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Editorial

I was married last month. Among everything else that proposition entails, it means that I add husband to my cast of roles. So I am now student, *Dialogue* editor, son, brother, friend, husband, and much else. All of which keeps the costume shop rather busy.

There are people who take the Calvinist concept of calling and argue that each person is called to exactly one role. Thus, while at Calvin, I am called to be a student. I should think twice and three times and as often as it takes to fill my four years about extra-curricular activities, including *Dialogue* and, presumably, marriage. While at Calvin I should concentrate on being a student, and only a student.

Our secular society questions my (and your) multiplicity of roles similarly. Society demands of us success. And success is success in one field. Thus, we are to use a liberal arts major to achieve top management positions or top government positions or top academic positions. As Mark observes in this month's meditation, we are all somehow driven to be number one.

I would be naively hypocritical if I denied the value of this drive. I typed this editorial on a word processor and under Thomas Edison's light bulb. Most of my world has been constructed by men who devoted their lives to one thing and to be number one at it. And what is mainly studied at Calvin is the achievement of great men.

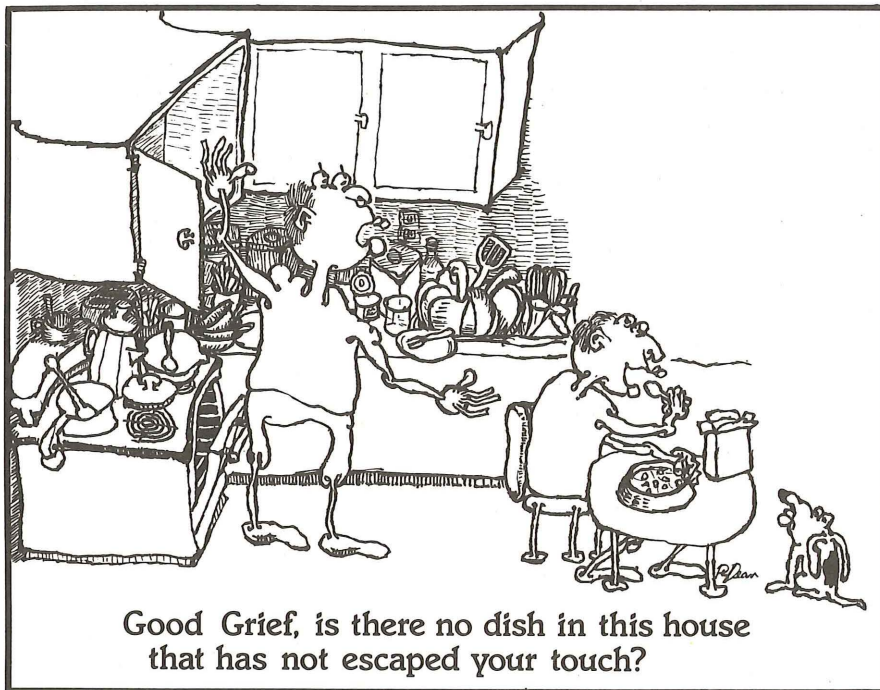
But they are mostly men. Women, from my outsider's perspective, seem to be better able to balance their many roles. Perhaps male-dominated society imposes all these roles on them. To the extent that so-called feminist criticism attacks this imposition, that criticism is proper. But women's ability to balance the competing demands of their various roles is not to be lamented.

If we are to face a final judgement, we will not be judged as students or business executives or theo-

logians or husbands. We will be judged as persons. And persons necessarily assume many roles.

The successful life, then, if we are to accept this category, is a life which balances all these roles, and, more importantly, exercises virtue and integrity and evidences grace in each of them. The successful life may not stand out when viewed from any one sphere, but it will certainly be seen from the perspective of eternity.

RS



Raymond D. Van Velsen

Dear Editor:

Last summer "some research work" may have taken Ron Wells to New York, but he certainly forgot about any research principles when he chose to write "What Should I Major In? A Partial Answer from Wall Street" [December *Dialogue*].

I am very disturbed that he draws the conclusions he does from his illustrations without conceding that he has no significant data to back them up, only the off-hand remarks of the small sample of people he queried in New York and a couple of isolated examples involving his father and a local friend (who was a history major. Can I conclude that's the way he chooses friends?). Furthermore, I find it reckless and irresponsible that Professor Wells would insinuate that an undergraduate business degree is a dead-end degree, that advancement beyond entry-level positions is not likely. I am also confused as to what my colleague thinks we do in advanced business classes. The primary objective of marketing and management classes which I teach is to help students develop analytical skills and, of course, communication skills. Success in any endeavor requires these abilities.

On the other hand, I join my colleague in what, I hope, is his major proposition. Students who are undecided should "major in whatever discipline you are drawn to and become the most complete person you can be." There are a myriad of opportunities available to liberal arts majors in business, just as there are for business majors. There is absolutely no conclusive evidence that one major versus another is the best preparation for top management positions. There have been many longitudinal studies conducted on this subject. Each concluded there was no statistically significant difference.

So . . . business majors take heart, despite Wells' opinion; and students who are undecided take heed, Professor Wells has sound advice for you!

Steve Brothers
Assoc. Professor,
Economics and Business

Esther

Ruth McBurney

"Hello, Esther."

"Why, hel-LO, dear!"

She was sitting propped up on some cushions on the end of her couch—a tiny woman in blue stretchy pants and a preppy blue pullover sweater. As usual, she was slowly shuffling through a small pile of junk mail.

"How have you been this week?"

"Fine. And it says *here*," she informed me, "three for twen-tee-four nine-tee-five and I told Vicki earlier today that I would like to purchase *this one*."

Most of her index finger pointed at a picture of a plaid flannel shirt while the top joint reared off to the right and pointed at the coffee table.

"I could have guessed you'd get that one," I said, "because it's blue." And I laughed and so did she. It was going to be a good night because she seemed to know me. I threw my coat and books on the bed in the dining room on my way to the kitchen.

Ellen was sitting at the kitchen table finishing up the notes in the daily care record. I glanced at the clock—4:58. Good—two minutes early, not one minute late. I keep my watch three minutes ahead, and it fools me every time.

Ellen put her coat on and went out to the front room to say goodbye to Esther for the weekend. "It says *here*—three for twen-tee-four nine-tee-five," said Esther.

"Yes, we ordered some of those for you," said Ellen. "They should come in a few weeks."

"Why, that will be *grand!*"

"Goodbye, Esther. I'm going home now."

"Goodbye, dear. And when will you *be back?*"

"Next Saturday." She kissed Esther goodbye. "Goodbye, Ruth."

"Bye Ellen."

I closed the door behind Ellen.

"Did you see these plaid shirts?" asked Esther eagerly.

"Yes. They look warm. What time would you like dinner?"

"Oh, about six would suit me fine. What are we having?"

As it turned out, the menu called for chicken TV dinners and that was fine with Esther, so I put them in the oven and came back out to the living room. It was getting dark out, so I walked around the room closing the drapes and turning on the lights in each corner.

The room still seemed dark as it always does to me. Esther has been smoking in that room for forty years now. I don't know what the color scheme might have been earlier, but now the warm nicotine lamp shades

cast a deep yellow glow on the ancient nicotine-stained wallpaper and the heavy nicotine drapes. The light does not seem to make it very far from the lamps but hovers along the walls, leaving the center of the room in a shadow.

I spread myself and several varieties of homework out on the floor, although I didn't plan on doing much of it. The homework was there, but the pressure was not. Esther's house is a sanctuary for me, and I don't tend to get much homework done in sanctuaries.

"Are they pinching down on homework for you, dear?" asked Esther.

"Yes."

"Because it's almost the end of your time for this semester, isn't it?"

"No, it just started." "Oh, *really?* Well, I guess they're getting it started off right then, if *that's* the way they want to think about it. But I don't understand politics, and that's why I won't say anything about it."

I find the senile simplicity of Esther's time-scheme very appealing. She very efficiently crosses out all the days on her calendar at once. When she reached December 31, she starts from back to front and crosses them out again. So when she asks me what day it is, I can take my pick so far as she's concerned. It is usually Sunday.

Esther sat and read the headlines of the newspaper, and I picked at my homework in a leisurely way. She put down the paper and picked up her junk mail again. "It says *here*," and she pointed out the words to me, "three for twen-tee-four nine-tee-five." "I bet you'll buy the blue one," I said, right on cue. "Well, *that's* encouraging. I like blue."

Esther and I like to get a lot of mileage out of our conversation topics and we rarely run out of things to talk about.

She turned to me with a puzzled look. "You know, there was a little girl here earlier today, and she said, 'I bet you'll get the *blue shirt*.'" "

"Well, she must know you pretty well."

"Why, yes, I guess she must."

And we laughed. And I took the junk mail from her and gave her the front page of the paper so we would have something new to discuss.

"Now *this* is what I was reading earlier, and that's why I wonder about this Mackey who's resigning from MSU. . . and this MSU or MCU. MCU has vice-president, John. . . Mackey and he is resigning and that's why I said to you



earlier today that I think things are upset in a political way, and *that* I don't like."

"I don't think it's politics, exactly. He's vice-president of a college. Maybe he's retiring or something, I don't know."

"I don't know either and I don't understand politics, so, let the men take care of that."

She gave me a knowing, conspiratorial glance, and I returned it. If the men wanted to get upset in a political way, they were welcome to; but we weren't going to be bothered with it.

I wandered into the kitchen and turned on the radio and puttered around setting the table. I made the coffee and ate some banana bread from the refrigerator. I could see Esther sitting in the living room, arranging stacks of old letters and photographs into neat piles on the end of the couch.

"Esther, do you want to get washed up for dinner?"

"Pardon me?"

I walked out to the living room.

"Do you want to get washed up for dinner?"

"Yes, I *do*!" You know, the girl who was here earlier asked me when I have dinner, and I told her 6:30. But that's been changed now, and I don't understand, because I was told we would eat at 5:30, and no one has arrived yet." I helped her out of her chair and gave her her walker. I hung on to her from behind as she walked.

"No one else is coming for dinner tonight, Esther."

"Oh, I see. Are you going to pick up Charlie now?"

"Charlie? No, Esther. Charlie died. He died in March."

"Oh. Well, I guess I didn't realize that. Someone ought to have told me."

"I'm sure you knew. It's just hard to keep it straight sometimes."

"Yes! It is hard, dear, especially when you're old and stupid like me."

I had nothing very wise or reassuring to say, because, while *stupid* is not the word to describe Esther, we both knew what she meant, and it could not be denied. So my chance to respond passed by and we continued silently on our way to the bathroom. But in a few minutes she would not remember the conversation. Her forgetfulness has forgiven me many times.

I steered her into the bathroom and convinced her to use the toilet as long as we were there already. I have to help her in the bathroom, but she forgives me that, too. She washed her hands.

"Ready for dinner?"

"Yes, I'm *quite* hungry. We'd better go out on the davenport where we can listen for the door."

"No one else is coming tonight."

"But the hospital called earlier and said that Charlie

was to come home for dinner tonight. Do you think they will release him today?"

"No, Esther. Charlie's not in the hospital anymore. He died about nine months ago."

"Yes, I think you may be right. I think someone told me that earlier this afternoon."

"You went to the funeral, remember?"

"Yes, I *do* remember. And that was my Charlie?"

"Yes."

"And is *that* who's coming for dinner?"

"Nope. Nobody's coming for dinner tonight."

I helped her into her chair in the kitchen, gave her her bottom teeth, and tied an apron around her neck. When I tried to serve her she wouldn't take much food—a tablespoon of corn, half a chicken pattie.

"Don't you want some more?"

"Well, I think we'd better save some for when Charlie arrives."

"Charlie's not coming, Esther. He died last March."

"So he's dead, then. Well, that's music to my ears."

She sighed loudly and looked down at her chicken, resting her head in her hands. On the top of her head her hair was thin and puffy and I could see through it.

"I wondered if maybe he had passed away. It seems as though someone would have told me. Well, I'm glad you set me straight. It's better that I should know."

I gave her Charlie's share of the food and sat down.

"Why don't you say grace," suggested Esther.

"OK. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for this food . . ."

Clink. clink. clink.

I looked up at Esther who was stirring sugar into her coffee. Oh well.

"Amen," I said.

"A-men," said Esther and crossed herself solemnly before reaching for the cream.

"I used to be a Catholic," she confided. "My mother was a Catholic. But when I married my first husband I became Episcopalian."

"They've got a lot in common, haven't they?"

"Yes. *First* cousin!" And she held up two fingers together for emphasis.

We have this conversation often, and each time she holds up the two bent fingers. And not only are they together, but the crooked top joint of the Episcopalian finger is leaning trustingly on the Catholic one. She likes this conversation because it is something she remembers.

Dinner passed silently except for Esther's comments on the food. She loves TV dinners. Salt and grease are her favorite spices. She also loves jello because it is so pretty. Red is the best.



I got up and cleared the table and gave Esther her dessert and a cigarette. She smoked contentedly while I did the dishes.

"And you're the girl who hums in the kitchen," she noted.

I guess I was humming. "Yep, I guess so. Do you need anything else?"

"No, dear. Once I finish this cigarette I'll go down on my bed."

"OK. I'm almost done here."

"And so am I!"

I dried my hands and helped her to her bedroom. She clutched me tightly as I helped her down and shuddered as she relaxed.

"Is your back bothering you?"

"Oh, terribly."

I turned on the little lamp on her dresser and turned off the overhead light.

"How's that?"

"Fine. And you'll call for me when you want me?"

"Yep."

"OK, dear."

"Don't go anywhere without me." She often tries to get up alone.

"No, I wouldn't dare."

"OK, then. I'll come in for you in about a half an hour."

I wandered back into the living room, stepped over my homework, and picked up the paper. I put it back down and picked up my homework, and after a few minutes started writing a letter to my sister on the back of my math notes. A half an hour later I checked in on Esther.

"Hi, Esther."

"Why, hel-LO, dear."

"Would you like to get up now?"

"No! mm-mm!"

"Do you need anything?"

"Well, I'm very thirsty, but I always am when I lie down."

"Would you like some juice or something?"

"Well, no, but there was a little girl in here earlier, maybe it was you, and she offered me some wine, and I said, 'No, I don't like wine,' but she said it was a very good wine."

"I don't think you have any wine. You have some beer and whiskey, but no wine."

She concentrated and tried again.

"Well, I think she said it was pine. Pine wine."

I laughed and laughed and tried not to laugh myself silly. "I think you must have been dreaming."

"Yes, maybe you're right."

I kept laughing. She gave me a sleepy, puzzled look. "Where ever did I come up with pine wine?" She took

my hand and laughed quietly and happily, like a dove who is laughing instead of crying.

We were both happy at the same time and together.

She didn't want to get out of bed, though. So I had to wait another half hour for her company.

When I went back for her she still didn't want to get up.

"Is something wrong?"

"Well, I don't know. I'm just all muddled up and there's no one to straighten me out."

She focused on me blankly. I don't think she quite knew who I was, but she needed my help.

"Well, tell me what's mixed up and I'll try to figure it out."

"Well, I wish someone could tell me where Charlie is."

"He died, Esther. He's in the cemetery."

"In the cemetery?"

"Yes, he died nine months ago."

"That's what people tell me, but it seems as though he would have called."

"Called? He died here at home, remember?"

She shook her head.

"A girl named Elaine was here, and she picked him up and put him in his chair." She always remembered this.

"Yes, and he died then?"

"Mm-hm, he died then."

"Do you ever see the girl who was on duty the day Charlie died?"

"Yep, she's coming tomorrow."

"Tomorrow? Good! Could you arrange for me to talk with her?"

"Sure."

"Thank you! I'd love to talk with her and find out how he's doing."

"Esther, he's in the cemetery, right?"

"Oh yes, that's right. I just can't make sense of it all."

"Well, let's go into the living room. It's hard to remember things here." In the living room it is easy to forget, which is sometimes more helpful.

On the way, I helped her to the bathroom again, and she stopped to wash up. She combed her hair and patted it down. She searched through the rows of bottles on the counter and put on some perfume. She looked in the mirror, dissatisfied, and patted her hair down again. She turned to me, frustrated, and then turned back to the counter and tapped her hands on the bottles.

"What are you looking for, Esther?"

She stopped to think. "Peace," she said. She laid her tiny head on my shoulder and laughed her quiet dove laugh.

I think she found some later while she was smoking in



the living room. We turned on a Mitch Miller album and sang along.

"And you're the girl that sings."

"Yep."

We had tea and popcorn, and Esther was on her second cigarette. I turned over Mitch Miller and sang "Shine on Harvest Moon."

"And will you have a cigarette?"

"No, I'm not much of a smoker."

She was disappointed. "Oh, I thought you might be the girl who smokes with me."

I don't know why she gets such a kick out of me smoking. I put my homework on my lap and tried to do my math, but following Esther through her wrinkled thoughts required a more quiet, wandering logic, and I couldn't do both at once. "I smoke with you every now and then."

"Don't you think this is a now?"

"A now?"

"I think this is a grand time to smoke—when you're celebrating with your friends!"

"Well, alright. You're corrupting me, Esther. First cocktails, now cigarettes."

"Don't tell your mother I gave you this cigarette."

"Don't worry, I won't."

"This certainly is a pleasure, smoking with you. I wouldn't give you up for the world, dear. And we used to call you Vicki, didn't we?"

"I hope not, because I'm Ruth."

"Ruth?"

"Yep."

"Why then you've worked for me an awfully long time. Did you know Charlie?"

"Yes."

"Did he know you were a pal of mine?"

"Mm-hm."

"Was he a big fellow?"

"Pretty big."

"And what was his first name?"

"Henry, Henry Charles."

"And did he look like my Charlie?"

"He was your Charlie. There was only one of him."

"Only one? But he *couldn't* have died twice!"

"He didn't, Esther. He died once . . . last March. You went to the funeral, remember?"

"No, I don't think I do. Did you know he had died?"

"Mm-hm."

"Why didn't you tell me, dear?"

"I did tell you. I tell you almost every week."

"But, no one told me. I just learned today."

"I think you're confused. You must have forgotten."

"Well, that *would* explain a lot of things that happen around here."

"Yes."

"Well, I'm glad you told me. That explains things, then."

Shortly after nine she decided to go to bed. I put her pajamas on her.

"And I call *these* my popcorn pajamas."

"Popcorn pajamas?"

"I mean, *chicken pox* pajamas," she corrected.

They did look a little like chicken pox with all the little roses.

She sat down in bed, and I helped her lie down. She took my hand.

"Has someone made a bed for you?"

"Yes, I'll be sleeping in the next room."

"Oh. Well, I don't think that the gentleman who usually sleeps here with me will be coming home tonight."

"No, likely not."

"And if you have no place to sleep you might just as well sleep with me."

"No thanks. I have a bed in the next room."

"OK, dear."

"Do you want to say your prayer?"

"Yes!" She took my other hand, and we started the Lord's prayer.

"... Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses. . . ."

Esther dropped out on the trespasses. "Forgive us our *what?*"

"Trespasses."

"Debzesses?"

"Trespasses."

She gave me a puzzled look. "And forgive us our . . . debzesses. And help us to remember and keep us *happy*. Amen."

She crossed herself. "I'm Episcopalian."

"Yep."

"I'm glad you're here to remember this prayer. You're a very sweet little girl. And have you made up the beds for the guests?"

"No, Esther. No one's coming tonight."

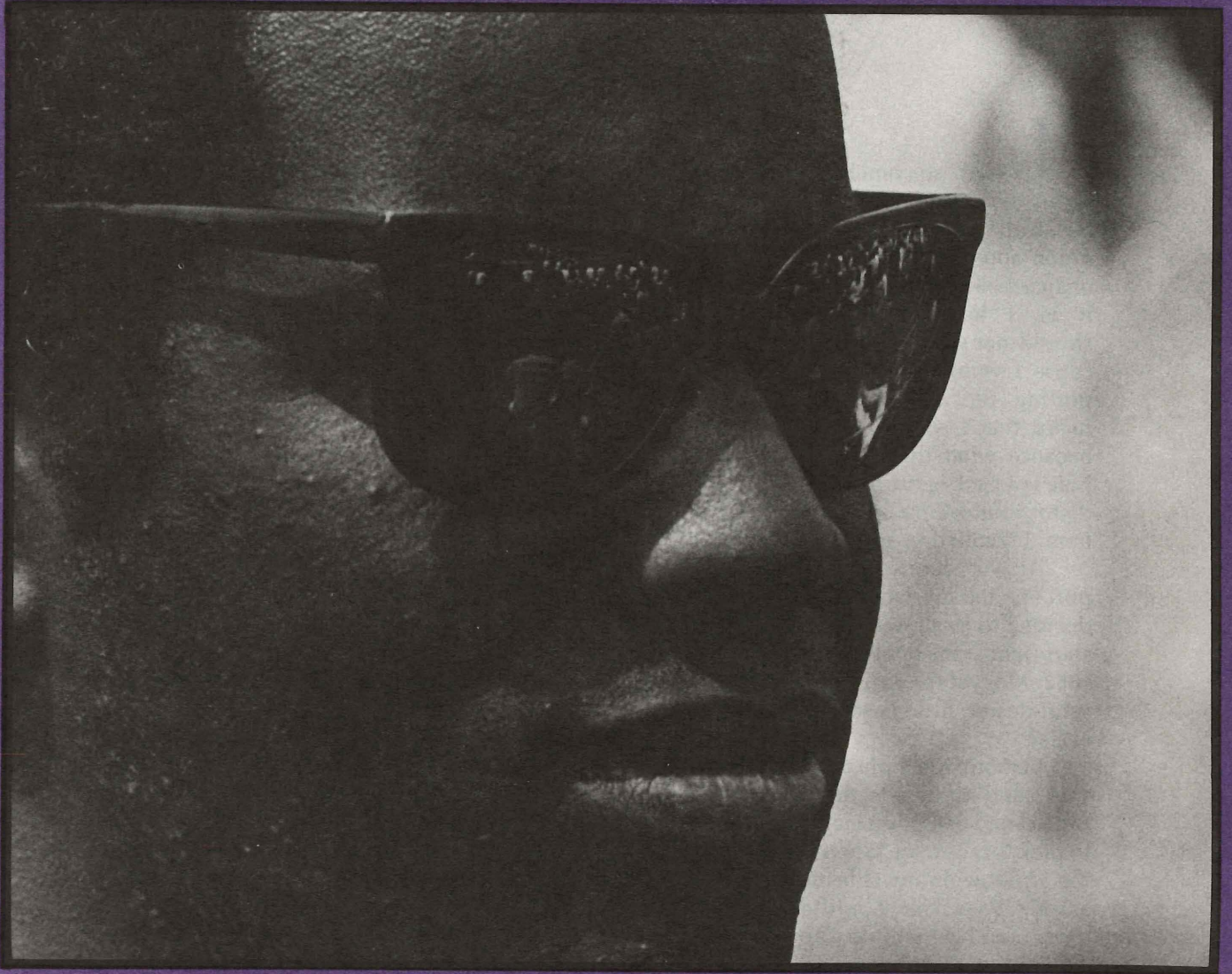
"Oh . . . , oh. Well, I hope they haven't been waylaid."

"Goodnight, Esther."

"Goodnight, Vicki."

I turned off all the lights and kicked my homework into a pile by the couch and went to bed. ■

Illustrations by Deborah Ebbers



Spring Arts Festival
Dwight Van Tol

A Visit to South Africa

Dr. Daniel Cloete

I heard so much about the country, how beautiful it is. I heard so much about the policy of apartheid, how rotten it is. I heard that I should not go there because I would be supporting the system. I heard that I should go because what they tell here is a pack of lies and distortions. Stubborn as I am, I decided to go.

At Jan Smut's Airport I rented my car and decided to go straight down to Cape Town to start right at the bottom, where they started in 1652. Most of the trip was through dry, rocky semi-desert, little to see and not much traffic either.

Just outside a place called Worcester, he was standing next to the road, hitch-hiking. Since I had passed so many already, I decided to pick this one up. When I stopped, he ran to the window on my side and smiling broadly asked, "Baas, kan ek'n lift kry na die Kaap?" (Boss, can I get a lift to Cape Town?)

Although I did not fully understand, I recognized some words that sounded like Dutch from my Dutch background.

I answered, "Get in." He wanted to get in the back.

"Come, sit in the front next to me. Why do you want to get in the back?"

"But I know my place, baas." He now spoke English.

"Why do you call me boss? My name is Bill."

"But you are white. If you are white, you are a boss."

"I am an American," I replied.

We were now traveling through some vineyards, heading for some high mountains.

"Have you ever worked on a farm?" I asked.

"I have done about everything, boss, Bill." It was clear that he was not sure about me. "On these farms the laborers have to work very hard from five o'clock in the morning till nine o'clock in the evening, for very low

wages, during the harvest season especially," he continued.

"How much do they pay?" I inquired.

"About R30 a week and a dop." That was about forty dollars.

"What is a dop?" I learned that it was a bottle of wine, which is regarded as part of the salary.

We were now going through a pass called die Toits Kloof. And all

of a sudden there was in front of us a beautiful green valley.

"This is where the Huguenots came to settle in 1688," he informed me.

"Did you go to school?" I asked.

"Yes, but only until standard six [about seventh grade]. We were a big family, and I had to go to work and help my parents."

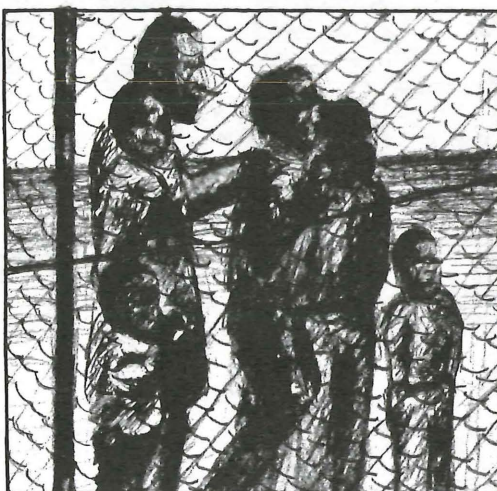
He told me that it was another forty-five miles to Cape Town; that he had gone to see some relatives in Worcester where there had been a death in the family; that he was quite grateful for the lift since he did not have enough money for the train. Now he would be there in time to go to work and would not lose a day's wages.

We were now on top of a little hill, and in front of us was Table Mountain and Lion's Head. It was a beautiful sight.

"Sir, I must get off here. Thank you very much."

I looked around. There were exquisite houses built against the hill looking over the city. "Do you live here?"

He was laughing. "No sir, this is Welgenroed [which means "in good spirits"]."



This is a white area. We stay down there in Bishop Lavis." He was pointing in a southerly direction about five miles farther.

"Well, let me take you home. Show me the route." I could see he was reluctant, but he remained seated, and we went.

We were passing some long, asbestos, dormitory-type buildings. "What are these?" I asked.

"These are transit camps. The people who have no accommodations are put in there until they get a house or a flat. I stayed there, too. It is terrible because you have no privacy and hardly any facilities."

"How long did you have to wait there?"

"Oh, about three years. Some people have to wait longer."

"Where did you stay before that time?"

"In Goodwood, where my parents had a nice place. But it was declared a white area, and we had to come here."

We were now in an area of match-box, semi-detached houses. It was difficult driving because there were children playing in the streets, seemingly unaware of the traffic. He asked me to stop and thanked me heartily for the big favor I had done him. The Lord would bless me, he said.

"Can't I come in so we can talk a little more? I want to know more about your country."

I could see he wasn't so sure. He suggested that I would not like his home. It was not a place to receive "high" people like me. But I insisted, and he invited me along. He went in to greet his family and explained that I wanted to come in. Shyly he invited me in, introduced me to his wife, and offered me a chair. She whispered something to him, and he asked hesitantly whether I would care for a cup of tea. I tried to assure them that they could trust me. Whether they accepted that I am not sure.

Looking out the window, I could see a

high pole like a street lamp, only much bigger. "What is that?" I asked.

"Those they put up after the riots and unrest in the seventies and early eighties," he explained. "It has very strong lights on it which cannot be broken by thrown stones. They put them on whenever there is unrest."

"How tense is the situation?"

"Very tense. It may not look so, but our

young people are not patient anymore. And they blame us for allowing this to happen. There are a lot of things happening that we don't even know of. Even the government admits that."

"But what do you think will happen? Will violence break out?"

"There is already a lot of violence, although no open war. You see, many people argue that

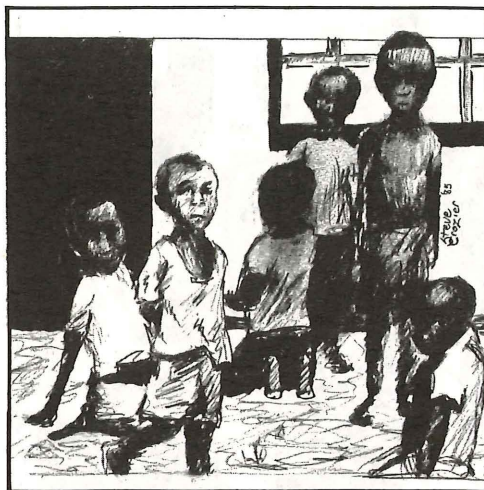
this apartheid is a violent thing. It uprooted the people from where they were staying in nice, stable communities and put us here. The government said it was to uplift us. But you can't put your head out of the door at night, especially over the weekends. So nothing has really changed. It has even gotten worse. We can't say much, and we can't do anything. My kids have to grow up in this situation."

"Do they go to school?"

"Yes, but they have to look after themselves when they get home. I have to get out early to work and come home late. My wife has to go out too; otherwise we won't make it with the rent and other things that we need now. So when the children get back from school at three o'clock, they are on their own. But then again, it isn't too bad. There is a black man working with me who does not even have his family with him. They are in the Transkei, and he sees them once a year. So you see, the young people say that if you do this to people

you are committing violence. I don't know. . . ."

His voice dropped off. After a short



pause, I broke the silence. "What do you think should happen?"

"I really don't know. We have tried to talk to the people, our leaders. But they don't really want to listen to us. They say it is for our own good and for the good of the country. You see, we don't have any way of stopping this. So many people, especially the youth, say we must fight. And many leave the country to do it. We can't really blame them, can we? So it looks like we are moving in the direction of violence. I can only hope and pray that it does not happen."

"But are there other ways of avoiding a confrontation?"

"Perhaps there are. I am a Christian, and that seems to mean that I have to try some other means. The things that your man Martin Luther King was talking about—I believe we should try them. But you see, the young people don't want anything to do with the church. They say that these people are doing these things with the help of their churches. So it is very difficult."

I tried to explain that we have racial discrimination in America, too, and that we are struggling to overcome it.

"You see, the problem is not only with us, that we are oppressed, but also with the white people, because they have become blind to our situation and deaf to our cries and they have no feeling for us. And they keep on telling us how sincere their concern is but will not listen to our side. So it is a real struggle."

"Do you think we can help you? I mean, you, the oppressed people?" I asked. "What can we do?"

"Oh, I don't know. You are very clever people over there. You make these satellites. And you have those high buildings and big airplanes. I am sure that you can figure out something to help us, too."

I indicated that I had to leave and asked

whether he could explain to me the route to the Holiday Inn in Cape Town.

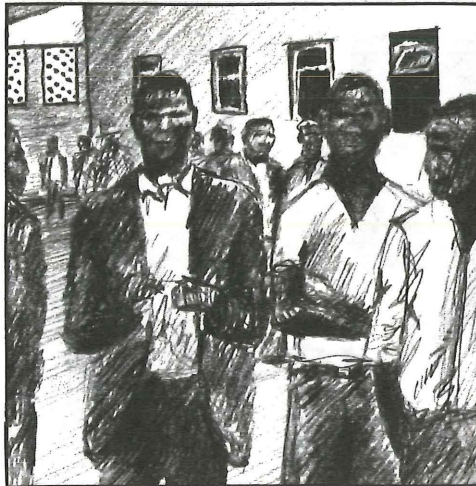
"That's also from America, isn't it," he said. "We have a lot of factories from you, too. You get a lot of money from us. Anyway, when you get to the Holiday Inn, you'll see a desolate place in front of you as you look over the harbor. That's where our people stayed for centuries, since the time of the liberation of

the slaves. We were thrown out. I hope you will enjoy your stay there. It was nice meeting you."

As I was getting into my car, an airplane passed overhead with excessive noise. I realized that we must be near the airport, because I heard many planes while I was inside the house.

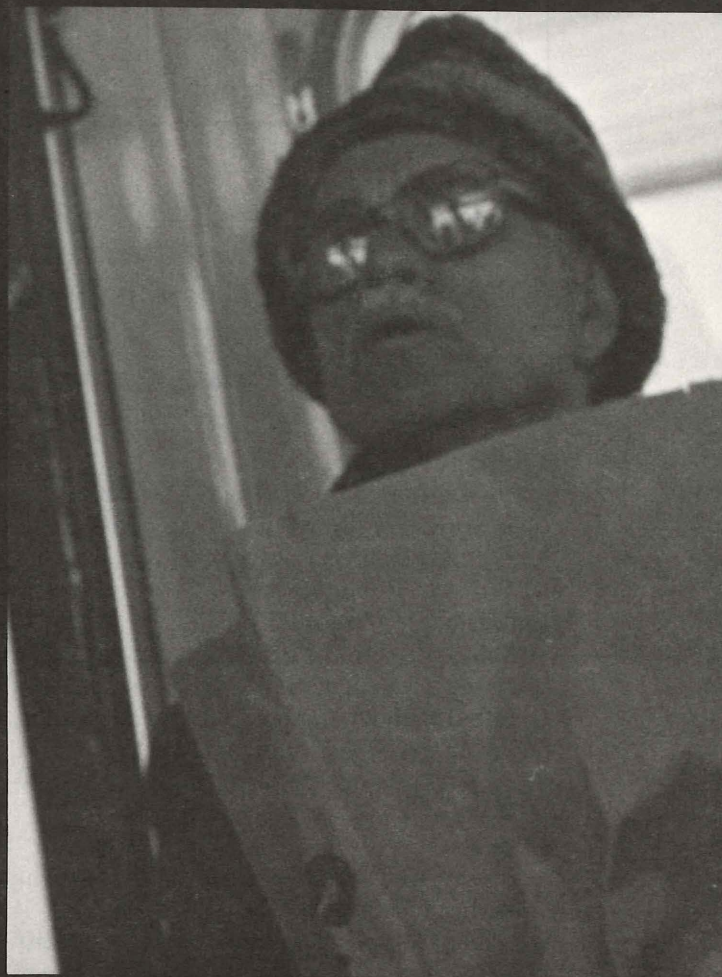
I was thinking whether I should not

take the next flight home. ■



Illustrations by Steve Crozier

Montreal Bus System—January 3, 1985
Tracy Van Rys



1:08 PM



1:09 PM

Roundtable

On January 15 the following students gathered to discuss their perspectives on the threat of nuclear war: Chuck Cairns, Dave deBoer, Scott Hoekman, Ruth McBurney, and Clark Smith.

Dialogue

What hope, if any, do the recent ice-breaking arms negotiations in Geneva between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. give you?

McBurney

Well, I think in the first place it's not an ice-breaking arms negotiation right now. It's a negotiation of when to have future arms talks. It's an agreeing to sit down and talk about it. We're not bargaining over anything right now.

Cairns

I'd say that's ice-breaking right from the start, because what is important is what is going on behind the scene, not necessarily what is going on up front: whether they're arguing to appease people or whether they're arguing because they really feel responsible to argue.

deBoer

That's not entirely true. Some have said, and I think it could be justified, that the reason, for instance, Reagan wants these talks is because it will be easier now for him to get his programs like the MX or Star Wars through Congress. He can say, we need this to take to the bargaining table, and that's going to create additional leverage now. That leverage could be a good thing if he attempts to bargain the systems away. But some conservatives don't want to bargain them away; they want the weapon systems. If we go to the bargaining table with a realization of the possibilities and a realistic understanding of the Soviet motives and mentalities, then there may be some valuable results. But we need to realize that the Soviets can't be trusted, and we need to be cautious.

Smith

I agree. I think if these negotiations give any reason for hope, it's that even though the Russians walked away from the talks a year ago,

threatening that, if you deploy, then we're not going to talk, they did eventually come back to the bargaining table. It makes the United States' firm stance more tenable.

McBurney

I think you can argue who's walking away from the bargaining table, but aside from that, there is a hope inherent in people going back to the bargaining table. But it's kind of a strange hope, because it's a hope that comes from the fact that it's just economically impossible to keep up what we're doing, and we both realize how hopeless it all is. I think the Russians especially can't afford economically to keep up with us, and they know it. There is hope for talks in that sense, and I don't think we need always to be one up on them with the latest weapon system.

Smith

Right. One of the biggest hopes is the hope on both sides to save money. Everyone can do better things with it than build weapon systems.

deBoer

Another reason the Soviets are so eager to come back to the bargaining table without any of their previous conditions having been met is that they're scared of our technology, particularly our Star Wars technology, because that could neutralize their first strike capability and the United States could still maintain theirs—if our Star Wars works as it has been projected.

Smith

I don't think we should bargain away any defensive capabilities that we have. If anything offers hope, it's the idea that maybe we can have some added security through some kind of defensive system from the threat of being annihilated. Whether it's in outer space or not is irrelevant to me.

McBurney

Star Wars right now is scientifically unfeasible; it's economically unfeasible; it could never be deployed and maintained, as things stand. Five years after we get it up there, the Soviets will get it up there. Besides which, instead of making things more stable, it makes things less stable by making it more crucial in an emergency situation for the person who has to decide quickly, before a satellite could knock out the computer systems and the reconnaissance systems, whether or not to push the button.

deBoer

Some of this disagreement is due, in part, to my failure to define my terms and the vague term "Star Wars." Star Wars doesn't just include the space part that you referred to. It's actually a series of research projects carried on by the pentagon and is, as I understand it, a three phase thing. It includes non-nuclear anti-ballistic capabilities that are all part of what has been called Star Wars. And it's that ability, on the ground level, which would not violate, say, the anti-ballistic missile treaty. It's that that the Soviets are afraid of, and that's all just part of the big package. But I would probably agree with what you say about the outer space. People have said that we shouldn't militarize outer space, but that's after the fact: it already is.

McBurney

It already is militarized, but my point is that anything that moves us closer to thinking that we can defend ourselves against a possible nuclear attack takes away the deterrence factor that we have relied on for twenty years. Star Wars brings the first strike thing much closer and makes it much more deadly, because if we both had some kind of system enabling us to intercept each other's missiles or knock out each other's missile silos before they could strike, then in an emergency situation the president would have the choice of either sitting around and hoping nobody would push the button or doing it first. And the time to decide when to do it first is getting shorter and shorter, becoming a matter of minutes.

Smith

That's a good point, but I'd rather have an actual defense than worry about what might happen if we do have a nuclear war. When President Reagan inaugurated the so-called Star Wars, it was comparable to John Kennedy's advocacy of his space program by the end of the 1960s. It's looking into the future, and I'm sure that, by the turn of the century, the technology will be in place.

Dialogue

Could that technology be purely defensive?

Smith

I'm talking Star Wars in terms of defensive capability, rather than offensive capability, which is potentially much more destabilizing.

McBurney

But do you think there could be weapons deployed in outer space that are truly defensive? In many cases they would be capable of

I don't think that anyone is dumb enough to put a satellite into space that only has the capabilities of defending.

knocking out the Soviet Union's military satellites, which would really be destabilizing.

Smith

But that technology is already there on both sides; it's up there now, so I don't see that as entering into it.

Cairns

Purely defensive satellites are a possibility, but I don't think they are a reality. I don't think that anyone is dumb enough to put a satellite into space that only has the capabilities of defending. Since the technology is there and the opportunity is there, I think

both offensive and defensive weapons would be incorporated into any satellite.

Hoekman

The original question was, what hope if any do these arm talks give us? We've really gotten detailed in policy. But I just wanted to add that, for my personal answer, it doesn't give me much hope, if any. But I find it a relief that there is communication, because this silence, more than a year of silence, was bothering me.

Smith

Appearances can often be deceiving, and negotiations often are. For example, during the cold war the Soviet Union was building up at a much slower rate than during, quote, detente, which was nothing of the sort. Detente was a surface thing. So I think negotiation can be, to borrow a Marxist phrase, an opiate of the people, satisfying them emotionally while nothing of substance occurs.

Hoekman

I realize all that's going on; that's why I said I don't have any hope for the talks offering any real solution of any sort. I've become quite cynical about it. At least there is some face to face exchange going on. Also, you can see

Negotiation can be, to borrow a Marxist phrase, an opiate of the people.

some of the changes the talks bring about in propaganda, because it's not as easy for Eastern propaganda or our propaganda to say certain things now. When there is no communication both sides just run wild.

McBurney

As far as what hope the talks give me, I'm going to make it more concrete and say what I hope to see come out of the talks. And what I'd like to see is a test ban treaty on space

weapons. I would not like satellites up there with the capability and the purpose of knocking out the other side's surveillance satellites. I don't see how it's going to make anybody any more stable to have weapons up there.

Dialogue

The present administration is the first U.S. administration to hold publicly the view that a nuclear war could be won. Is this position tenable? necessary? tolerable?

Cairns

It makes sense to espouse that. If you say a nuclear war is not winnable, you put yourself in one of a couple camps. Either you are not going to respond to a Soviet attack, or you assure the Soviets that you will respond, regardless of the impact, even if it takes out everything. It seems that for deterrence to work, both sides have to fear that the other side will react.

deBoer

It's okay that the president says that, because that's what deterrence is based on, that nuclear war is winnable and that we will fire. We just hope that our leaders don't really believe it.

Smith

I think it's something you have to say, whether you agree with it or not.

Hoekman

But it's such a ridiculous thing. There are some things you can say whether you believe it or not in this whole thing. But *that*? They know, we know—

Smith

Well, it's clearly an intolerable position, but I think that it is necessary. Nuclear arms are intolerable, but we can't get rid of them. It's a result of a fallen world, and we just have to make the best of the situation.

Hoekman

But the idea that a nuclear war is not winnable is what is the stabilizing, deterring factor, right?

Cairns

No, because it brings your opponents to the arms agreement. If you say a nuclear war is winnable, both sides start to think that something is very seriously wrong and we have to talk about it. If you say a nuclear war is not winnable, then it seems that both sides are not going to think that this is a possibility, that this can occur. The more emphasis you put on the immediacy of nuclear war the greater your chances are of getting an agreement.

deBoer

I think you guys are just arguing flip sides of the same coin. Yes, you're right, deterrence is based on the fact that no one can win. But it's also based on the fact that both sides have the ability and the willingness to begin a nuclear war, to deter the others from starting it. It is necessary to say it is winnable, to say that, yes, we would do this.

McBurney

No, I don't think so. It's plenty of deterrent to think that in any kind of nuclear exchange everybody loses out.

Smith

I think the real point and the real reason why the Reagan administration has declared a nuclear war winnable and the Soviets have not is because of the situation in Europe. We have inferior conventional forces there, no matter how you cut it. And we have had to rely in the past on the threat of tactical nuclear strikes in case they invade. The Soviets have no such pressures on them. They haven't had to come out so strongly. I think it's an unfortunate situation, and, if anything, one of the most practical ways to reduce our dependence on nuclear weapons and the threat of nuclear war is to build up our conventional forces in Europe, so that we won't have to rely on threatening a tactical nuclear strike.

Dialogue

Perhaps we could specifically address the question of whether the Reagan administration's position is tenable.

deBoer

I don't think any of us would say that a nuclear war is winnable. Of course it's not

tenable.

Hoekman

Then how could you possibly take that position? Other rhetoric is at least closer to the realm of sense.

McBurney

Yes. If everybody knows it's all a farce, then why bother? That's what I'm worried about. If Reagan really doesn't believe it and he knows

We already have enough nuclear weapons to deter about anything we'd like to deter.

that everyone else believes it. . . . He's an actor, and he believes what he says, whether he's thought about it or not.

Dialogue

Do you support a nuclear freeze? If so, under what circumstances? How about unilateral disarmament? a mutually verifiable test ban?

deBoer

A nuclear freeze lends itself easily to jingoism, as the Democratic primary campaign showed. All the candidates were virtually forced to come out for a nuclear freeze. It's an easily marketed idea. It's easy to take "Sure, who's for nuclear war? I'm against nuclear war," and immediately make the step and say, "Well, of course I'm for a nuclear freeze." The problem is, it ain't that easy. The goal should be stability, not freeze for its own sake. Both offense and defensive stability is what we hope for. Of course, a nuclear freeze would be good. But if all of a sudden we find out that China is aiming ICBMs at us or if we find that the Soviets have somehow developed some other weapon system that weakens us, then a nuclear freeze is not necessarily valuable.

Smith

A big problem when we come to nuclear freeze and unilateral disarmament or mutually verifiable anything is that the U.S. and the Soviet Union are not the only countries with nuclear technology. One of the biggest problems today is to try to limit the spread of nuclear capability. I understand Pakistan has just got its own bomb. The threat of the use of nuclear weapons by third world countries

Nuclear war is so abstract, and we don't see the missiles.

and powers outside the two superpowers, I think, is much greater than the superpowers starting a nuclear war. There seems to be no controlling nuclear technology; the countries of Western Europe, especially, eagerly export fissionable materials to anyone who will pay for them. I think any kind of treaty has to take that into account, as well as the arsenals of France, Britain, China. I definitely think a unilateral disarmament would be a big mistake.

deBoer

There have been some interesting proposals about unilateral disarmament, and one of them is, just say, for instance, that the United States would say we're going to dismantle this weapon system for six months, unilaterally, and challenge the Soviet Union to do the same thing. And if after six months, they haven't done so, say we're going to redeploy them. That would be one way that unilateral disarmament might be a good thing.

Hoekman

I was confronted with that one when in Germany, by the Greens that I ran into. They think that that's what we ought to try once. It sounds worth a try. Their point was, "You in the U.S., you've never even tried to back off once, and see if it works."

Smith

I would think that starting with land-based missiles would be the way to go for something unilateral. They're the most destabilizing of all the planned targets. They're also the most easily verifiable. It's hard to detect subs with nuclear war heads, and you don't know how many they are carrying. But with land-based missiles, each side can see what the other is doing. But I would only do it in the case where, we take ours away, you take yours away, if you don't, we put ours back.

deBoer

One more thing about nuclear freeze: serious argument is not about ends, but it's about means. No one is for nuclear war. The question is how to achieve that stability.

Smith

And maintain freedom and autonomy.

McBurney

I don't think "I want a nuclear freeze" is just something to say. There are ways of verifying a freeze, especially a test ban treaty. In order for everyone to go racing ahead building new and better weapon systems, you have to be testing them along the way. And if you can get a test ban treaty with on-site inspections, which were being negotiated in 1980, then you can stop this crazy, let's-build-something-new-and-more-fun-than-our-last-weapon kick. It's economically destructive and just crazy; it's not doing anyone any good. I don't see how a nuclear freeze could be especially destabilizing. We already have enough nuclear weapons to deter about anything we'd like to deter.

Dialogue

How does the threat of nuclear war affect your lives?

McBurney

It doesn't affect the way I live so much as the way I dream, because I do have dreams of nuclear war, especially when I'm in stressful situations. I've had dreams of being at my high school, and I can see my home up on the next hill over, and I saw a mushroom cloud over in the background, and we all jumped in the car and drove to West Virginia.

Smith

Actually, Oregon is the safest place to go.

deBoer

I've heard that many people across the country are reporting having nuclear dreams. Children in early grades are reporting that they worry a lot about nuclear war. So I think it's a fairly common thing. I haven't had a nuclear dream. I think I'm typical of another fairly large group for whom it's not really real, unless we've just seen *The Day After* or something. Nuclear war is so abstract, and we don't see the missiles. It's what George Will has called "the wall paper of our age." It's not something that dominates our thoughts or our lives.

Hoekman

But the wallpaper in a room affects you. It can make you calm or agitated without your even knowing it. When I heard this question, I thought of turning it around and asking, "What would it be like for you if there were no nuclear weapons?" If I think of the question that way, then I see that there really is something hanging over us. It's not always there; I don't think about it every day. But there's something there.

Smith

It would certainly be comforting to think that no one could press a button and kill you from thousands of miles away. I certainly don't think of it too often. We live with it all our lives, and we become almost anesthetized to it. There are other worries too. If there were no nuclear weapons, then I'm certain that the Soviet Union and the United States would already have had a conventional war, which would have killed many people. We wouldn't be worried about it; we would be fighting it now, and there would be people dying. The nuclear threat has, I believe, prevented conventional warfare between the superpowers. On the other hand, maybe it's not too comforting because it's the only thing that could possibly annihilate the entire human race.

Cairns

It's such an abhorrent idea that it's hard even to conceive the possibility. You were

talking, Scott, about having no nuclear weapons whatsoever. But mere conventional war is also a tragedy. I think the only difference is that in conventional warfare, less of a people's culture is lost; in nuclear war, everything is gone.

Hoekman

It's a good point that without the nuclear threat there might be a lot of people dying who wouldn't have died. But there again, it's just crazy even to be speaking in those sorts of terms, to have that sort of horror around and

Man's destructive capability has outpaced his ability to control it.

say that's really good because it's keeping people from dying. I don't know what to say, because on one hand it probably is true. It's just such a crazy truth.

deBoer

Well, the only conventional war nuclear war has prevented is that between first world and second world powers. There have been fifty-some wars on the globe since World War II. Cambodia has killed three-sevenths of its population. All across the globe there are armed conflicts. Another effect of this nuclear mind set is that we all think in terms of East-West, and we forget all about the rest of the world and our responsibilities there.

Dialogue

How does the prospect of nuclear war comport with your conception of a Christian eschatology?

Smith

I think as stewards of the world we have to do everything we can to head off nuclear war, to lessen the chances that it will happen. Obviously, there is no way to get rid of the technology. I see people in 1945 looking at the bomb as saving the world, and, arguably, it

did save lives. But now, man's destructive capability has outpaced his ability to control it. We passed the point of no return in 1945.

A nuclear holocaust would really blow away my eschatology.

And since there is no going back, we just have to try to limit that and seek out the wisest way to lessen the possibility.

McBurney

I had a discussion about last November's presidential election with some people who are for Reagan, not only for abortion and things like that, but also because of his strong nuclear stand. So we started talking about Reagan's strong nuclear stand, and they said his stand was very Christian, because, if the world blew up, they didn't care. They would be raptured away. God is going to destroy the world with fire, and if this was the means that He chose to do it, then we shouldn't try to stop Him. For my part, my eschatology, with the creation/recreation theme, is so different from that, that a nuclear holocaust would, no pun intended, really blow away my eschatology.

Smith

I don't think God wants nuclear war. We shouldn't have trust in God just for our salvation in the other world, but also for the continuation of this world. The cultural mandate does not mandate the probable destruction of this world through negligence.

Cairns

Faith doesn't have to lead to complacency. Trust is fine, and, more, I think it's expected for us to have as much faith as is humanly possible, but that doesn't mean that you live complacently under such a threat. We can take comfort in God, but he expects something of us as well. We can't hasten the hand of God, because we don't know what the hand

of God is. If God does plan to blow up the world, to put it in morbid terms, that's fine. When it happens, let's take comfort in the fact that this is the way God planned it. But we certainly shouldn't sit back and say, "That's the way God is going to do it, and let's be happy with it."

McBurney

There are several ways of coming at Christian fatalism or complacency. One is, God will blow up the world one way or another—who cares how. Another is, He won't, so don't worry about it.

Hoekman

I think about the idea of the Kingdom of God, and being instruments in the Kingdom of God on earth, and, for me, this entity of nuclear terror throws a strange twist into that idea of working towards the Kingdom of God. I don't know how I can figure in such an evil yet. But I can't figure it in as easily as saying it's an eschatological issue. That's a negative statement, and, unfortunately, I have nothing positive to put in its place.

Smith

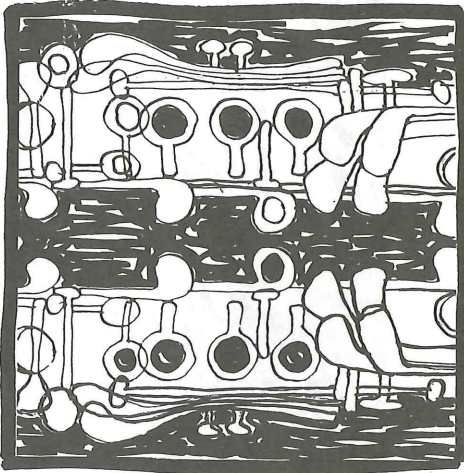
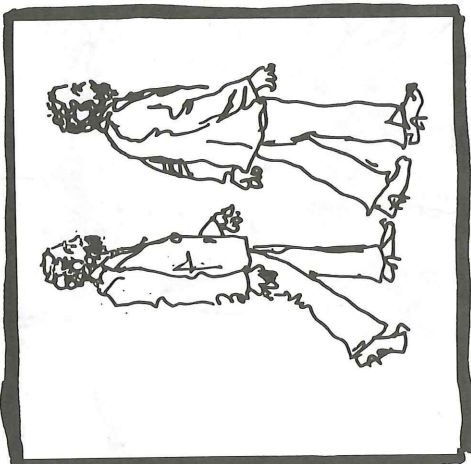
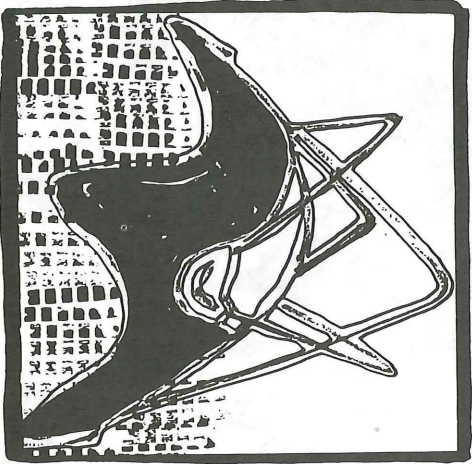
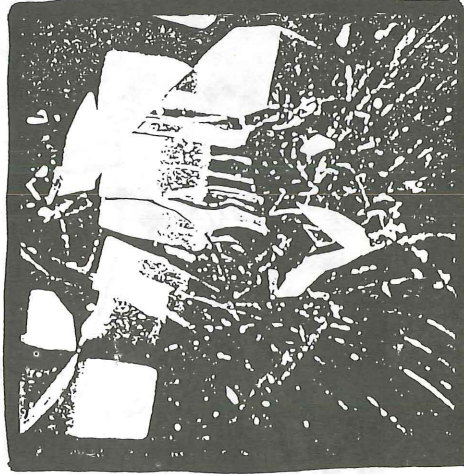
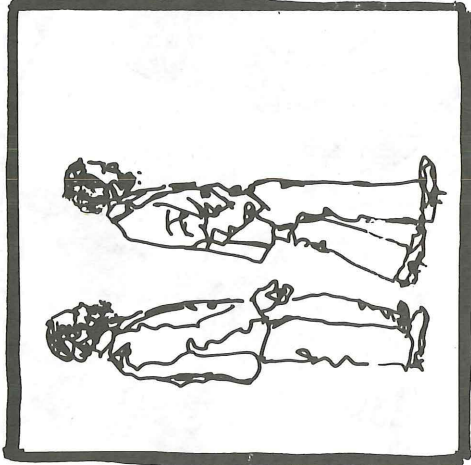
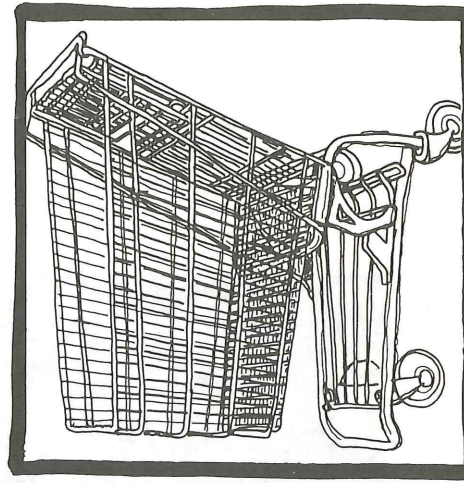
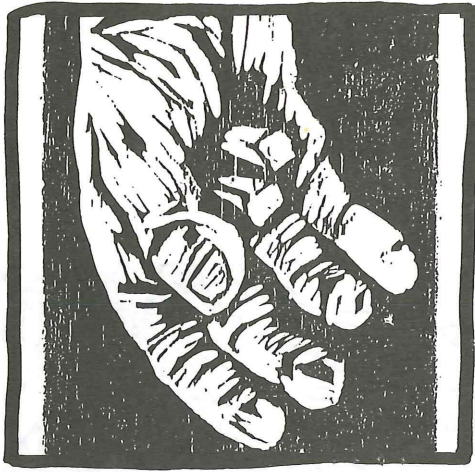
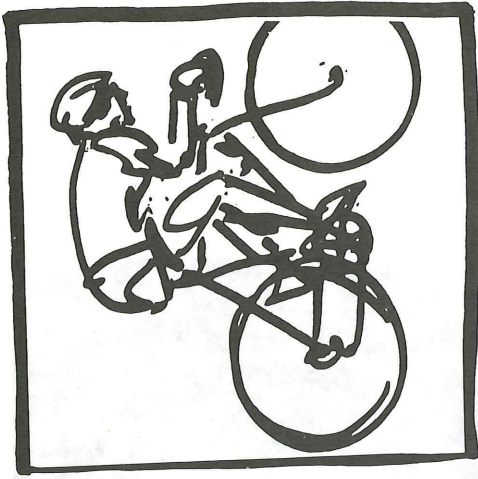
Faith in God does not excuse us from the mandate God has given us to take care of this world. Faith does not rob us of our powers of reason and our ability to do something about our physical circumstances. So I think Christians should do what they can to limit the chances of a nuclear war.

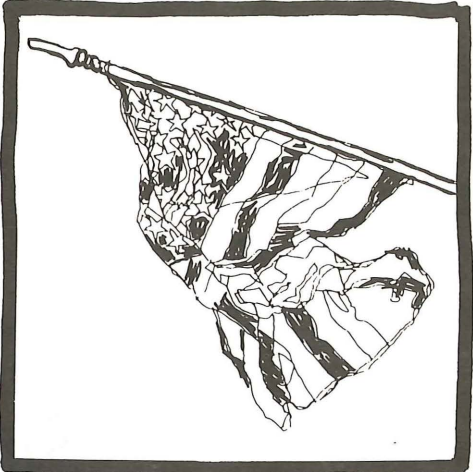
McBurney

My eschatology is not based on the model of our being disembodied and going to either heaven or hell, but on God coming back down and restoring. And that, for me, makes the work I do here now more important to the Kingdom of God, and, also, it makes it a lot more crucial that we don't blow things up; it's just more things that have to be fixed. ■

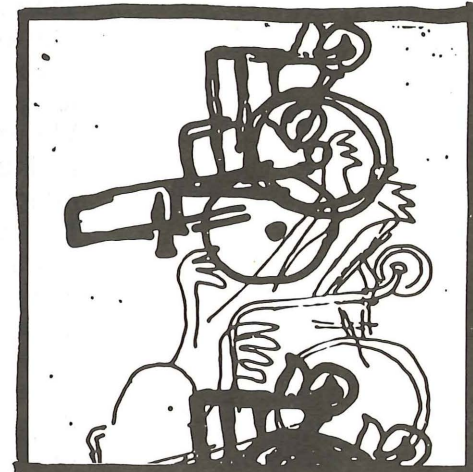
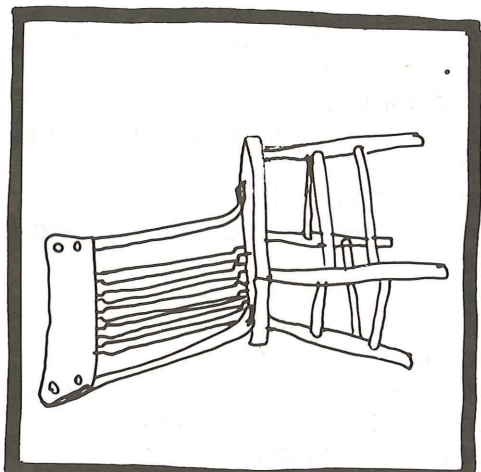
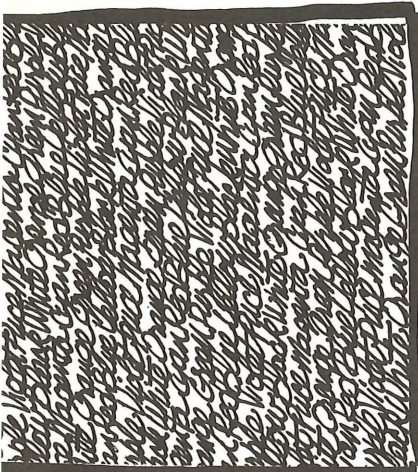
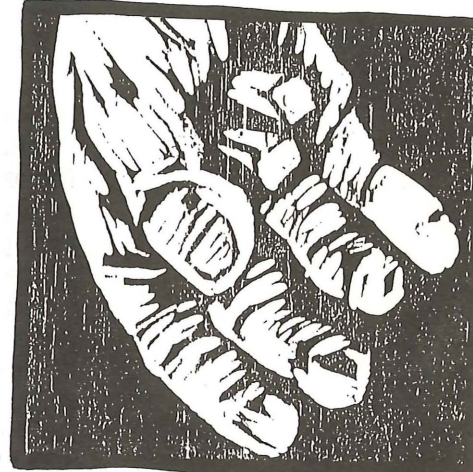
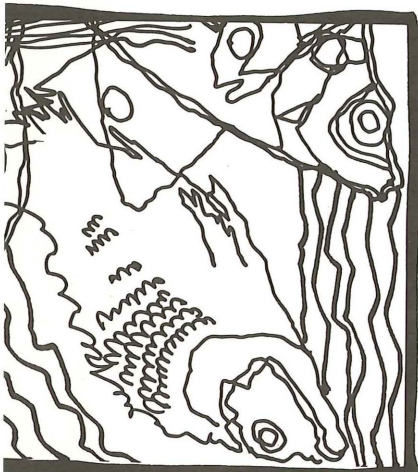


Eli: High Priest, Helpless Parent
Chris Stoffel Overvoorde

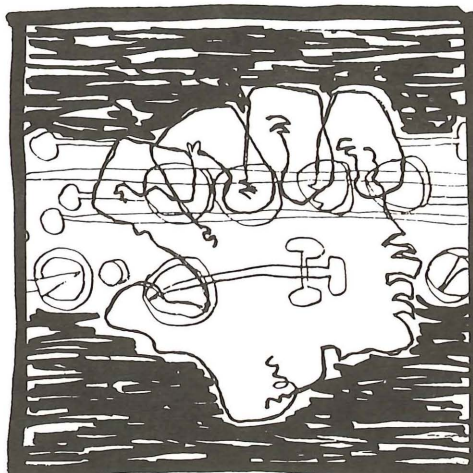
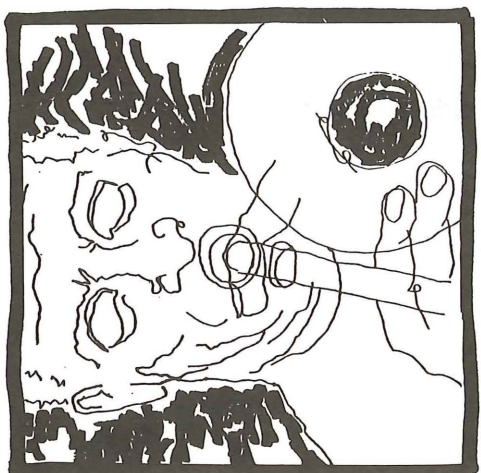




ROBIN JENSEN



JAUNT 106



INCONGRUOUS Juxtapositions

Small Waterfalls

The swamp width appears less expansive.
The trees seem more conquerable.
The territory has surely shrunk.
As children, our eyes could not see
through enough leaves to the other side.
Once I shed tears
standing, feet together, on a moss tuffet
in the far regions.
We followed the stream, one foot wide,
and marvelled over and fondled
the three-inch waterfalls
that branches created at certain points up-
stream.
We were archeologists as we uncovered
colored glass bottles
long ago dumped.
We were acrobats as we challenged feats
on the tire swing
hung there on the maple
by the bridge over the deepest and widest
point of the creek
in the swamp.
It has all shrunk several sizes.
When I rarely go back
there I can too easily see to the other side.
Being too heavy, I don't dare swing.
And I don't discover the waterfalls.

— Carla Witteveen



Heska
Pam Havinga

Marge, What the Devil are those

kids

up

to,

anyway?

Craig Taatjes

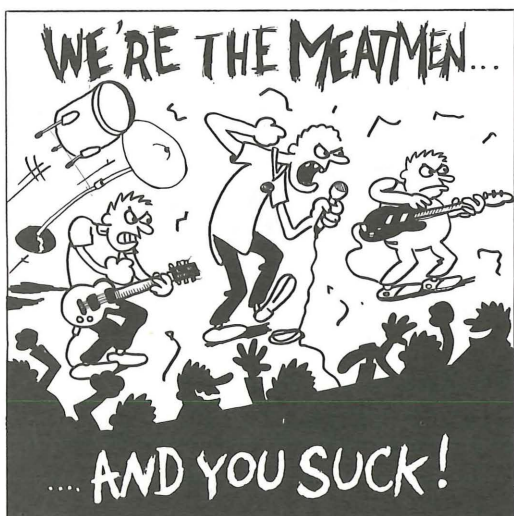
It all started with the Clash's green album, for me at least. I heard it late, though probably not as late as most of the rest of you, who may have endured with distaste a cursory listening after the Clashcrew had entered their entirely useless and enormously successful commercial style. The Clash might have been the best band in the world then—this was before Joe Strummer had gone on record describing their best work as sounding “like a nagging wife”—but I certainly didn't know. I was the average high school cultural basket-case, reading *Rolling Stone* and thinking I was hip. But I had read about this Clash band in one of my stolid rock rags, with all the accompanying critical best-band-in-the-world hype, so when the American release of their first album made it to WLAV's midnight album showcase, I stayed up late on a school night to record it. It was the moment of my conversion. It wasn't that I realized that the music was infinitely more inspired and compelling than, say, Boston, or even that I recognized the mean crashing as inherently superior music for teenage liquor-riding; I was primitively and almost subconsciously con-

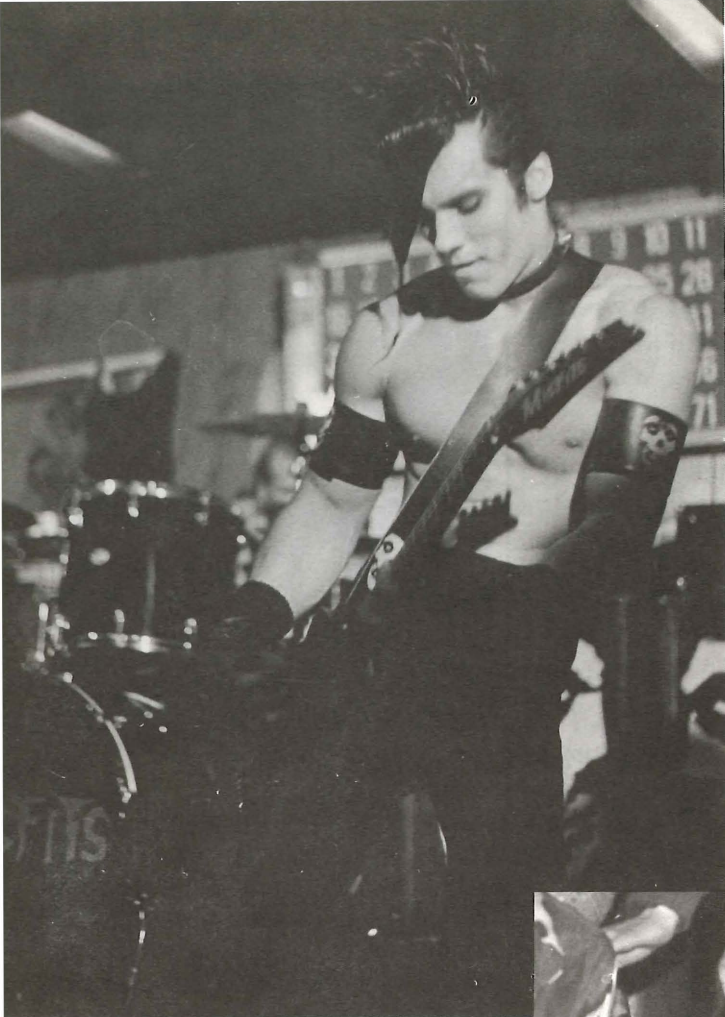
verted, the brash rebelliousness of that revelatory record being the perfect thing for a self-important little social misfit like myself to use against my half-imagined high school enemies. Sure, later I developed a more sophisticated approach to my new love, but at that first moment I was taken by punkrock for the same reason (I imagine) that self-important high school machismo addicts jumped on Ted Nugent—it did everything I dreamed of doing, and the music (like Ted's, I suppose?) engendered an almost physical sympathy. Besides that, no one else could stand the stuff, which nourished my germinating theory that the taste of the masses was entirely undeveloped outside of their trend-following little mouths. But, alas, 'tis a sinful world, as they say, and the ensuing story is not altogether happy. . . .

It's impossible to say exactly what punkrock did for me and my friends in our endurance of that strict social cesspool of semi-rural redneck Michigan high school; certainly it gave us a wide reputation for, umm, eccentricity. Somehow we at my school managed to avoid the almost perfunctory hatred most of “our kind” experience. Maybe that is because we were some of the nicest people to walk on two legs. Maybe not. At that point I still cherished the notion that the entire world lay open to the influence of my new-found ear-throb, and if all the mainstream plow-horses with whom I shared my high school could only be made to listen with an open brain, they would be converted like me and the world would be cappuccino-and-cream. Obviously this wasn't the case, but I'm getting ahead of my little tale now. But during my social development—those years simplistically called “adolescent trauma” by condescending adults too old to remember what they were

like—I was one of those pathetic punkrock missionaries, preaching vibrant musical salvation to a stagnant heathen quagmire who wanted no redemption. The outcome of that futile head-bashing belongs to one of my later points of discussion, but the bashing itself constitutes an important means of my punkrock awakening, if you'll forgive the melodramatic terminology. It was time for a change, I told myself, and we were just the people to do it. But who has changed whom?

The music is the most obvious thing about this punkrock phenomenon, and especially back then, the music is the message. The bands all sound(ed) like what they were saying, and what they say is simultaneously an individualist cultural blast and a bitter backhanded plea for harmony. The new world I was making with my punk proselytizing was a world of beautiful tolerance and acceptance of a dizzying spectrum of outlandish creative beliefs. The story of my own involvement is one of watching an adolescent dream de-





Doyle from the Misfits

yourself and a more sophisticated—if more nasty—view take its place.

In my punkrock days of discovery I and my friends were at first stuck with a kind of Britishism, and I'm sure most of you have already been told by some half-informed rock pundit that "punk started in England in 1977" or some similarly simplistic lot of trash. Fact is, that's where the attention went, as bands drawing musically from sixties' American "punk" bands and culturally from years of social ferment blew out in that particularly bizarre creative rush that garnered the attention of world-in-a-tablet U.S. newsweeklies, caught the cash-lit eyes of sensationalist tabloids, and even impressed bored little middle-class high school twerps like me. It also struck the fancy of poor-little-rich-boy types in the Hollywoods of the nation, which was to cause us no end of grief, as we shall soon see. But whatever the reason, we were scorched with the British fire, to put it a-bit-too-cleverly. Bands like the Damned and Sham 69 and Genera-



tion X (whose former singer, Billy Idol, in an apparent attempt to prove that he wasn't the talent in that seminal band, has gone on to produce the tired string of pop-metal trash we've been plagued with lately, even redoing the late Gen X throwaway "Dancing with Myself" in pastiche) had us shaking our little fists at old ladies on the street and trying our damndest to terrify the weekend shoppers at the malls. Whatever were the social implications of the music to the people who made it, they were lost on us.

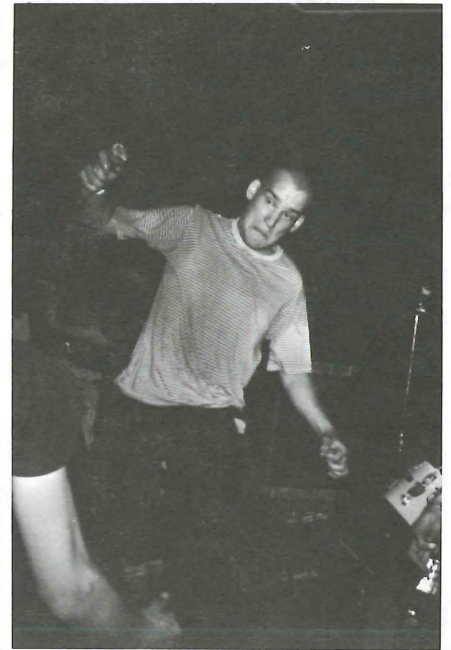
Our liberation was purely cultural; we were bored with being the middle-class consumers-en-masse and this was our way out. But as our favorite imports became the province of idlerich speed freaks and self-styled culture snobs interested in punk "for the honesty of it," or something equally condescending, and as the cynically engineered punk dilutions hit the masses' gullets, we were moving back home. While the palatable nüwave bastardizations, like the paste-white jerky neo-disco of useless doodlers like the B-52s or self-referential dada dopiness of twinks like Devo created suitable middle class consumer armies of play-doh punks, we discovered the delicacies of the USA.

The first (great) American hardcore/punkrock record I bought, or so I would like to remember it, was Black Flag's *Jealous Again*. It was a serious revelation, and with my subsequent discoveries of the legendary sickman Tesco Vee's *Touch and Go* and D.C.'s Dischord Records, the scene was set for my now-completed domestication. The cultural stagnation that we had reacted against with our appropriation of British forms was being addressed directly, and more compellingly, by those within our very midst. In addition, the very rarity of the music and its lack of acceptance and effective distribution caused the development of a hardcore (that's what we called ourselves so the "Sid Lives" heavy-metal-leftover wash-outs would leave us alone, and so people wouldn't confuse us with the bouncy pogo-happy sunglasses set) community out of sheer necessity. The only way to hear about the latest hot vinyl from D.C. was through the punkvine, and the only way to get that blistering S.O.A. EP that your buddy wowed you with was to write to Dischord and get it direct. So the local support group built on itself, and we found a creative and anti-social vehicle of unparalleled vitality and power in the group of mutually interested and supportive people that grew around this one brash and as-

saultive musical form. The world lay at our feet, but something went wrong. We were ready for the glory days, speaking in terms of the three-state "midwest scene," the days of the Freezer Theater and Touch & Go. Here in Grand Rapids I was still going to see bands like Bann-X do rocked-out versions of 999 songs, thinking I was some punk riding on Ramones drug-cruises. But things were changing. Grand Rapids even saw one gig by the all-powerful Fix (way before they entered their creative decline and their guitarist took a rockabilly cocaine trip with the thoroughly disposable Flying Tigers). I cut my hair—off—and moved solidly into punkdom. I bought the great records, I dressed like a working-class hood, I was it. In D.C., bands like the ever-awesome best-on-earth Minor Threat were going forth without equivocation to the "staight edge" no-drink no-drugs position that was to gain them so much undeserved resentment from the beer-swilling football-team re-

jects who went to punkrock shows to smash and get smashed. There was that kind of basic discounting of all the social strictures of the perpetual high school that is US society, and it wasn't just the "I hate" demon conjured up by TV shamans for an extra point-and-a-half from those Frito-eating Nielsen families. We were important, we were doing what was important, and we knew it. Then I came to Calvin.

I had placed myself outside, in a world of swirling and smashing cultural cross-currents and in a group of fast-moving, creatively charged people. I was not one of "the masses." I came to Calvin and saw with horror that people here were somewhere far behind me. I was astonished. People here went to "new wave" dances and "punked out" to miscarried Kinks clones like the Romantics. I would mention "punkrock"—I quickly learned to keep my mouth shut—and



Ian of Minor Threat

some Canadian would talk about Teenage Head (now I can never listen to the classic Flamin' Groovies' song of that name without a shudder). I ought to be fair; they were ostensibly trying to understand me, but the point is that they could not accept me unless they first "understood" me in some familiar terms and found me O.K. That's what understanding me meant to them. It doesn't matter to me anymore if people like, say, the Tubes, but I spit fire if they try to describe my musical tastes with the Tubes, as if those 45-year-old dope cases have anything to do with anything relating to punkrock. Fortunately for me, and unfortunately for roommates and nearby dorms, my first two years in the Calvin dormitories were also two of the most exciting years in hardcore musical production. I could find some haven from the relentlessly contracting Calvin mind-set by blasting my music, and my purposive alienation of mainstream Calvinites allowed me to choose my friends and avoid the smothering "fellowship" and straight-jacketing "understanding" that our normal student somehow feels compelled to offer. At that time some of the most creative people in the country were trying their hands at punkrock, and I could escape the

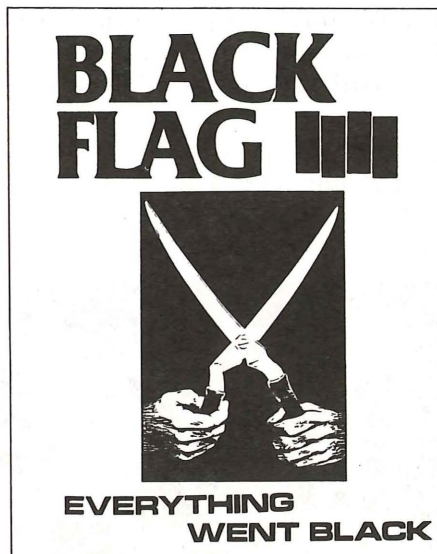


endless parade of ice cream, bible study, and square dancing by my contact with the immensely exciting and exploding world of punkrock. In Detroit we had the Freezer Theater, and the attendees were all circles of friends and acquaintances. There we could find the support and the creative atmosphere that our individual cultural backgrounds lacked, and we all contributed more or less to the well-being of the group. There we were the one, we had the (well-founded) feeling of being pioneers of the next pop frontier. And so we were. The exhilaration and sheer adrenaline push of a show could take me through weeks of sheer boredom, and my less-than-wholesome image kept me safe from do-gooders. Remember that Saturday Night Live episode with Fear on it when all the hardcores were flyin' on and off the stage and Americans—even the enlightened liberals who watch SNL—were all sitting in their living rooms with mouths agape, saying “Omigosh, look at that, Muffy”? Well, that’s what it was about then. It was coming to the point where people who wouldn’t accept

our individuality were going to have to deal with it. We were a cultural fact. We had arrived; what a short stay it was.

It was wonderful. We stood on the threshold of recognition; it was what we always thought we wanted. But it wasn’t the way it was supposed to be. The world, like a king-sized Calvin College, wasn’t about to recognize us unless an acceptably easy-to-digest summary of punkrock could be delivered to it on its own turf, as it were. The amazing (and tragic) side to this whole story is that there are a certain group of people within the so-called “punk scene” who are falling over

each other to give mainstream America exactly what it wants. Back when we were some secret disease on the cultural innards of the country, we were free to expand in all directions simultaneously, each community and each band developing, in a tumultuous but fertile breeding ground, individually distinctive expressions. But the national recognition came upon us, and the media moved from their wonderful stereotypic hate-punk sensationalism to annoyingly off-base and ultimately counter-productive “rational discussions of punk rock music.” And all over the country, kids are willingly following the piper, clinging to that old hope of a hardcore movement to right the nation, and hopping the punk-unity train. The arisal of such “international punk fanzines” as *Maximum RocknRoll* in Berkeley, run by some long-time leftist activists from hippie days, has made the problem well-nigh incurable. But as punks line up



to plop down their dollar to be a part of the true punk political movement a la *Maximum RocknRoll*, the people we thought we had finally converted are slipping surely away. One can almost hear them: "So that's what punk rock is about; now how can we make a buck from it?"

In the mainstream rock mags, like *Rolling Stone* and *Musician*, there is a growing complement of punkrock bands, most of them actually quite good, for reviewers to mention in order to look hip to their equally un-knowledgeable public. That may strike you as a cynical point of view, but, heck, they all pick up the same bands at the same times and in the same sequence. . . . This is leading, however, to another development which I would have thought unbearably exciting two years ago—enough people have been fooled by the give-'em-an-inch rock writer's smokescreen that there are uninformed masses who actually want to know what's happening in punkrock, sort of like those early culture snobs gone public, and people who actually are clued in may be hired to tell the rest of the folks all about it. Kraut and Suicidal Tendencies may not be my favorite bands by a long shot, but there is no denying that they are punkrock, and they're on MTV. There is this sinking feeling in my gut, though, and it's not that the bands

that get mainstream press have sold out— Black Flag and Husker Du are making some of the best stuff of their careers—it's that the meaning of the music is lost forever if all the people you've ever hated start drooling on themselves in praising it. The irony is that this big attention is what we were after in the beginning, but we found out too late that jerks are jerks whether they like good music or not, and punk music didn't have the power to change souls. But the punk scene did, and its creative power shaped me and many of my contemporaries. So I am returning below decks culturally, at least as much as I need to; my last hope for this punk thing is that some few of us will have the stamina to keep confusing people and not let their blind eyes see, and we will just wait for the next big thing. Kinda sad. Now you might understand why you don't feel enlightened about punkrock after reading this: I was just trying to confuse you. ■





Eric from Double O

O Father, Give the Spirit Power to Climb

In memory of Daniel Buizer

Boethius

Ben Kornelius

Tempo Rubato (as a prayer)

Soprano *mp* O Fa - ther give the spi-rit pow'r to climb To the

Alto *mp*

Tenor

Bass

foun-tain of all light,

S *cresc.* light, *f > mp* and be pu-ri-fied. 5 7

A *cresc.*

T *f* Break through the mists of

B

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10

S *mf* Shine forth, shine forth in

A

T earth, the weight of the cloud. *mp*

B

S splen-dour, *f* > *mp* Thou that art calm wea-ther, And qui-et res-ting

A Thou

T

B

15

S place *p* for faith-ful souls. *f* and the be-

A

T *mf* To see Thee is the end, *f* the be-

B

20

legato *cresc.*

S gin — ning, Thou car-riest us, and Thou dost go be

legato *cresc.*

A gin — ning, Thou car-riest us, and Thou dost go be

legato *cresc.*

T gin — ning, Thou car-riest us, and Thou dost go be

f Thou car — riest us, and Thou dost go be

25

rit. *a tempo* *rit.*

S fore, *f* *mp* Thou art the jour — ney, and the jour — ney's

rit.

A fore, *f* Thou art the jour — ney, and the jour — ney's

rit.

T fore, *f* Thou art the jour — ney, and the jour — ney's

rit.

B fore, *f* Thou art the jour — ney, and the jour — ney's

mp

S end. *pp*

A end. *pp*

T end. *pp*

B end. *pp*



Madrid Lamp Post
Joy Erlich

Words & Works

Rob Schreier

—Why do you write poetry?

—That would have to be the first question. I think one of the main reasons I write is to fill up my notebooks with typed poems. When they are typed they are done, and I don't have to bother with them again.

—But you could fill up your notebooks with lots of things—advertisements, postmarks, back issues of *Boy's Life*.

—I suppose so.

—Why poetry?

—Sometimes I write poems for a feeling of power—this is a poem that I have made. I suspect, though, that the poems I think this about are the ones I'm most embarrassed with when I look back at my poems. But I'm sure I don't always write for power. I don't know. Ask another question.

—Do you look back at your poems often?

—Not that frequently; but probably too often. I do it when I feel a desire to write a poem or generally to do "something creative" but haven't the energy to do it. That's an embarrassing confession to make. I don't realize how evil it is to look back that way when I am doing it.

—What does it feel like to write a poem?

—No different from writing anything else. There is a sense of anticipation and even urgency while writing that the work be over. Not so much because of the release which may be there at the end if you are successful. The completion of writing is what is sought at the time of writing. There may be consolation at the end.

—How consolation?

—Well, there you are getting close to my latest idea about art, life, and everything, which you probably hesitate to bring up.

—...

—There is a kind of peace in writing a poem which grows in proportion to the success of the poem as I estimate it. Or, perhaps, the peace is the poem's success. This is true even if the poem itself isn't peaceful, even if it is sarcastic, like "Red Tape." The peace gives me hope in writing poems. That is probably why I write, besides filling my notebooks.

—But that is all for yourself. What do you expect readers to do with a poem of yours? For that matter, why do you show anyone your poems?

—I'm not sure why I show my poems. I suppose it is largely for power again. But it seems to be part of the process to have others see them. Once I show someone a poem or publish it, I guess I really don't have much say over what they do with it. A common response, and I don't think it is just to my poems, is that the reader apologizes for not understanding it. What I'm afraid that means is that they don't like it. I'm not sure I'd like my poems *understood*, at least

not as understood is probably meant. But I would like them enjoyed.

—How is a reader to enjoy one of your poems, say, “(For Pat)”?

—In the case of that poem the reader maybe should enjoy the honor of having met the old woman of the poem. The poem gives access to another person in ways that are not available apart from art; in this case, access to a rather colorful and contradictory person.

—But don't you think some of it is difficult to make sense of?

—Not any more difficult than speech. The poem kind of works in fits and starts, and that's how her mind works. There are certain conventions unique to poetry, especially to modern poetry, which require some initiation on the part of the reader. But I don't think this poem is too difficult to make sense of the second time through.

—What does the bit about “the desperate light and the machinations of fear” mean?

—The old woman hates the lack of consciousness she sees in the people around her. She doesn't think they are aware either of the subconscious roots of their actions and motivations or of the higher reality of which they are a part. In this case, this higher reality is not glorious but desperate. But she knows she can't really say these things with certainty. Isn't she just like them? After all, “One must not be soon to judge which has knowledge and which does not.” Her awareness of these things appears only momentarily, like a stream in a city park.

—Then why does she say anything at all?

—She doesn't actually know her own motivations. And, frankly, neither do I. That may be the point of the poem. This poem, and I like to think each of my poems, is kind of like a city park. They are kind of oases in the congestion of my life. And occasionally streams appear in parks. Perhaps art functions in part as an oasis in contemporary life. It can and should do other things; but this is one of the things it does do.

—Doesn't that limit art when you make it a retreat from the rest of life?

—Yes. But it can function as a sign of hope, the way parks can be a sign of hope in cities.

—How?

—Art necessarily orders. There is order to dances and novels and sculptures. Even so-called random art and found art involve human intention, at least in the proclaiming of it to be art. Human intention gives it ordering. It gives it, Aristotle describes, a beginning and an end. But it is also the case that we can discover order in a work of art which was not consciously intended by the artist. I used to think that these accidents ought to be avoided. Certainly they shouldn't be sought. But their appearance is a cause for celebration. For in them we discover an order which is not our own. I'd like to think that that order is a sign of hope that perhaps life is ordered. Not that I believe it isn't. But such signs are necessary—belief often falters; but there is a peace which passeth understanding.

—Aren't you forgetting what some people may call the fallenness of art?

—I don't think so. I am usually quite aware of the fallenness of my poetry, if inaccuracy and falsehood is fallenness. But it is because art is fallen that its order can be a sign of hope.

—Are you certain about this?

—Not at all. I'm afraid I'm more often attracted by the feeling of ideas than by their truth.

—What do you mean by falsehood in poems?

—What I think we meet continually in life, not only or even especially in poems, is affliction. I think I am orthodox when I say affliction is a result of the fall. The human response to affliction is suffering. In suffering we are tempted to escape through fictions and falsehoods. Thus, when I allow the wrong words to become a part of a poem or of any writing, I fail to meet suffering by avoiding it through falsehood. Simone Weil believed that Christ was the Truth who remained the Truth to the heart of suffering. But there is more. It might be that the imagination arises out of this avoiding act of the consciousness confronted by suffering. This act may then be an act of hope—asserting an imagined world out of this world of suffering.

—Does that mean imagination is rooted in sin or, as you say, in falsehood?

—Perhaps. I know there are some who think it is. Certainly the imagination is fallen. But it can show sparks of redemption. There are sparks of redemption in Shakespeare's and Eliot's poetry.

—So the imaginative act of hope is partly confirmed in the order which is there to be discovered in its products.

—Perhaps.

—What about "No Surface to Mold"?

—What about it?

—Is it autobiographical?

—As autobiographical as a poem can be.

—What do you think is good about it?

—I used an image I have often used of life as a surface. The fallout, then, is a location where the surface has broken. I had decided before writing this poem to write it in three-line stanzas. Those are small enough units to afford a lot of control. It gives a surface to mold, so to speak. I think it is formed quite well.

—When did you write it?

—October, I believe.

—Do you think you will keep writing poems?

—I haven't been very certain of late that I will. But I would very much like to.

(For Pat)

As I've tried to write this poem I've often seen a smooth surface from below my feet spread out infinitely to a horizon where its grid-like lines converge. It is grey, of course, and the sky is only slightly darker, with a bluish tint like gun metal. I don't know what it is, though these are words; perhaps a stage for this soliloquy.

One must not be soon to judge
which has knowledge and which does not.
I am old and will not see
the return of Halley's comet,
nor was alive to see it before,
yet have seen the northern lights
and the particular light of an eclipse
before my eyes hazed all my days.
Your decade has its own dull luster—
I will not mar its glint and sheen.
I have no strong passion
for recording nor ordering
the curious passage of my thoughts—
I will not trouble you with
such an embarrassing burden.
Our mothers valued the old and dying;
my vanity finds its reason there,
like a work of art I saw:
old leather shoes wrapped
in yards of orange nylon cloth
and wound with blue ribbon.
My anger is like that ribbon,
blue and long. I have seen
much ignorance, much blindness,
much lack of imagination,
fools, known and hated, stamped
from iron, composed of lead,
lodged between the desperate light
and the machinations of fear.
I have loved them with condescension
and hated them with tears. Words
have robbed me of my truth. Time
has taught me nothing I can teach
and nothing I can know. Feelings
course and falter like senseless streams,
emerge in city parks and sink
again below the aching streets.
I am an old woman done.
Death gives no lesson, only
measure. Forgive my fretful passing.

No Surface to Mold

You shape time,
Chris. But how would
you shape this? It

was the night I heard
the snap of the trap
and later saw the

grey mouse's paws
tight with rigor
mortis. The phone rang,

Chris, and he told
me his sister was
critical and the other

driver killed. What
would you do, Chris,
with such a fallout?

With no surface to mold?
Just the echo of
sleep in one's ears.

Red Tape

An Eastern official up the mountain
in the worst time of the year
with seasoned climbers and climbing gear
to record the wreckage, to count, and

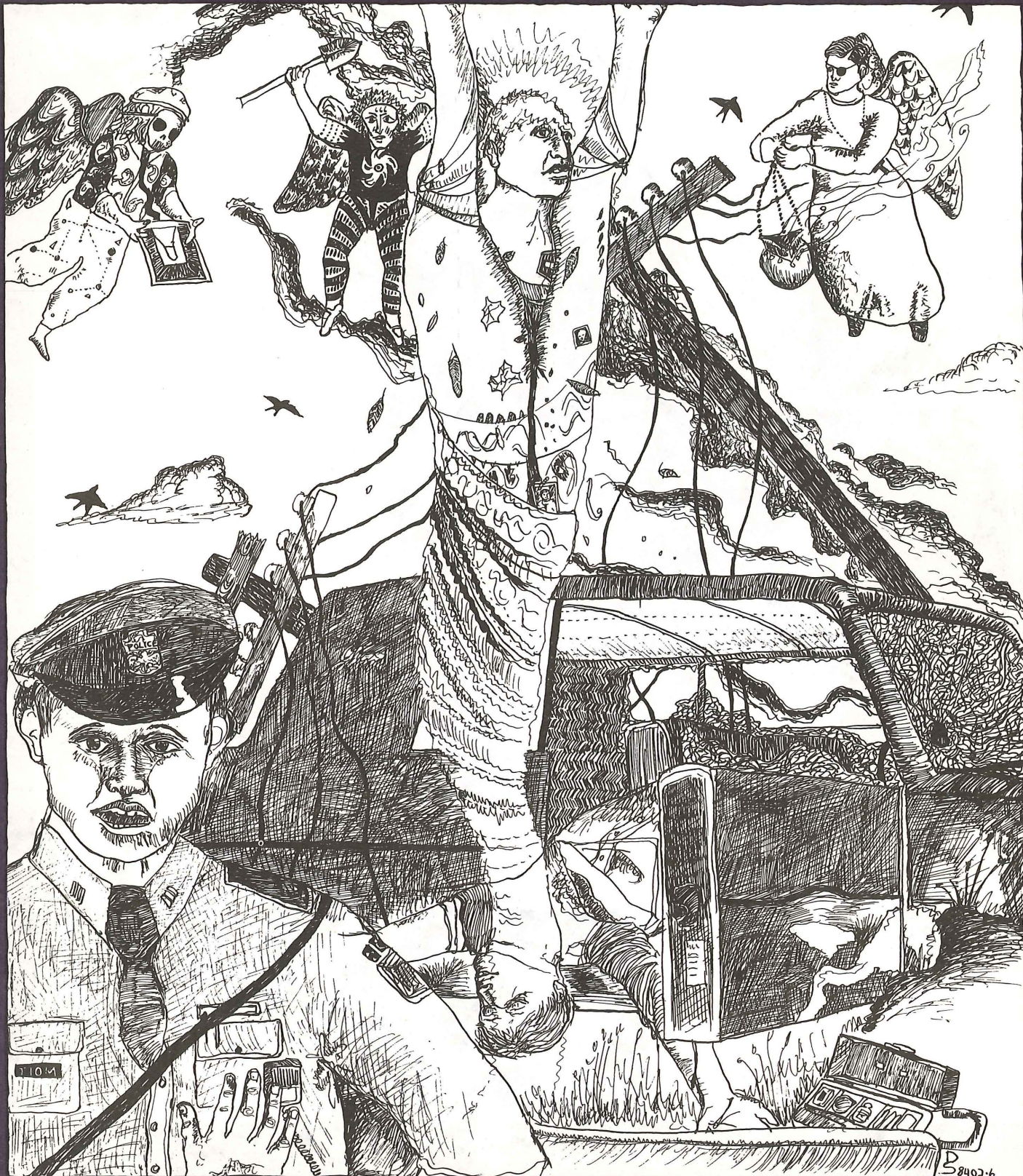
to note the wind cover with snow
the cracked carcasses of plane
and person; a pencil up the mountain
to close the file; a camera to show

you and me it was the Andes
grabbed from the sky man's
modern compromise of Icarus's plans;
an official to restore our planned ease.

There is a madness in your method,
a wide-eyed look in your going round,
a tremor in your craving of the sound
the static makes and the pilot's "O God."

The news prints the final story.
The red line comes off the slopes.
The cold denies our little allegory,
denies our warm and modern hopes.

Portfolio - Dave Shaw











Meditation

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,

Or what's a heaven for?

—Robert Browning

I was watching a David Letterman rerun one night during Christmas break. One of his guests was Joe Theismann, the flashy quarterback of the Washington Redskins. The discussion rambled till Letterman mentioned his guest's rivalry with fellow pro-quarterback Jim Plunkett and asked how it had felt to finish second to Plunkett for the Heisman Trophy. Theismann hesitated and then replied that, although you say that it was an honor to have been considered, it's no fun being number two.

We can all understand the desire to be the best, to be number one. We all have our dreams of succeeding in sports, academics, business, or society. Our culture tells us to set our goals high, to be hungry, to shoot for the stars, to be all that we can be. Never settle for second best.

I was talking to a friend the other day as we left the library. He didn't know what job he'd have, where he'd be living, whether he'd be married, or any of the details normally expected of seniors. But he had a dream and he was excited about it. He had realized the extent to which God could use him. His vision was very real; his job, neighborhood, etc. were a means to an end.

We can understand the experience of my friend. We've been raised on such Reformed buzz words as world-life view, the will of God, Christian

service. We realize that our lives are to revolve around a vision of serving our Creator, of redeeming aspects of a fallen world.

We can understand exuberance about a Christian vision just as we can understand Theismann's exuberance regarding football. But whereas I had viewed Theismann's as being natural, my friend's excitement struck me as being out of the ordinary. When we discuss future plans we seldom discuss them in relation to God, and when we do it seems largely out of obligation. We can get excited about applying to graduate schools, about jobs, and promotions; but any sense of urgency about serving God we leave to Evangelical preachers and missionary societies. Our attitude towards service tends to be one of comfort and complacency. It is easy to tack God on to an ideal situation rather than allowing God to mold that situation. Could it be that we're afraid of taking our service to God too seriously?

Afraid, perhaps, to go out on a limb only to find out that our ideas of service were "misguided." It's easy to be in favor of peace and justice for all but how are these abstractions to be brought about? The fact that committed Christians are to be found on both extremes of the political spectrum testifies to the degree of confusion and ambiguity in how to carry out one's service. When uncertain, we stay in the middle of the crowd. Be easily satisfied, never excited or ambitious.

Maybe we're afraid of failing, of spending our life, giving our utmost, for little visible success. It becomes hard to believe that things can change

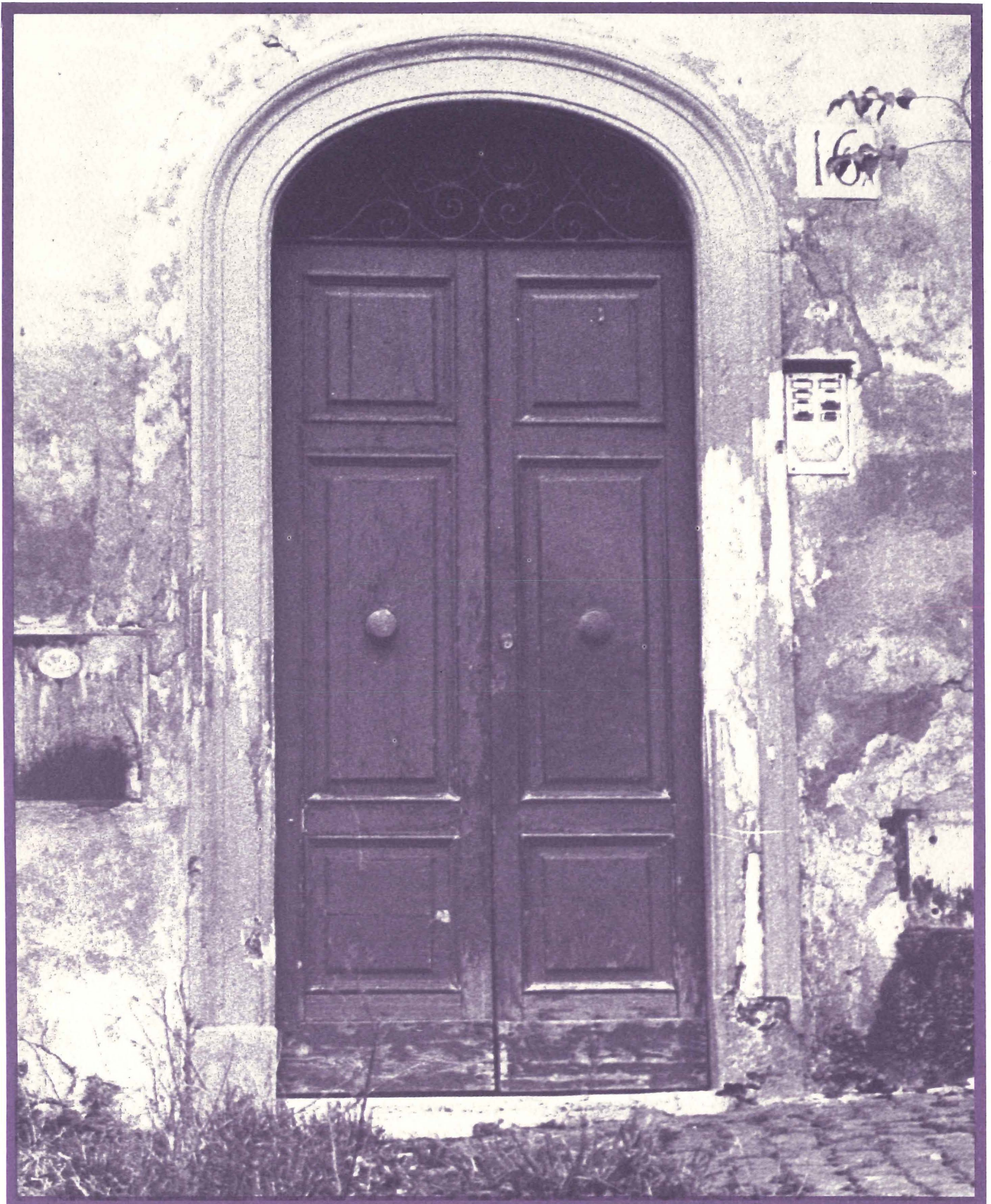
for the better. Cynicism has killed the dreams of many a dynamic Christian, leaving him tired, empty, and scornful.

Maybe we're afraid of sacrificing too much. In a society so materially-minded, perhaps this is the biggest reason. Service entails giving of oneself, but how much are we willing to give up? Do we place such prerequisites as preserving a middle class lifestyle on a calling before we will consider it? Are we open to being used among those who look, believe, or, heaven forbid, smell differently? Do we attempt to get by in life giving up as little as possible?

This isn't to suggest that the rich and powerful can't or don't serve God. Is it right, however, to focus our attention and energy on becoming rich and powerful, limiting ourselves to "acceptable" means of service to justify our accomplishment? I was once reminded that everyone is willing to minister to the management of Chase Manhattan, but who will establish a bank for the inner-city?

Finding God's will for our life is a struggle. Are we too quick to settle on an easy, comfortable way out? Pray for the proper perspective. We don't necessarily serve God when we give our utmost, but we must give our utmost in service to God. Don't be too quick to settle for second best.

Mark Van Haitsma



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