."

Pierson wrote in *Official Detective* magazine: "One thing we were to do was defile the flag. The American flag in the park was taken down, then rehung upside down. After this had been photographed, a group of us, including me, were ordered to pull it down and destroy it, then to run up the black flag of the Viet Cong. I joined in the chants and taunts against the police and provoked them into hitting me with their clubs. They didn't know who I was, but they did know that I had called them names and struck them with one or more weapons."

And so, when the Democrats returned to the scene of the crime and brought their convention to Chicago again in 1996, that scraping sound you heard was philosopher Herbert Marcuse twisting in his grave as the term he coined — "repressive tolerance" — came to life in the form of a lottery for would-be demonstrators — from Psychologists for Quality to the Lesbian Avengers — seeking government-sanctioned time slots in a location where delegates wouldn't hear them. This was the ultimate trivialization of protest. No wonder the National Space Society yielded its hour to a marijuana-rights group.

In an officially-approved, fenced-off site opposite the Hilton Hotel facing Grant Park — where in '68 the whole world was watching as sadistic police turned a peaceful rally into a brutal riot — now, *nobody* was listening as an individual spoke about the injustice of the legal system: "I would like to share with you another experience. . . ." He was supposed to be followed by the American Art Party which, like several others, didn't bother to show up.

But then came the most successful demonstration, to honor the work of the late comedian, John Belushi, with a postage stamp. *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist Richard Roeper led 200 spectators in a chant: "Give him a damn stamp!" There were two prototypes, but Belushi as one of the Blues Brothers was deemed more popular by the crowd than Belushi in his *Saturday Night Live* bumblebee costume. Democracy in action.

* * *

In 1968, the Yippies decided to nominate a pig named Pegasus for president. When William Burroughs learned of this, he said, "It would be more interesting if you ran a tape recorder." When Chicago authorities learned of it, they put an armed guard on the pig in the zoo. Meanwhile, a certain competitiveness developed between Abbie and Jerry. Abbie bought a pig, but Jerry thought it wasn't big enough, mean enough or ugly enough, so he bought a bigger, meaner, uglier pig which was released at City Hall and seized by Chicago police.

This year, an animal-rights activist wearing a 7-foot tall pig costume (with a small bat-

tery-operated fan built into the head) prepared for the protests against the World Bank and the IMF in Washington, D.C. by obtaining a truckful of manure — the kind you use for dumping in front of a building — from Police Department horse stables. At the Republican convention, he conducted another manure-dumping and was arrested for "transporting a material intended to be used to create a public nuisance." At the Democratic convention, he dumped four tons of manure in front of convention headquarters at the Wilshire Grand Hotel. Before he was cited for misdemeanor vandalism, police questioned him for two hours.

"C'mon, Lefty, you better sing to us or you're goin' up the river! Now, for the last time, who'd you buy that shit from?"

In 1968, Walter Cronkite delivered the body count on CBS Evening News every Thursday: so many American dead; so many Vietnamese dead; so many enemy dead. At first anti-war protesters were virtually all white — later, "No Vietnamese ever called me nigger" became a black slogan — but in 2000, the demonstrations are multi-ethnic. Back then, organized labor originally had an adversarial relationship with protesters — later, "No Vietnamese ever froze my wages" became a working-class slogan — but now, with some Big Labor exceptions, union members are out in the streets with them. *Ebony* and *Ivory Meets Teamsters and Turtles*.

Tom Hayden, now a California state senator, has been observing the new breed of young activists. "One difference I see with '68," he told me, "is that back then you had a war and a draft that forced people to pay attention. What is extraordinary about the new movement is how they are motivated by idealism and moral rage — like the early SDS [Students for a Democratic Society]. If they connect with the broad constituencies of 'at-risk youth' (and their families) around the issues of 'jobs, not jails,' and if they also connect with labor around the working poor and immigrants, we will see great swelling of social action like we haven't seen since back then."

Philadelphia used to be known as the city of brotherly love. Now it's called the place that loves you back. And Los Angeles, of course, is the city that cheats on you. Prior to the conventions this year, although police in Philly and L.A. didn't see *Battle of Algiers*, they were shown a ten-minute video featuring WTO protesters in Seattle smashing Starbucks' windows. Consequently, in a somewhat unusual process, the California Highway Patrol requested \$1-million in convention "security equipment" for the L.A. Police Department, currently in total embarrassment mode because of a scandal-in-progress at the Rampart station involving the planting of false evidence, the selling of narcotics, and the murder of innocent civilians.

State legislator Hayden theorizes that they didn't have enough nerve to ask the City

Council for pepper spray (\$125,000) and a paper shredder (\$2,400), so instead tried to sneak those purchases through the legislature. "Can you imagine," he asked, "at this point in the Rampart [police corruption] crisis, showing up on your budget with pepper spray? And a paper shredder? For a police force under scrutiny for framing people?"

Things evolve. Vietnam has become Colombia. Woodstock Nation has become Hip-Hop Nation. The military-industrial complex has become the prison-industrial complex. Leadership is no longer dominated by white males. Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin have been replaced by Lisa Fithian and Margaret Prescod (who is black). Not only is there a strong sense of continuity, there's also a specific linear connection. Fithian — an organizer of the Direct Action Network — had worked with Hoffman on his Save the St. Lawrence River project, and in 1984-5, he hired her as a guide on a tour of Nicaragua he arranged. The clients included feminist Betty Friedan, New York Senator Israel Ruiz and *New York Post* reporter Fred Dicker. It was there that Abbie, his wife Johanna Lawrenson, Lisa Fithian and Al Giordano (a fellow tour guide, now editor of *Narco News*), concocted a plan for the People's Peace Corps — brigades to work at the camps in Nicaragua, to build clinics and bring medicines.

Along with everything else, technology has evolved, changing the nature of protest: walkie-talkies have been replaced by cell phones; organizing once done with messy mimeograph machines is now accomplished via the Internet — quicker, cheaper and way more widespread; demonstrators are now well-armed — with information. The '60s Bread & Puppet Theater has given way to individual artists whose puppets have been confiscated as weapons. "Hey, hey! Ho, ho! LBJ has got to go!" is now "HMO has got to go!"

The Yippies have become the Ruckus Society, and its leader, John Sellers, was arrested by 35 officers while walking down a Philadelphia street. His cell phone and Swiss Army knife were confiscated as "instruments of crime." He was charged with aggravated assault on a cop, that charge was dropped, and he was charged with a misdemeanor. His bail was initially set at a million dollars — for a misdemeanor — later reduced to \$100,000.

"It was like a bad SWAT movie," he said.

In 1968, the Vietnam war was the main target of demonstrators, but now R2K and D2K — the networks planning protests at this year's Republican and Democratic conventions — served as umbrella organizations for a dazzling myriad of causes, including reproductive rights, child support, corporate globalization, capital punishment, racism, sexism, wages for housewives, universal health care, nuclear abolition, welfare issues, media monopoly, gay rights, three-strikes laws, rainforests, wetlands, militarism, veterans' benefits, AIDS, immigration, disability rights, starvation, breastfeeding rights,

genetic engineering. The unsung theme song of this movement has evolved into "We shall overlap."

* * *

The name of the game this summer was alternative conventions. There was the Homeless Convention, bringing together homeless activists at the Dome Village, a homeless enclave led by Ted Hayes, who stressed the need for nonviolent dialogue, only to be injured by a rubber bullet when he got caught in the middle of a police over-reaction in their zeal to shield delegates from protesters. Tom Hayden's son, Troy, was also injured by a rubber bullet as he was leaning over Ted Hayes trying to protect him.

There was the Anarchists Convention, held in a warehouse. Anarchists had become generic scapegoats. They think of themselves as "people, not legally bound, watching out for each other." But you could watch as police at a demonstration would target anyone dressed in black clothing, because that's what anarchists always wear. Instead of political vandalism, however, a group from the Bay Area arranged to feed homeless people near Staples Center. "It's our obligation as anarchists," explained one, "to look after those communities that the state fails to look after."

The People's Convention — run by earnest socialists and communists whose anti-capitalist outrage permeated the sparsely-filled auditorium — took place at Belmont High School. Just as a session on police brutality was about to begin, a pair of cops strolled into the auditorium. They were asked to leave. "Sorry," it was explained, "we don't allow any weapons at our meetings." They left, and the audience laughed and applauded. This event was budgeted at \$8,000, and there was resentment expressed that its thunder was being stolen by the Shadow Convention, budgeted at \$500,000.

Philanthropist George Soros had funded the Shadow Convention with \$100,000 on the bi-partisan proviso that it be held in both Philadelphia and Los Angeles. Organized by columnist Arianna Huffington in conjunction with a few organizations, including Common Cause, the Lindesmith Center Drug Policy Foundation, and the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support, there were three basic areas the Shadow Conventions would explore — campaign finance and political reform; poverty and the growing income gap; and the failure of the drug war — a full day being devoted to each crisis.

I was invited to participate in the Rapid Response panel, whereby journalists and satirists would react in real time to the speeches being delivered at the official conventions. At the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communication, there were two giant screens on the stage of the 950-seat auditorium, and the idea was to provide commentary as if we were watching in our own living rooms. When Dick Cheney said, "We will never see one [Al Gore] with-

out thinking of the other [Bill Clinton]," what pleasure it gave me to observe that the GOP's underlying campaign theme would be to stress the notion that Clinton, Gore and Monica Lewinsky had indulged in a threesome.

I was most moved at the Shadow Convention by the transformative experience of Huffington's 11-year-old daughter, Christina. On the day when the war on drugs was examined, she realized that it was really a war on some people who use some drugs. She was horrified to learn of the blatant unfairness of mandatory-minimum sentencing. She could identify with the utter inhumanity of law-enforcers snatching parents away from their children for growing medical marijuana. To Christina, "Just say no" has become "Just say know."

I was happy to reunite with a few old friends from the '60s who were fellow participants at the Shadow Conventions. In Philadelphia, it was Reverend Howard Moody of Judson Memorial Church in New York City. We — the Christian minister and the professed atheist — had both run underground abortion referral services while that particular form of surgery was still illegal. In Los Angeles, it was Ram Dass, with whom I had shared some memorable psychedelic journeys. Now in a wheelchair after a stroke, his Zen spirit remains high. I once asked him, "If we were to exchange our philosophies — if I believed in reincarnation and you didn't — how do you think that might change our behavior." He paused, then replied with a twinkle in his eye: "If you believed in reincarnation, you would never ask a question like that." He laughed in delight and triumph.

I also saw Tom Hayden both at the Shadow Convention and in the street, at a rally in Santa Monica supporting striking members of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees union. Somebody was trying to engage him in "radical nostalgia." Meanwhile, another demonstration, denouncing slave labor, was taking place a few blocks away in front of the Gap, where I encountered yet another old friend, Jeff Cohen, founder of FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) and commentator on the Fox network's *News Watch*; he was told by CNN that he's too controversial for them. He's now campaigning for inclusion in the presidential debates of third-party candidates.

Although the Republican ticket of Bush-Cheney is the darling of the oil tycoons, on the first day of the Democratic convention, police attacked a peaceful afternoon march to protest Al Gore's involvement with Occidental Petroleum — his family owns half a million in stock, inherited from his father — and the company's intentions to drill oil from the sacred land of the indigenous U'wa people in Colombia. And that evening, while President Clinton was speaking to delegates of the Democratic machine, Rage Against the Machine

(Continued on Back Cover)

Unheard Melodies Are Sweeter by Lynn Phillips

The Realist so precisely defined its era — an historical period so bizarre as to be beyond satire — that it's hard to imagine an era stranger, yet I suspect that we are entering one such now. We are leaving an age, the great Realist Era, in which Self and Truth — identity and integrity — are in a state of meltdown: Sheep are cloned; lightning goes up as well as down; President Nixon's shrink believes in Jeanne Dixon's tabloid predictions.

In the Post-Realist era, however, things will be even stranger. In the Post-Realist period, Jeanne Dixon's animated head will make fanciful predictions from the Web, and not only will highly-placed doctors believe in them... her bizarre predictions will have already come true! Here are a few examples:

Realist Era prediction: Liz Taylor and Eddie Fisher won't last. *Post-Realist prediction:* Ellen DeGeneres and Anne Heche won't last, and Eddie Fisher has been surgically altered to become Liz Taylor.

Realist Era prediction: Subliminal ads will make us think about sex when we shop. *Post-Realist prediction:* Trendy people will shop online for government-subsidized aphrodisiacs and will tattoo corporate logos on their genitals.

Realist Era prediction: Many wild animals will become extinct. *Post-Realist prediction:* Domestic animals will be raised in factory farms like widgets but become superfluous because meat will be grown in vats.

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was performing in the designated protest pit, known as "the Gaza strip," across the street from Staples Center, protected by 14-foot chain-link fencing. The cops had ear plugs.

The concert climaxed with the band's song, "Freedom," with 8,000 people giving the finger to Staples Center and chanting in unison: "Fuck you! I won't do what you tell me!" Police dispersed the crowd with tear-gas pellets, flash grenades, rubber and beanbag bullets, indiscriminately rather than singling out obvious troublemakers. Inside Staples Center, the sound of "76 Trombones" drowned out the noise from outside.

There may not have been as much overt police violence toward protesters at this Democratic convention as there was at the one in Chicago, 1968, but in Los Angeles there was more covert police violence toward the 1st Amendment.

Based on an anonymous tip that there was a bomb in a van, at 4:30 p.m. police detained its owners and blocked the Independent Media Center's parking lot, in the process eliminating their broadcast capabilities. Fifteen minutes later, based on another anonymous tip that there was a bomb in the parking lot of the Shadow Convention, 700 people were ejected from the auditorium at Patriotic

The New York Times Magazine reported that humans could soon be gestated in cows, if only the notion of cows giving birth to people didn't make everybody so nervous. In a period like this, conservatism looks good because "progress" has turned into such a kinky proposition. You used to have to take a lot of acid to come up with the kind of morphing meltdown that you now encounter in science news and in kids' video games daily.

It's hard to explain to those not attuned to essentials how profoundly surreal the real has become: In physics labs particles appear in two places at once yet behave as one; biologists tell you that your parasitic bacteria weigh more than "you"; neurologists caution that your "mind" is an illusion produced by a welter of sub-brains, so you're not who you think.

And geneticists? They say that your genes closely resemble the roundworm's, and if you're rich enough, your "death gene" might one day get turned off so you'll cease to be mortal.

Past religions tried to imagine what kind of god would have created the beauty and cruelty of this world. When you do that today, you get someone who might very plausibly issue instructions to gestate the next Dalai Lama in a llama.

The Realist has been a great ride. Perhaps its greatest and most cutting joke is that it is now pulling over to let the onrushing, irony-gobbling, horizon-hungry American road stream by riderless — into the amazing, amoral void of Century 21.

Hall. It took three hours for the bomb squad to arrive, so the Rapid Response panel moved onto a truck. There, Arianna Huffington stood between panelists Gore Vidal and Christopher Hitchens like a neo-populist sandwich, while a phalanx of 100 riot police looked on. An officer announced, "If you don't move, we'll use tear gas." When they refused to move, the cops told them that they could go back inside. Oh, well, maybe it was just a bong threat — a neutron bong that wipes out the user but leaves the stash intact.

Amidst all the violence on the streets, I had escaped unscathed, until the final night of the Democratic convention, when Al and Tipper Gore — in the most calculated kiss since Michael Jackson and Lisa Marie Presley at the MTV Awards — smooched as if to say, "We don't need no steenkin' interns!" Roseanne was on the Rapid Response panel at the Shadow Convention that night. When she announced her candidacy for president, even though she had never voted, the audience booed, so what happened to me may have been her displaced hostility, but I'm sure it was because she had read my Kafka Awards in the *Los Angeles Times*. In any case, when we were introduced, one of Roseanne's personalities beat me to a bloody pulp.

MEDIA FREAK

All the News That's Fit to Piss

More and more companies are requiring employees to submit to random drug tests, and their privacy goes down the drain while their urine is sent to the lab. *Rolling Stone* and the *New York Times* are among the publications which have such a policy. When a *Times* employee takes a drug test, the faucets are removed from the sinks in the bathroom so that the testee will not be able to dilute his or her urine with tap water.

The Federal Fight Against Medicine

Daniel Forbes in *Salon*: "Within days of the California and Arizona pot initiatives' passage, drug czar Barry McCaffrey convened a high-level meeting of some 40 government and private sector drug warriors to plan a response to the medical marijuana threat. According to Daniel Porterfield, who attended the meeting as the individual in charge of coordinating various anti-drug efforts within Health and Human Services, 'The reason for the meeting was to organize the effort for the other 48 states.'"

Lost and Found

Playboy reveals that emergency-room doctors have discovered "misplaced" sex toys in pelvic X-rays: "Besides dildos and vibrators, physicians have removed screwdrivers, artillery shells, curling irons, spatulas, baseballs, flashlights, candles, vegetables, a polyethylene waste trap from the U-bend of a sink, sewing needles, salami and shampoo bottles."

Filler Items

- Margaret Cho at a Gay Rights Rally: "I'm gonna use the Washington monument as my own personal strap-on dildo."
- The *Wall Street Journal* reported that Saddam Hussein chose, for the theme of his birthday celebration, the Frank Sinatra recording of "I Did It My Way."
- In Norway, a new fashion craze is threatening air safety — teenagers stealing seatbelts to keep up their baggy trousers. An average of five belts a day are disappearing from the company's planes.
- When *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist Mike Weiss asked Willie Mays about something in his autobiography, Mays told him, "I was misquoted."
- There are now rubber bull's eye pads in public urinals with this message: "The Star Wars Missile Missed Its Target! Will You?"
- When George W. Bush called a *New York Times* reporter "a major league asshole," a Fox News commentator referred to that epithet as "the end of the lower intestines." The *Washington Times* resorted to "a rectal aperture."
- Denial of the year: by Jerry Falwell, who proclaimed, "Global warming is a myth."
- Bumper sticker of the century: "Your Planet's Immune System Is Trying to Get Rid of You."