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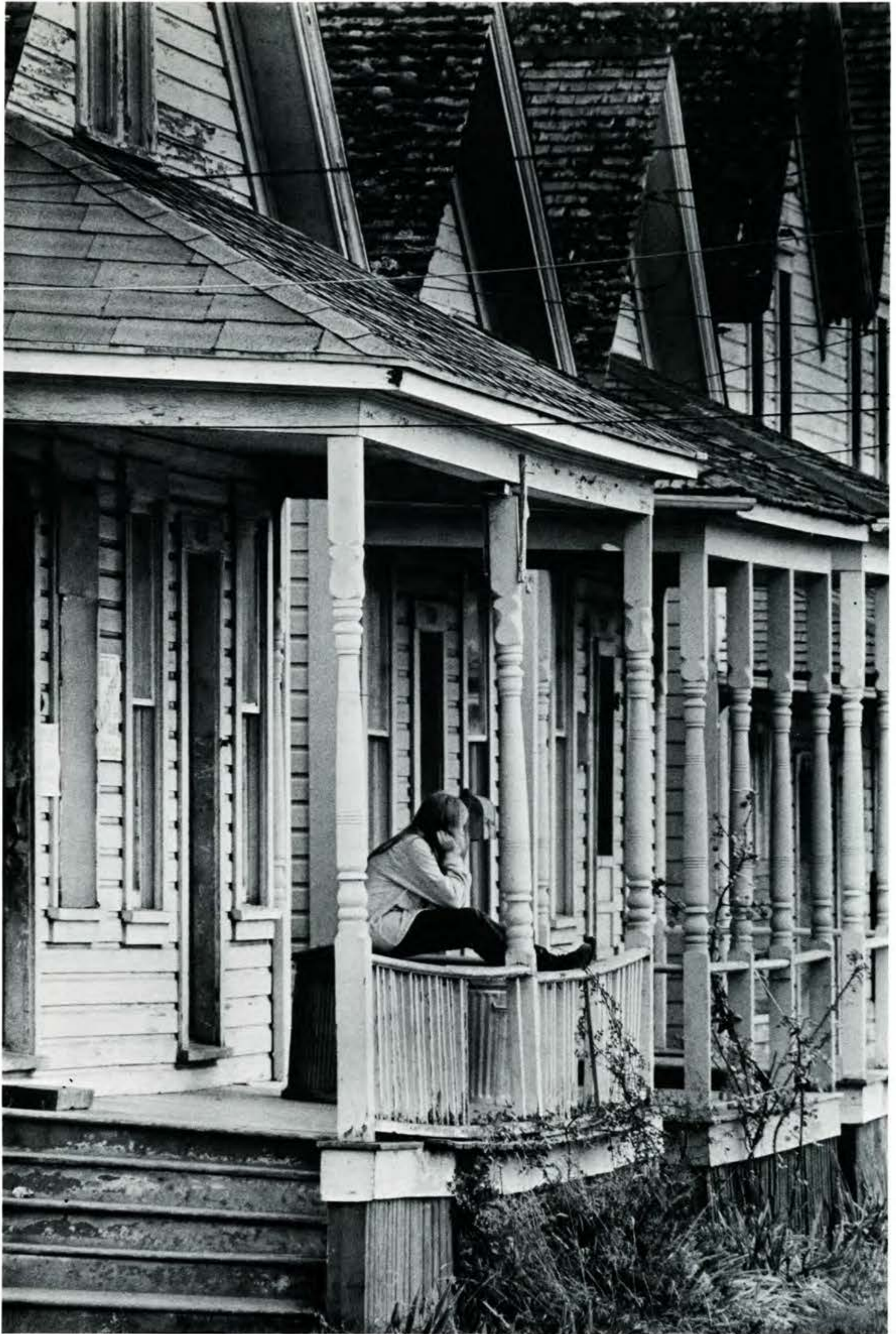
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David D. Johnson

"Is there anything troubling you about your living situation?"

I didn't see what that had to do with it. I came to the counseling center to find out what was wrong with myself — not my living situation, so I said, "no."

THERE'S GONNA BE A HOOK

by Stanley Shotwell *The following is a true story.
Only the names have been changed.*

But how could the counselor know I had such good roommates? There was Chuck — my hometown friend and my chief protector. We had endured a year together. It was Chuck who had stood faithfully by my side in those rare times of late-night tavern stress. When my boasting needed backing, Chuck was there.

There was Patrick — my new intellectual comrade and self-disciplined, scotch-drinking roommate. Patrick had complete confidence in himself. It was comforting to merely be around him. He had a response for even the lowest forms of human life. Patrick simply unpacked his Niemyer Irish Aromatic blend of deluxe pipe tobacco, and chuckled.

And there was Fred — my newest friend and my comic relief. Fred had a passion for midnight root beer floats poured heavily over talk of past high school glory and fist fights. He had "hooked" the meanest and laughed the loudest.

But God, I hate to disappoint them by doing this. I'm their support. What will my roommates think if I need support as well.

I faced the counselor directly in front of me, trying to answer the questions, losing my train of thought, thinking of myself wandering through campus only a few moments before. The trouble started after that girl actually stopped to ask me the standard question, and stood there waiting for an answer.

But I put her off. I managed to get myself into a hurry. We could always talk about it later.

The coffee shop is safe, I'll eat and forget. My stomach is growling, but I can't get the food past my throat. I'm gagging in my mouth. Why should that be? The pressure is in my chest. Well, why not seek professional help? I can't be the first person to doubt his sanity.

Okay, Miller Hall is the place — room 262. Yes, this was the time. I would pay a visit to "shrink" headquarters today. Thoughts of roommate Fred came to mind as I made my way across campus. Yes, Fred had done it. Who would ever have thought that funny, quick-witted, super-masculine Fred needed counseling help? It was always such a joke with him.

"May I help you?" asked the smiling receptionist, and I was on the spot for something to say. Now if I could just think of the counselor's name that was the one to see... the one Fred had an eternal appointment with. . . Dr. Brown. . . that was it.

"I would like to see Dr. Brown."

"Alright, we'll make an appointment. Dr. Brown is busy right now. What day next week would be best for you?"

"No — I need to see Dr. Brown right now."

And the pleasant face behind the receptionist's desk smiled so sweetly that I couldn't see her at all. She couldn't help me next week. She probably couldn't help me now.

"Oh, never mind," I stammered, and began to turn, watching my own head spin.

"Wait a minute, won't you? If you would fill out this card for me, maybe we could help you. It only takes a second to complete."

Well, I guess I can do that. So I put down the vital statistics — name, age, sex, and so forth. But then came the space at the bottom. "Please explain briefly the nature of your problem." I might as well give her an idea about my ups and downs, high as a kite one minute, suicidal the next, staring at those strangers in the room, laughing at inappropriate times in class.

So I filled it out. "I feel as though I am experiencing some sort of mental or emotional breakdown. Things make absolutely no sense, and I am undergoing alternate periods of laughing and crying."

She read it quickly, then once more. She looked straight into my eyes and rode the current for a full second. I think she saw me.

"Well, Stan, from the nature of this I think perhaps you'd better see Dr. Brown right now." And she pushed a button which must have made noise somewhere because it didn't make any noise here. So I took a seat in the waiting room as I was told.

Straighten out. This is ridiculous. I don't know this Dr. Brown. I don't even know this room. If only I could quit talking to myself like this.

A beautiful woman came to my side to interrupt me. She was doubled and quite out of focus, but I felt her presence strongly when I began rambling through my tears and broken voice. I was getting nowhere, so I held out my hand and started all over again.

"My name is Stan."

"And I'm Dr. Brown." But more than that, for she took my hand in both of hers and pulled it to her. We held that position for a good twenty minutes as she put the lid back in place and reassured me that she would be waiting for me if I would come back later in the day . . . say about 4 p.m. Besides, she would have more time to talk to me then.



David Sherman

It wasn't too bad living for a short term goal, like "say about 4 p.m." Everyone was home by three and through with classes for the day. Surely I could make up some excuse to get one of my roommates to give me a ride back to campus. Chuck was lifting weights. Patrick was reading about another war. But Fred would be glad to take me up to campus to "turn in a story at the newspaper office." But before we went, Fred had another funny story to tell.

"Well, I went in to see the shrink again today. And what should happen but some raving maniac drops by the office and demands to see Dr. Brown on the spot. Oh yea, I was real happy. I should have gone out and hooked him in the mouth so he could have had my fist in his teeth to complain about. Yea, I could just imagine some guy with a .45 pointed to his temple — 'Alright, I've got to see Dr. Brown right now. This is it, and if you don't get her out here right now . . . I'll blow my brains all over your floor.' I guess the guy was really desperate. . . it had to be 'right now.' So Dr. Brown wasted about twenty minutes with this lunk. And when she came back from the waiting room where this guy was putting on his act, I had just the right line to drop on her — 'Well Dr. Brown, how much did you owe that one?' And she just picked up her pencil and pad again with — 'Oh Fred, you're such a cutie.'"

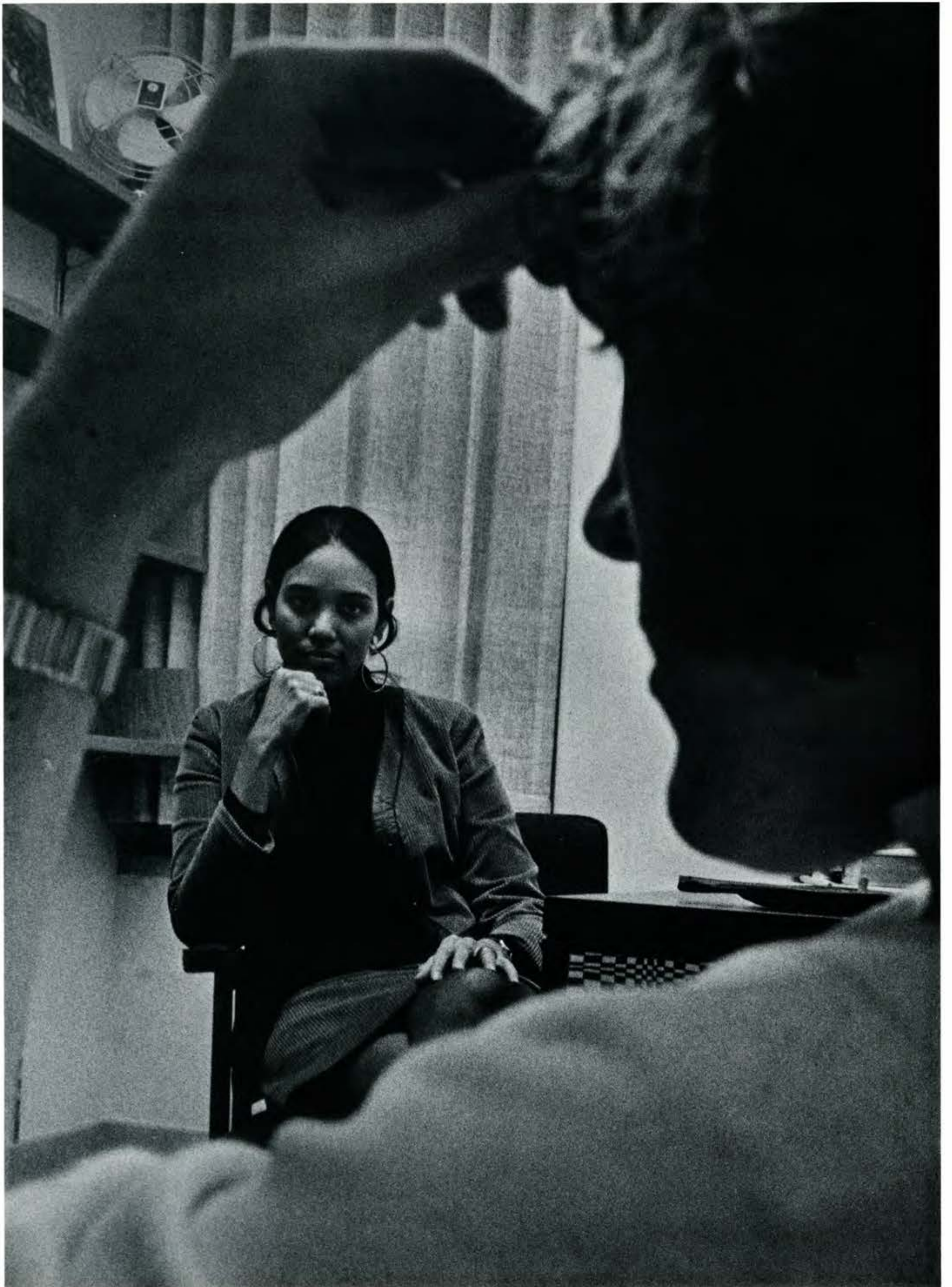
I must have chuckled politely for a few seconds like I usually do. I was actually thinking about my upcoming four o'clock visit with the shrink. And then it dawned on me just exactly what he was talking about. I fell back in a corner of the kitchen, laughing hysterically. He was telling a story about some unseen madman — and the madman is me.

I was still laughing as Fred let me out "in front of the newspaper office." If he only knew . . . but I couldn't let Fred know, much less Patrick, and surely not Chuck. There was no way I could discuss it.

No, Fred couldn't know about it. He would sympathize between the two of us, but he made too light of himself and his sessions with the counselor when he got around a crowd. Everything was too much of a joke to Fred, if it wasn't something to be "hooked."

And no, I couldn't talk about this to Patrick. He was too strong and sure of himself to sympathize with weakness. It was better to leave him alone with his history books, science fiction movies, and his own self assured intellect, born of a few extra years of hardening in the mainstream of life and that invaluable experience as a war-tough marine returned from a real war — nothing imaginary for him.

And no, I couldn't let any of this reach Chuck. Not big, strong, protective (at least of me), insensitive (at least



David Sherman

202
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of Patrick), patronizing (at least of Fred), short-sighted Chuck — who detested all forms of weakness. He was 250 pounds of muscle packed beneath a short fuse, and ready to hit the first thing he didn't understand.

"Is there anything troubling you about your living situation?" Funny thing. . . but it seems like she asked me that earlier, perhaps when I first went in to see her this morning. She probably forgot.

"No."

And away we went for the next two months, meeting every Tuesday morning at nine, going into detail about my past bouts with black depression, my tendency to overthink and never act, all the frustrating history of my childhood, my habit of sticking with a small group of friends, and all the other trite symptoms leading to my paranoia — like talking to myself. If I could only quit talking to myself.

Life was somewhat better with a regular listener. Imagine that — having an intelligent, responsive woman listen and talk with me, just me, for that one hour each week. I began to actually look forward to confronting her.

Even strangers began to talk with me about my sessions — always far from the house, of course. There was Holly, a beautiful person, but still only a friend of the crowd and a stranger to me until I began to tell her of my weekly sessions. And she had been seeing Dr. Brown as well. How great to know we can all go nuts together.

And there was Kate — intelligent, sensitive, always listening Kate. Of course it's nice when friends can get along well with roommates. It seldom happened, but I always managed to iron out the friction somehow. When Kate got just a bit too intellectual for Chuck to handle at the birthday keg party, she became "another one of those intelligent women . . . just what we need . . . another smart ass woman." But I always had patience in reserve — enough to bear anything.

"That really bothered you, didn't it, what he said about that girl?" asked Fred in private.

"Yes, I guess it did, but how did you figure that out? I didn't say anything about it."

"I know — you never do. You always take everything in such stride. I don't know how you do it, but I wish I was as strong."

"But how did you know it bothered me then?"

"You just started squirming . . . kinda like you were uncomfortable."

I had learned the art of squirming quite well. I squirmed again on the night of the cat controversy. I squirmed in my seat trying to think of a way to tell Patrick I understood his feelings. It seems he didn't appreciate Chuck turning the dog loose on the cat again.

"There she is, dog . . . go kill the kittie."

"That's no way to treat the cat, Chuck," challenged Patrick.

"I'll kill that cat . . . don't tell me about that goddam cat."

But I didn't say anything at all to Patrick. It was easier to be witty with Patrick about something else, but I had trouble getting past that history book and the cynical chuckle. But I was learning to be such a good listener now. If Dr. Brown can listen so well to so many, then surely I could give an ear of understanding to a few. So I listened.

"I've about had it with Patrick always correcting us on everything, like he knows it all," and Fred was visibly upset. "Maybe a poke in the chops will set him straight. I'm not kidding this time. If he pops off his smart mouth again. . . there's gonna be a hook."

Chuck had been quiet for a few days when I swept the floor in front of the stereo and reached over to turn up the volume. It got a response.

"Well, no shit," yelled Chuck. "Why don't you make it a little louder? I mean, we can always use more noise." And Chuck cranked it to full blast with a spin of the dial. I think it's called sarcasm.

I knew just what to do. I turned the volume back down and went on sweeping. More importantly, I said nothing.

At least I could take some assurance in Patrick. That aura of self-confidence seemed firmly entrenched in the old warrior's reserve forces. Cool in a crisis — that was Patrick. Surely I could breathe a little easier one day as I drove to campus alone to pick him up, knowing all would be peaceful for a few moments — at least with him.

"Take me to the liquor store . . . and make it quick." The slam of the door brought his demand to a nicely accented conclusion.

"What got into you?" I asked.

"I've never been so pissed in my life."

"At who?"

"Myself . . . just myself. Let's go, dammit . . . I've got to get a bottle. Christ, I can't believe what I did. Through sheer stupidity I completely bungled that Chinese history test."

"How could that be? You knew everything about it, and you did all that outside reading besides. Was it that hard?"

"That's just it . . . it was easy. I knew that crap backward and forward, but we were supposed to answer one question from each of two groups of questions. So what did I do? I answered two questions from the same group. Dammit . . . that pisses me off . . . and I knew every question . . . I could've answered anything. Do you realize that, man? I could've answered anything."

"Well, you didn't actually flunk it, did you?" and there I was in all my reassuring glory.

"Here's the test right in my hand, dammit. Full credit on one, and a big 'F' in a circle to show for it. Christ, how stupid of me. The prof told me he wouldn't think of it as just an ordinary 'F' when grading time comes around, but..."

"Well, forget it then." That seemed like fairly sound advice for me to offer.

"It's just so embarrassing. I've never done anything like that before. I've never got below a 'C' in my life. And all because I didn't read the directions. It's just so stupid. I can see Fred or Chuck doing something like that, but not me. Where's the scotch? How could I have done that . . . how?"

The year was almost done and Dr. Brown had seen me through it all. I was leaning back on my pillow one night in the house alone, thinking quietly to myself about all that and a few other things, like my life and how I seemed to be in better control of it now than a couple of months ago.

My peace was broken by the sound of drunken footsteps on the porch. Suddenly voices rose to a series of shouts, the sound of a body slamming into the wall rising above even the voices.

"Don't shove me around," demanded Patrick.

"We'll see about that," answered Chuck.

"Don't threaten me, you sonovabitch . . . don't you ever threaten me."

I had never heard anything so threatening as the tone of the word 'ever' rasping its way out of Patrick's throat. I had jumped around the corner of my bedroom to find Chuck with a death grip on Patrick over the edge of a desk, both men screaming in each other's faces. I watched in panic as Chuck threw him first one way across the room and then back the other.

"You're just an arrogant punk," snarled Chuck.

"Oh, how funny," snapped Patrick. "I suppose you think you're some kind of killer because you can throw around some guy a hundred pounds lighter than you. What a joke! What a goddam adolescent!"

"Don't talk that shit to me, you fucking egotist!"

Furniture began to upend itself as bodies scuffled back and forth yet again across the room. Fred looked at me in confusion while we both stood silently and watched Patrick's airborne body break a window on the fly. His mouth was still working full-time.

"You're just a loser, man, and that's all you'll ever be. You're a bicep with no brains — just a simple adolescent!"

I grabbed Fred by the shoulder and asked him how it had started, but somehow he had forgotten. He shrugged his shoulders, and looked as lost as I did.

"I don't know. We were just out drinking beer together. We were laughing right outside the door before we came in. I don't understand. All of a sudden they were all over each other."

The body-slamming stopped for a moment as Patrick told Chuck once more what an ass he was, and followed it

with a well-developed laugh, long past the scornful stage. The string snapped somewhere behind pale blue eyes, and a huge fist came crashing into a face. He began mumbling incoherently in his own grogginess. And I saw visions of prize-fighters on their feet who shouldn't be — guys drifting around a ring with that glassy stare and the brain temporarily turned to jelly, while the whole crowd knows everything has changed, because it's no longer a contest of skill and artistry, but only a matter of time till the jaw snaps again, and nerves can twitter all aglow down to the tiniest toe. Chuck looked into those still insolent, but semi-conscious eyes, and knew what he saw. And it was then that Chuck snapped back into control.

In a matter of moments apologies were being made while I surveyed the damage. A broken door, a missing window, and a cut lip were the high points for the night. Fred was still jabbering as the two titans walked outside to talk it all over.

"Man, I've got to get out of here. This is a nut house. I can't take it anymore . . . will you leave with me, Stan?"

I could only wag my head and lift my hands to the sky as though looking for superhuman guidance from that direction. I must have looked pretty much the same as Fred and I crawled into the car to take Patrick and his lip to the hospital for a late-night repair job.

So there I was, sitting in the hospital emergency entrance waiting room, wondering when all this would be over and I could think about it much later. Fred sat with his shoulders slouched forward, looking quite bewildered. After several minutes of silence he turned to me.

"Stan, you've been . . . you've been seeing Dr. Brown . . . haven't you?"

"Yes, Fred . . . how did you know?"

"Our friend Holly told me. You know how it goes — 'Now don't tell anyone I told you, but . . . blah blah blah. . .'" And I didn't feel the slightest embarrassment, nor did he. He looked at me even more seriously before going on.

"And that time I was making light of the guy who was so desperate about getting help . . . the guy I wanted to hook . . . that was *you* wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was."

"I had no idea."

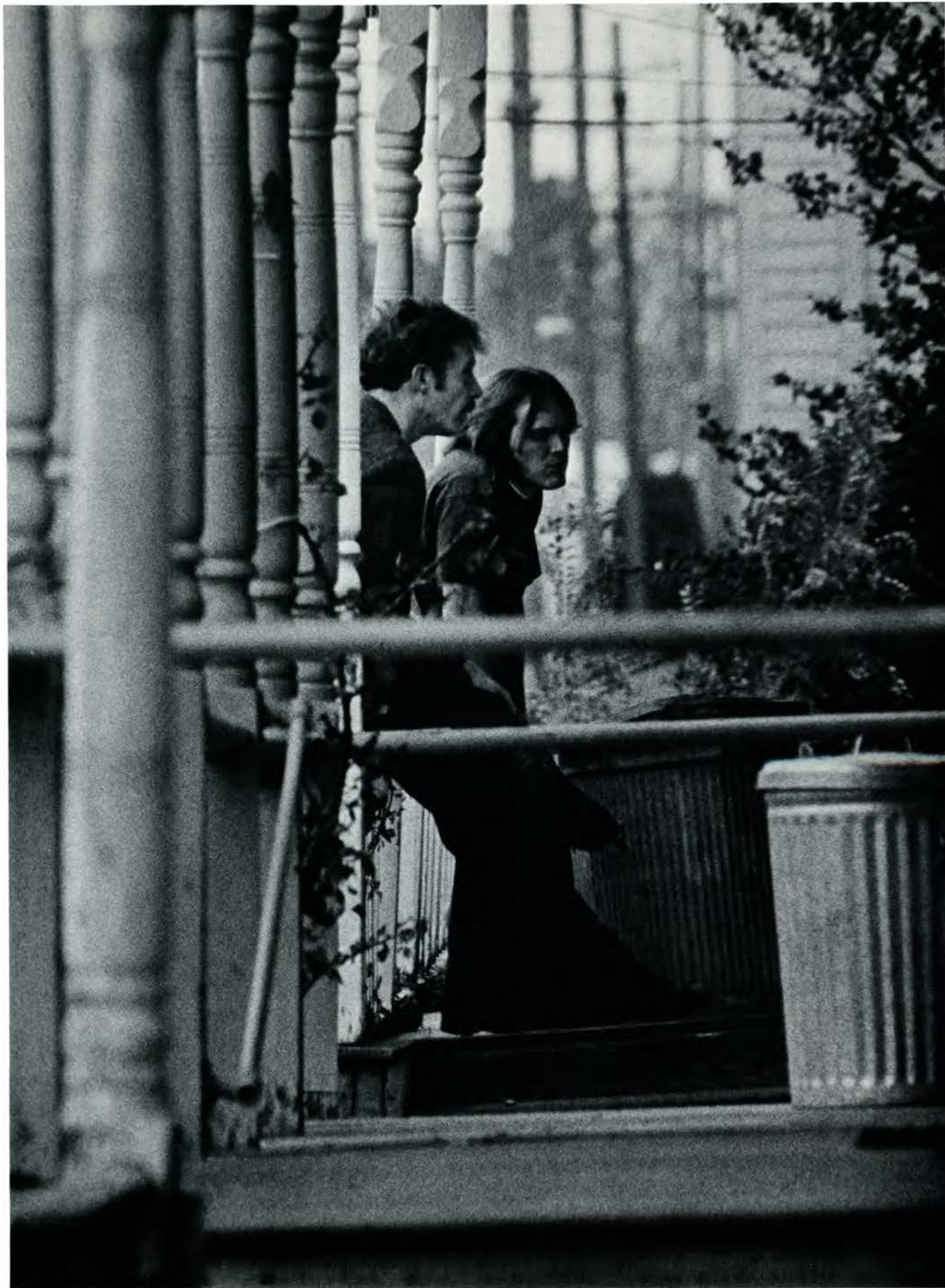
I had no idea about a lot of things as Patrick came swaggering out of some hidden room with his lower lip very inconspicuously bandaged with a flesh-colored, miniature pad. Flesh goes together again nicely, but quite a few other things don't.

Fred . . . was a good friend.

And Patrick . . . yes, Patrick was a very good friend.

And oh yes . . . about Chuck . . . well, Chuck was my best friend.

Is there anything troubling you about your living situation?



David D. Johnson



David D. Johnson



Loren Bliss

You've got to live somewhere. You can't crash forever.

The choice comes down to either on-campus or off-campus housing. On-campus, believe it or not, has many advantages. Relatively clean rooms, regularly served meals and a certain degree of confidence in knowing you'll be treated fairly, plus no worries about unpaid water bills, mice in the basement or a faulty front lock, all add up to on-campus housing's favor.

UP AGAINST THE HOLE IN MY WALL

by Sue Gawrys

Think again. Wouldn't it be handy to entertain your boyfriend / girlfriend without the close scrutiny of your roommate, however friendly you may be? What about the day you have a taste for chili and Saga comes up with breaded veal (again)?

So students move off-campus, expecting all the comforts of home, freedom to do as they please, and a hassle-free quarter. Between 5500 - 6000 students live off-campus. And as many as half of those students may have trouble with housing rip-offs.

The going rate in Bellingham for a house or apartment seems to be \$50 monthly per person. Craig Cole, director of the A.S. Housing Commission, said that average utilities run \$12 monthly, but there was little comparative difference in the price if they are paid by the landlord instead of the tenant.

Most of the time, housing is found through word of mouth. Some are listed in the Bellingham Herald, through real estate agencies, or through the listing services of the Housing Commission. Once an acceptable place has been found and rented, the trouble begins.

— One landlord demanded that her tenants receive visitors of The Opposite Sex at certain hours only.

— Another landlord rented a house to four freshman girls, then promptly rented it to four freshman boys. He was amazed to discover they weren't interested in living together.

— A girl rented a cabin in the country from a Canadian landlord. She went away for two weeks and found her TV, sewing machine, pottery and possessions gone, taken to Canada. A note explained that she had damaged the cabin.

— One boy was threatened with eviction for participating in an anti-war march.

— A girl complained of plumbing problems in the bathroom. The more than obliging landlord appeared to fix it only when the girl was using the bathroom. She complained about the landlord.

— There are all sorts of landlord stories, ranging from ridiculous ("I can only take a bath three times a week between 7 and 9 p.m.") to the moralistic ("My landlord says no drinking.") to harassment ("He comes over to inspect the place at least once a week, sometimes late at night.")

"It's not a typical consumer-buyer relationship," Cole noted. "All they [landlords] should be concerned about is the tenants keeping up the premises. Why should they be concerned about drinking or overnight guests?"

He thinks the student tenant / landlord relationship is a classic example of the generation gap. Lifestyles of tenants often irritate landlords who subsequently attempt to impose their moral codes on the tenants. Some landlords consider it a privilege to rent their house or room.

The landlord-tenant relationship is so nebulous because there are few laws that define it. Laws are generally archaic and geared towards the landlord, according to Cole. Laws protecting the tenants come and go in the state legislature, mostly going, due to a powerful real estate lobby, Cole said.

Leslie Forbes, who works with the Tenants Union of Whatcom County, said that one of the biggest complaints from tenants is the non-return of the damage deposit — \$25 or \$50 held by the landlord for the duration of the lease, in case the premises are damaged, dirtied or destroyed.

There's an old tradition in housing circles which says that tenants shouldn't expect to get the deposit back. In a way, it's like a non-interest loan to the landlord, who might consider it a fee rightfully his. Contracts seldom say when the deposit is to be returned or how — a good excuse not to return it. Everyone says to get it down in writing, but this is another big problem, especially with the seemingly friendly, full-of-promises landlords.

Some verbal agreements do hold in a courtroom situation, usually only if an impartial third party is present at the time. If you sign something, generally it is binding.

If you read contracts before you sign, you won't be so easily fooled. Some contracts have clauses stating that the landlord can inspect whenever he wants, prohibit smoking, etc. If these things are agreed to in writing, they hold.

David D. Johnson →



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Suppose you have one of these or similar problems with housing. A.S. Housing Commission or the Tenants' Union can help. You file a complaint and they notify the landlord. Once in contact with him, these organizations will negotiate, acting as advocates for the tenant, yet informing the landlord of his options and legal rights.

If the problem isn't solved and it involves money, the landlord can be taken to Small Claims Court, a subdivision of the District Court. For a \$1.00 filing fee, claims up to \$200 can be awarded. Should the landlord be unable or unwilling to pay (and it happens), the case can be taken to Superior Court. This may involve much time and expense.

If you're disheartened about the substandard housing being passed off in this town, consider the situation of a low-income family, stuffed into a small space barely classifiable as housing, such as migrant camps.

"The low-income housing situation is rotten. It's hard to find housing, sometimes it takes a lot of juggling. Some of the families I had to take into my house, they didn't have enough money. The housing is overpriced to where people can't afford it. I have a full book of people who can't pay over \$100 a month for housing," Forbes said.

Cole charged that local government has been lax in providing adequate housing and in cracking down on slum landlords here, noting one landlord had 50 complaints against him. The bad landlords stick around, because they're so good at playing the game.

As if all the other housing hassles aren't enough, a landlord has another advantage. He can refuse to rent to you because of your clothes, your job, your hair, your vocabulary, or your accent. And it happens quite a bit.

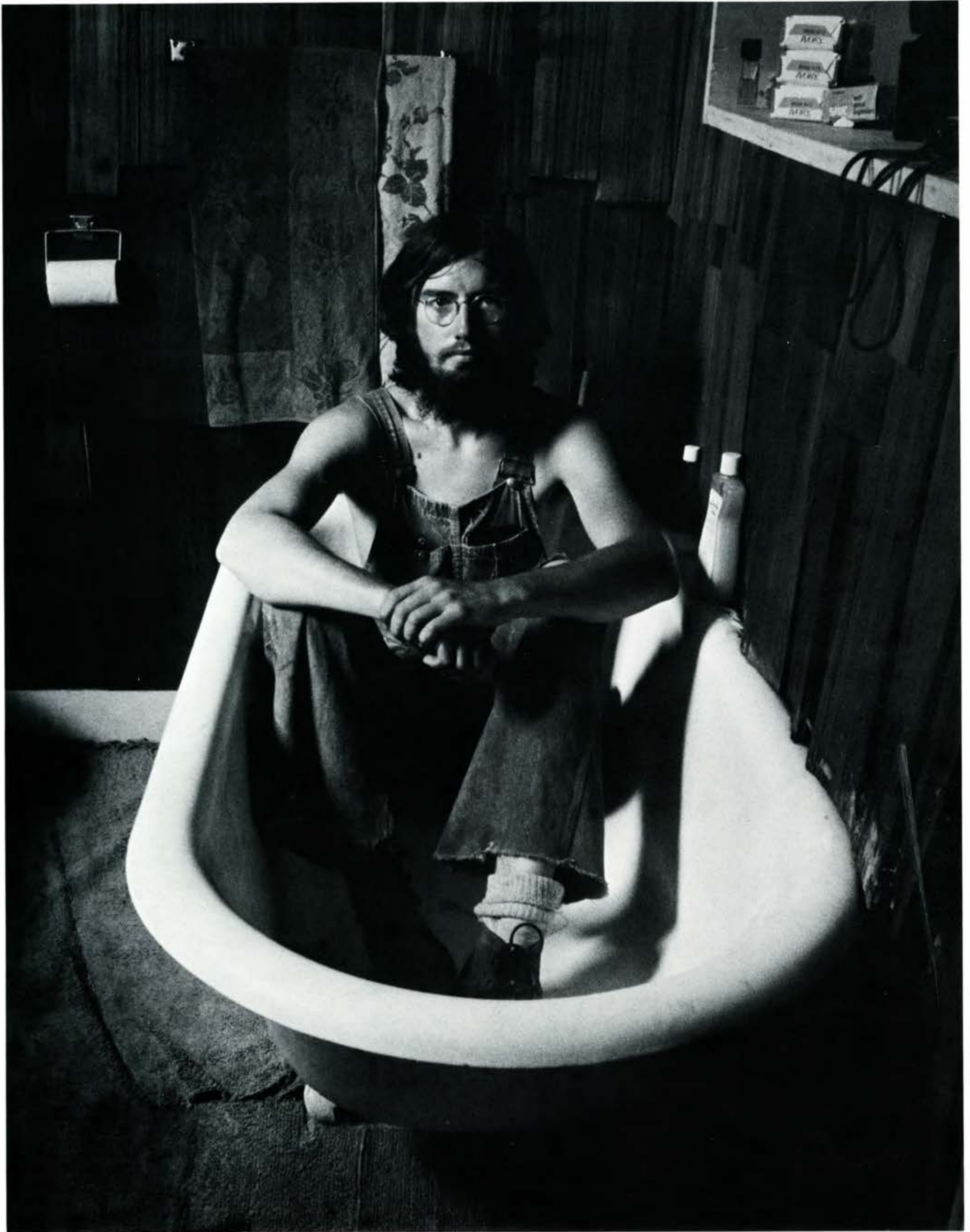
"No one can convince me there isn't discrimination in this town," Cole said. "It's worse for the ethnic minorities."

Of course, not all landlords are out for a rip-off. Some care about their houses and their tenants. Some even complain about their tenants (common complaints include wild parties and damage) and often are justified. But don't naively expect a good landlord. Most of the time it's the tenant complaining legitimately.

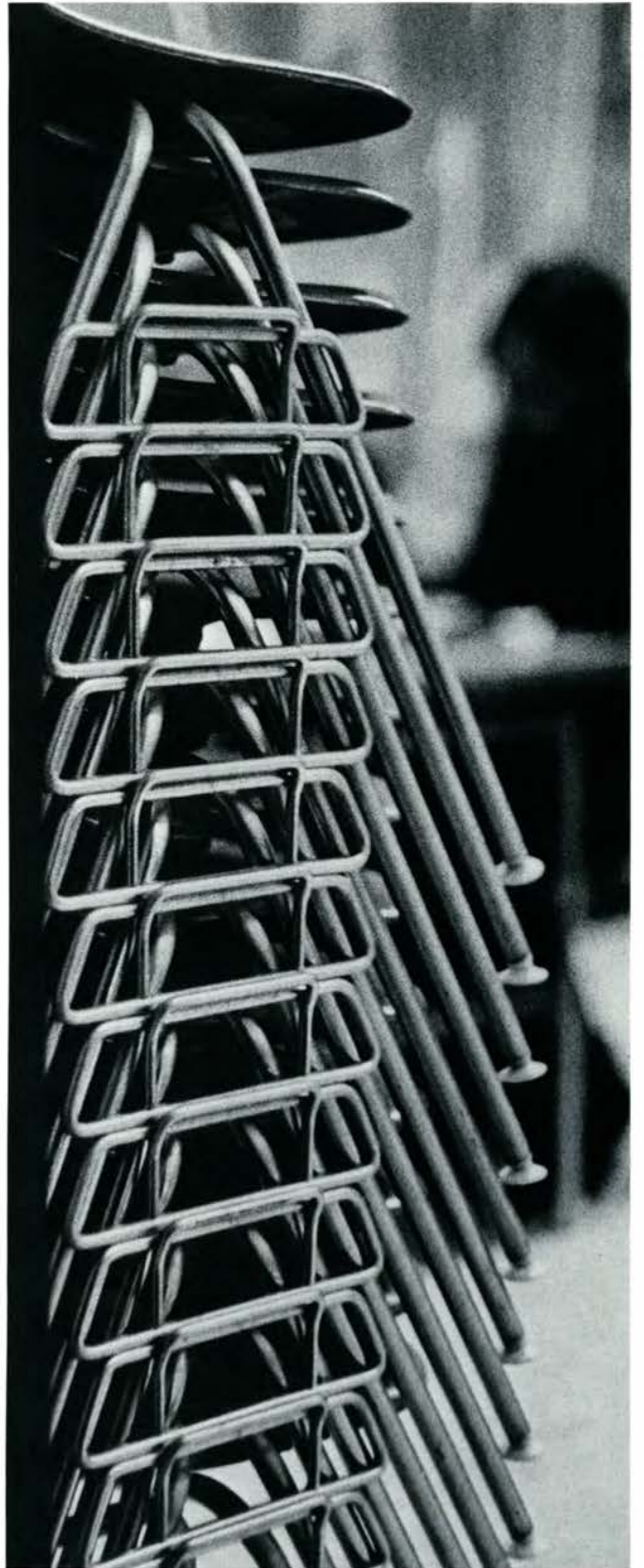
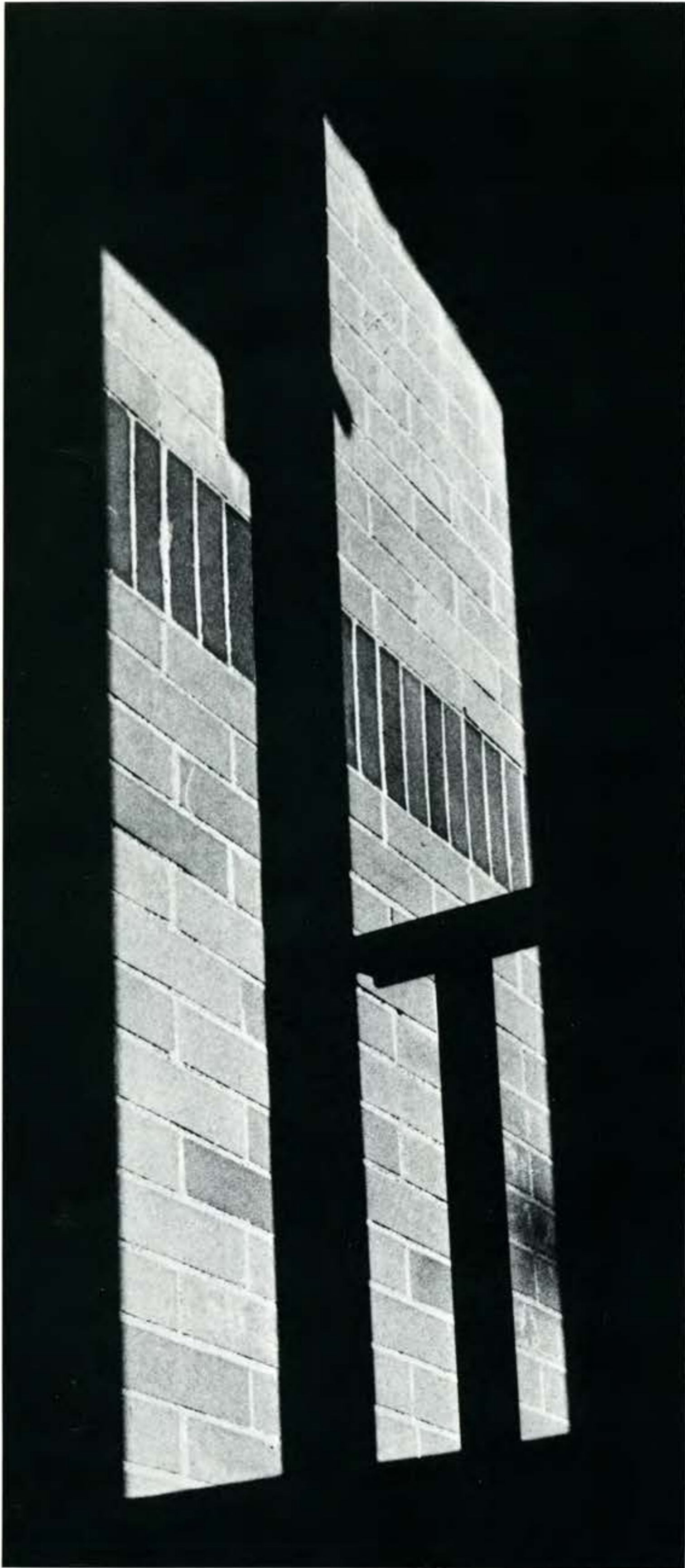
A Winter 1971 survey at Western said that 86% of the people who move off-campus do so for privacy. Sometimes it's the only way. If you feel it's worth it, stay. But don't let your landlord take advantage of you. You have rights. You're buying a commodity. Settle only for the best you can find and afford.

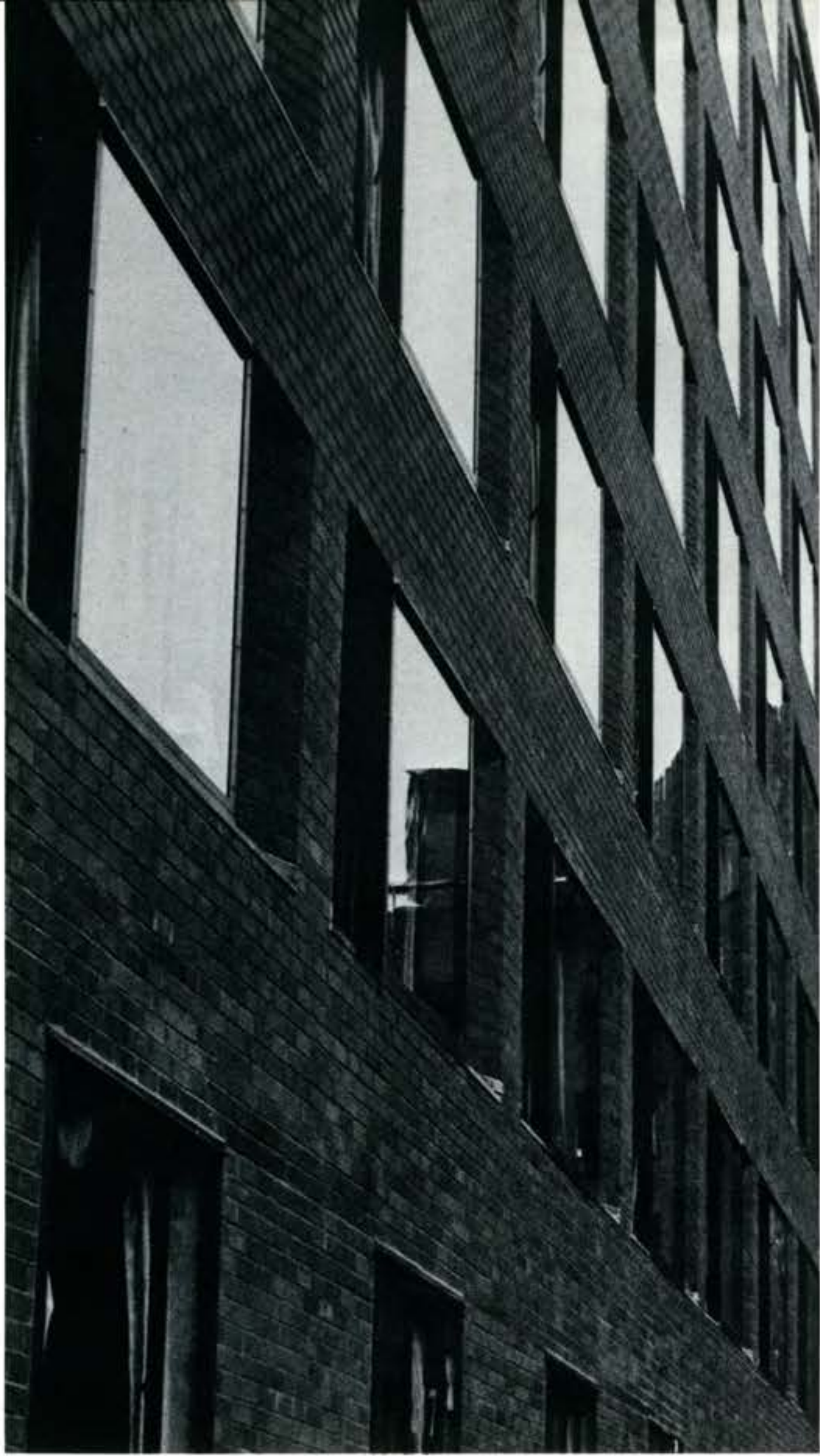
David D. Johnson





Rod del Pozo





photos by Scott Nagel





The symptoms were immediately recognizable and not uncommon among Western students. Usually prevalent inside the walls of the outdated infirmary, they develop after you have missed your nine o'clock class and are about to miss your eleven.

HOLD THIS UNDER YOUR TONGUE

by Paula Podhasky

Looking around I slumped back into the dilapidated couch. The room was full of coughing, peaked-faced patients, leaning against the wall. One can easily go in with an ingrown toenail, lean on the wall, and come out with a sore throat.

Usually there are three nurses to handle most of the non-acute medical problems and give advice when needed.

"Oh, only about an hour or more," slurred the girl as she fussed with the thermometer in her mouth.

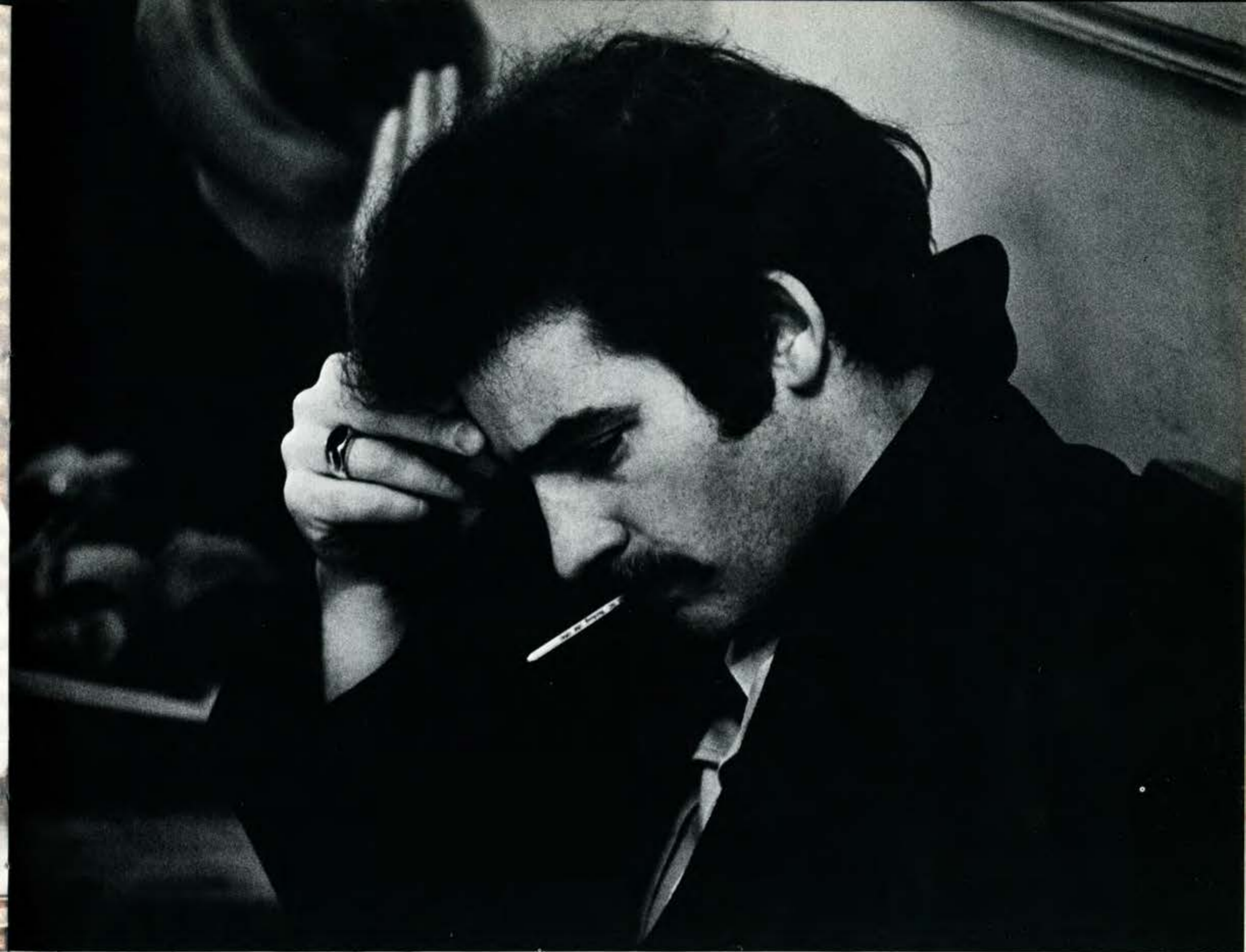
"What's your problem?" the nurse asked pleasantly.

"I have these funny red spots bumping up all over," I replied.

Open-eyed she asked "Oh my, why were you sitting in there with all those people?"

The backlog of students begins in the waiting room. This is where you meet a nurse who will probably inform you that you may have to wait "a few minutes."

"How long have you been here?" I asked, looking into a pair of bloodshot eyes.



photos by David Sherman

Shrugging my shoulders I, the diseased victim, was led to a room. I pulled up my shirt and revealed the spots. She quickly realized this was a case for. . .MISTER BIG!

For those serious enough to see the doctor, one line leads into another, and your waiting vigil will continue.

After your examination you will be released, realizing your two-hour trip to the infirmary (10 minutes of which was spent with the doctor) is as good as a 15 minute visit to the store for the "American wonder pill — aspirin." Or take the long way through the maze and become an "in-patient." "These students," Dr. Kenneth Jernberg stated, "are too ill to stay in their rooms but manageable outside a hospital." The in-patient program has one nurse on duty around the clock, but with only 9 beds for over

9,000 students the program is far from adequate — though often exciting.

There has been a cutback in funds but there has not been a cutback in common colds. "When students come in we try to handle their needs, no matter what they are," stated Dr. Jernberg. But they can only do so much with the core staff comprised of two part-time physicians — Dr. John Mumma and Dr. Margrethe Kingsley, and one friendly head nurse, Mrs. Evelyn Schuler. The three nurses handle a minimum of 150 students a day.

Both Dr. Jernberg and the students agree that the Health Center is understaffed and inadequate. Money is needed desperately. As a result, for many the infirmary has become "confusing and disorganized."





"The College strongly encourages students to have some form of health and accident insurance This policy, underwritten by a national company, provides broad benefits and coverage for a modest premium. Those who do not already carry an adequate health and accident insurance are urged to take advantage of this plan."

1971-72 general catalogue, WWSC

"This group policy with a national company provides broad coverage and liberal benefits for a modest premium."

1970-71 general catalogue, WWSC

"It has to be explained that student medical coverage is limited and benefits payable are not in direct relation to the quarterly premium."

United Pacific Life Insurance Company
4 November 1971.

IS STUDENT HEALTH INSURANCE A RIPOFF?

by Loren Bliss

It starts out with a little pain somewhere, a half-physical sensation of malaise flickering in and out of consciousness like some dirty-lensed idiot light on the dashboard of the central nervous system telling you for chrissake stop the car and get the engine checked. For me it was a urinary tract infection that wouldn't go away, complete with memories of drunken Asiatic garrison towns, 300 whores to the square block, clap and whiskey by the caseload and a bad dose it took the medics six weeks to cure.

For somebody else it might be anything, headaches, vague stomachstorms beyond the reach of televised curealls, menstrual cramps that do not diminish with the waning moon, bad breath, crotch odor of a jungle taint, chronic piles, flat feet, eyes print-focused to bleary oblivion and screaming migraine protest behind some half-successful quest toward the dubious goal of meaningless academic numbers, muscles or bones jocked into fragments or tatters on muddy fields and cindery tracks, scalp wounds suffered honorably in barroom boogie infected with cuestick staph or knife-blade fungi, lead poisoning of unknown ballistic origin, ignominious fingernail gouges from an escapade at some local rape-o-rama. It is but a short road from bar and bed to infirmary and hospital, and the path is treacherous and damn expensive, and if you're poor and can't pay the bill you'll end up in court being chastised by the judge for presuming that your mere humanity entitles you to decent care. It's a fact: In the United

States, in the richest country in the world, if you can't pay your medical bills, you don't deserve medical care, and it's your lot to suffer and die, and it's my lot too. Sometime in the next few months the process-servers will be at my door with the summons, and I'll be before the judge explaining why I didn't pay.

Yet at 31 I should have known better. I should have realized that in the land of the ripoff and the shuck and the godalmighty con even the college is on the take, and now this instant writing these words I wonder who gets the kickback (if indeed anybody does) for dealing hospitalization insurance that allegedly offers "broad coverage and liberal benefits." Sharp. Try to define those words in a court of law, try to prove that you and I and god knows how many other students are getting fucked because they believe the catalogue. The college will tell you that they publish a brochure explaining the policy, which they do, but how many people read it, and of those, how many understand it? Maybe if we could get enough people together we could file suit and win. Maybe. The fact is, nobody gives a shit. I was here three quarters before I ever saw the brochure, and even then I found it incomprehensible to the extent that after a few paragraphs I tossed it away. The biggest joke of all is that people think academia has some sacred patent on truth in advertising. Caveat Emptor! Before you believe the catalogue, go talk to the people in the trailers who couldn't get their sewer fixed despite their \$200 per month rent. Or talk to me, cynic of cynics, arch-heavy from the northeast, master of ripoffs and of ripping off the ripoff men. Most of all I'm pissed at myself for being taken in.

I went to the student health center in May and June and July, and they did their absolute damndest to help, but their facilities are limited (although they're free. Despite the misconception, you don't have to have student health insurance to be treated at the student health center. And although the place is crowded, and the doctors and nurses work their asses off, they care about you, and they do the best they can) and after a while they said I better see a urologist. The urologist opted for an exploratory surgical process.

The hospital bills came in September, and promptly I filed the insurance forms and forgot about it. They came again in October, and already deeply in debt and having little or no hope of getting out soon, an additional \$139.95 was the last straw. I called the Crisis Clinic, on the verge of freaking out. Two hours later a chick named Chris called me back and put it as succinctly as anybody has since: "Nobody knows anything about the student medical insurance." A call to the local agent for the company the next day produced a similar non-result, but the local agent was good enough to write the company for me. Here is the reply:



UNITED PACIFIC
LIFE INSURANCE
COMPANY

SEATTLE BRANCH: DENNY BLDG. • ROOM 300 • 2200 - 6TH AVENUE • SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98121 • AC 206 .623-6080

November 4, 1971

Ireland & Bellingar
P. O. Box 9
1525 Cornwall Avenue
Bellingham, Washington 98225

Attention: Mr. Bob Young

RE: Student Loren F. Blitz
Western Washington State College

Dear Bob:

We have determined the above individual's bill was paid correctly by the Company.

The contract does not allow miscellaneous hospital expense for out-patient surgery for illness. His hospital charges were \$146.95, \$36.00 being diagnostic x-ray & lab and an allowable out-patient expense. The doctor charged \$83.50 which we covered to the extent of \$54.50.

It has to be explained that Student Medical coverage is limited and benefits payable are not in direct relation to the quarterly premium. The premium at this time is barely a little more than \$3.00 a month.

Hope I have been of help.

Very truly yours,

UNITED PACIFIC LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

W. B. Lovegren, Regional Manager
Seattle Group Department

WBL/sl



It took me just a few phone calls to find others who were similarly burned. One young woman told me she needed emergency room treatment and the insurance company didn't pay a cent. Everybody told me they had been led to believe that the coverage was relatively complete.

The least the college could do is clean the bullshit out of the catalogue. Change "liberal" to "limited" and "broad" to "narrow." I doubt they will, though. After

all, college is but one more part of the great American ripoff, and the students, like the rest of the suckers, hit the bait every time the fishers make their casts. Sitting at my desk ending the piece I even begin to wonder about myself: Who the hell am I to bitch. I'm part of the ripoff too, but in this case I'm the cat who's getting screwed, and all I can do is stand here and take it in the ass knowing that sometime in the next few months I'll be in court for the triple crime of being poor and having a urinary tract infection and being stupid enough to believe the catalogue.



THE ARE-YOU-A-STUDENT-AT-WESTERN QUIZ

by Steve Johnston

1. The reason you are going to Western is to get
 - a. the best possible education
 - b. out of the draft
 - c. a husband and / or wife
 - d. laid

2. When hearing Western raised the price of tuition to \$149 a quarter, you automatically thought
 - a. you must pay for quality teachers
 - b. what a rip-off
 - c. whoop de do
 - d. of another reason for quitting Western

3. If given a choice between going to Western or the University of Washington, you would choose Western because
 - a. of the higher academic standards set
 - b. you heard it was the hippie mecca of the west
 - c. it is closer to Bellingham and all the action
 - d. you are basically a masochist

4. After seeing the prices being charged in the Student Co-op Bookstore, you
 - a. just shut your mouth and paid them
 - b. made plans to burn it down
 - c. wanted to meet this Student who owns it and make a deal
 - d. puked

5. While walking across Red Square and seeing two dogs having intercourse, your first reaction is to
 - a. stop them and give them a stern lecture
 - b. watch
 - c. join in
 - d. first try b and then c

6. Again you find yourself stumbling across Red Square and now you stop to look at the Noguchi Sculpture. While looking at it, you think
 - a. Noguchi knows what it is all about
 - b. Who's Noguchi?
 - c. This Noguchi really knows what he is doing if he can sell this big bolt for \$17,500
 - d. Where did the dogs go?

7. Julius Hoffman is to Abbey Hoffman like Western is to
 - a. MIT
 - b. revolution
 - c. the waltz
 - d. education

8. The A.S. President for this year is going to be played by
 - a. Tod Sundquist
 - b. George Wallace
 - c. Richard M. Nixon
 - d. all of the above

9. Before choosing a major to spend the rest of your life with, there are several things you must think about. One of these things is
 - a. how much money it will pay after graduation
 - b. finding one you can pass
 - c. figuring out what a major is
 - d. dropping the major for a captain to live with

10. On the first day of classes you always
 - a. go to the class and introduce yourself to the teacher
 - b. head for the coffee shop and introduce yourself to the cashier
 - c. sit under a tree and cry
 - d. never show up

11. If a teacher recommends reading a book, but then says nothing from the book will be used on a test, you
 - a. buy the book anyway
 - b. just forget what the teacher said
 - c. wonder what the guy does besides reading strange books
 - d. didn't hear the teacher in the first place

12. A teacher has just called America "the sty of the pigs." You will
 - a. report him to the FBI
 - b. report him to your mother
 - c. say "Right On"
 - d. oink

13. At the last anti-war demonstration, you didn't attend because

- a. subversive elements might show up
- b. you lost the address
- c. it was raining
- d. you gave at the office

14. A fellow named T. Wolfe wrote some books and did a bunch of other junk. Can you name at least one of his books?

- a. Look Homeward, Angel
- b. Boy Scouts to the Rescue
- c. Radical Chic & Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers
- d. Call of the Wild

15. A place called Buchanan Towers has just opened. When hearing this name you think of

- a. student living and fun
- b. bread
- c. a home for the elderly
- d. a home for the criminally insane

16. You have just attended a student government meeting and you come away filled with

- a. hope for the future
- b. laughter
- c. despair
- d. diarrhea, but not for long

17. Western teachers are asking for more money. If you had control of paying teachers you would

- a. raise their pay
- b. ask them to work, then raise their pay
- c. ask them to move around a little, then raise their pay
- d. fire them

18. For outside activity, Western has a

- a. football team
- b. rack
- c. bingo room
- d. firing squad

19. When someone asks you to sign a petition you always

- a. ask what it is all about
- b. tear up the petition
- c. sign a phony name and then report it
- d. punch someone in the mouth

20. Should you ever graduate, at the moment you are going to get your degree, you will

- a. cry for happiness
- b. ask if it will be recalled
- c. ask if there will be a refund
- d. never find yourself in such a situation

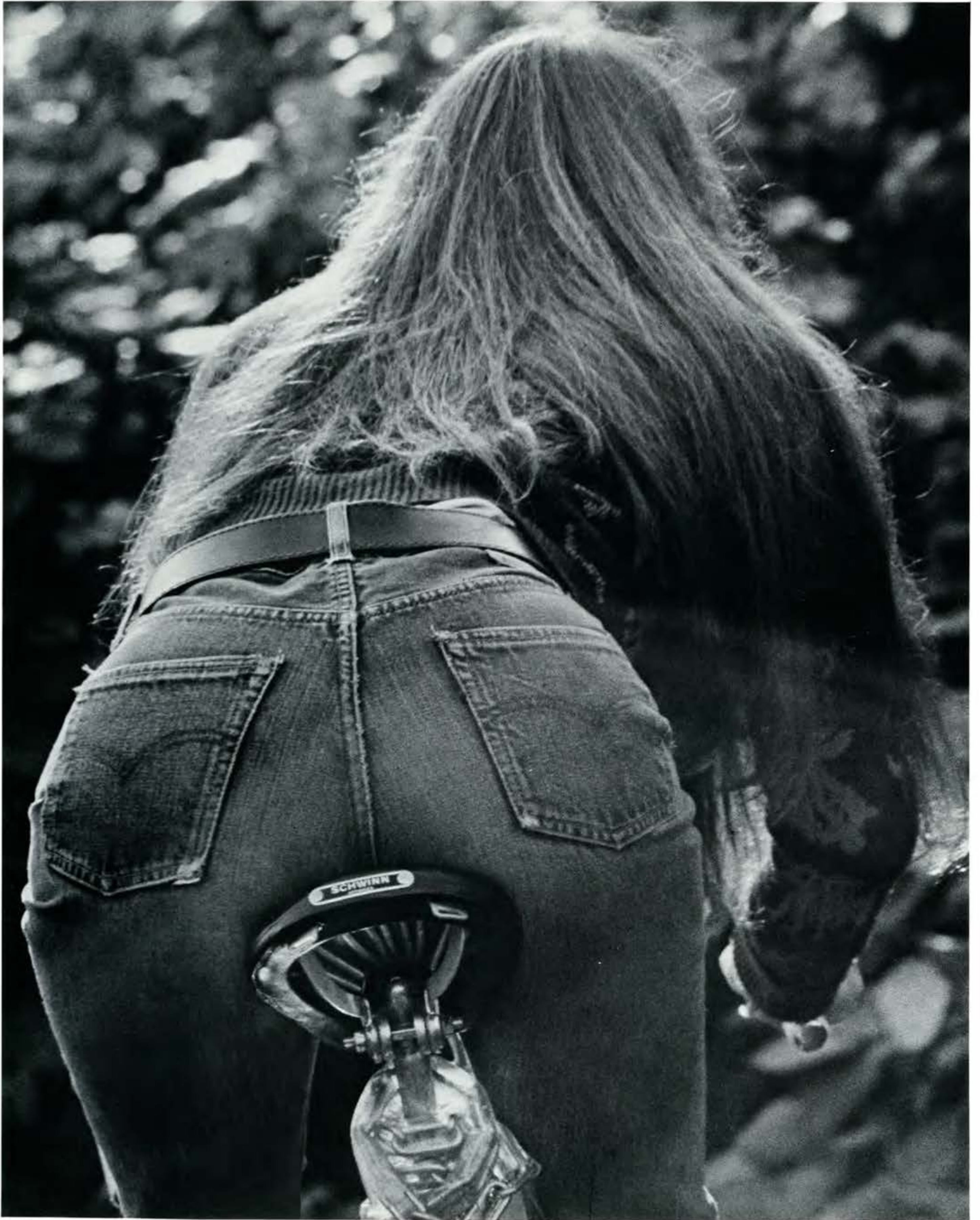
ANSWERS:

First of all, there is nothing in this test you can flunk because anyone with \$149 can become a student at Western. But there are certain people who will score high on the test and they share certain traits. So for every A answer, give yourself five points; four points for B; three for C; and just one for D.

The person who scored between 85 to 100, they will do very nicely at Western, probably become a CPA and a crashing bore later in life, if they are not already. For those with 60 to 85, they will also get along, if they're not killed first. Those scoring between 30 and 60 have a good chance of getting out, possibly by being arrested and sent to prison. Finally the student with 30 or below will be here forever and end up as college president.



Loren Bliss



David D. Johnson





Dennis Withner



Sue Gawrys



In the beginning it was innocent, and it was good. Child woke from his slumber and got up and stretched and flexed his muscles and felt the warmth of the sunshine soaking into his shoulders and decided that from now on he would call himself no longer Child, but Hero. And Hero looked around him and saw that the other children had wakened also.

A DREAM OF SORTS

By Bob Hicks

Hero stood and looked round at his companions and cleared his throat and began to speak. "I have something to tell you," he said. "I have had a dream, and in this dream a messenger of God came to me and told me that we are a chosen group, children of God, privileged to stand in His Presence. The messenger told me of a sacrament, a drug that will help us always to live in peace and love. He told me we are a great people who will overcome great hardships and accomplish great deeds for the benefit of all mankind." And as Hero sat down, the others began to murmur among themselves, felt their voices resonate together, laughed a joyful laugh, and replied to Hero in unison: "Yes, that is the same dream we all had in our child-slumbers. We all heard the words of the messenger, and we all believe. So Let it Be."

They were parentless, these New People, a people unto themselves; a people of the future. Yet even so there were memories: dark brooding fears from a past no longer present, vague longings for attachments once known now lost, sad musings on the welfare of childhood parents now forsaken. "What life is this?" said one. "We are alone in the world." "Foolish one," replied Hero gently. "We have ourselves. We have the future. What need have we of others?"

The Good Life: living together, partaking daily of the sacraments, making music together, loving, touching, sharing secrets of mind and body, laughing beneath the timeless warmth and light of the sun.

"We are examples to the world," said Hero. "We must show the world the gentleness and simplicity and beauty of the flower. We will be flowers; live our lives in peace and beauty and serenity." "Yes," chorused the others. "This is good. We will teach the world how to live."

Hero was asleep when he heard the screams. Rising from his cot, he opened the door to the darkened hallway. It was a girl, horror and fear gaping from her face, struggling in panicked rage against the restraining grip of three strong men. From the pit of her stomach came forth a mindless, cacophonous shriek of hysteria; the

whiteness of her wrist was defiled by jagging spurts of dark red which formed a steady stream that flowed down her trembling body and covered the splinters of broken glass on the floor. As Hero watched the struggling began to cease, the scream became a whimper, the river of blood became a careless drip. It was over: she slumped white and lifeless to the floor. One of the men looked at Hero. "She was partaking of the sacraments," he said. "She said that instead of seeing visions of heaven, she saw hell."

Hero stared at the body. "No one must know of this," he said. "We must hide her. It was not the drug that caused this, it was she herself. We must allow no doubt to be cast on the holiness of the sacraments."

The man twisted his face, almost in a sneer, Hero thought, then spoke. "All right. We will say nothing. But it will make no difference. People will know. They will find out."

The change was subtle at first, but it was there. Hero still danced and laughed and sang and made love, but the vision of the girl who saw hell became a constant chancre in his brain. And now he began to see things he had not noticed before because of his devotion to the dream. Here was the girl who grew rigid in fright at the approach of a hand wanting to touch. Here was the woman who made touch a self-punishment, inviting all men into her body under pretense of love and wincing in guilt-pain at every sweaty stroke. Here was the boy who could not smile without the constant support of the sacraments. And here was the man who could not smile, even with the constant support of the sacraments. Here, now visible for the first time to Hero, were the petty quarrelings, the shows of overindulgence and greed, the small cruelties inflicted on one another that rubbed raw and infected and became hatreds, the cynical willingness of one man to take advantage of the gullibility of another. And Hero frowned and shrugged his shoulders and danced and laughed and sang and made love.

And one day Hero came upon a man who was swallowing a month's supply of sacraments at once. "Stop!" said Hero. "You are misusing the sacraments. They are holy things to be used with great care in the inner search for God. This is the way of the Dream."

The man squinted his eyes at Hero, smirked and said in a giddy voice: "Screw God. God is dead. And screw the dream. The sacraments get me high." He snickered, then stood shakily up and looked at the crowd round him. "Do you hear me?" he yelled. "Screw God! Screw the Dream! The sacraments get me high!"

The words shot out and slapped the crowd in the face, stinging in the cold crisp air. For a moment the crowd

stood a rigid, silent whole, then it shattered in a rumble of confusion and discord. "Yes, yes!" shouted many. "Screw God! Screw the Dream! The sacraments get us high!" And others, aghast, cried "No! You deprive our way of life of any meaning! You destroy our culture and you destroy ourselves! This is not the way of peace and love!"

"Screw peace and love!" the man cackled above the uproar. Off to one side, some people stripped their clothes off and began dancing in a circle. They were laughing insanely and chanting, "the sacraments is God! The sacraments is God!"

A look of horror etched itself on Hero's face. "Have I wrought this?" he cried. But no one paid him any mind. He turned and slowly shuffled to the far edge of the crowd, carrying with him a small pouch filled with sacraments. At the edge of the crowd he hesitated, then continued walking, began climbing the hill, his back to the crowd in the valley.

At the top of the hill he turned again and looked back into the valley. He could hear the muffled roar of far-off shouts and the faint rattles and bangs of battle. The crowd had fallen upon itself in rage and fury, and now, with a contemptible, determined mindlessness, was destroying itself.

Once again Hero turned and looked, this time down the other side of the hill into a new, virgin valley. He raised his head to the sky and looked, as close as he could, into the sun. A trace of bitterness touched his voice. "I can no longer be Child," he said, "and I will no longer be Hero. From now on I will be Survivor."

Survivor let his head drop back down. He took his hands and rubbed the brightness out of his eyes, then looked again down into the new valley. Slowly he began to walk. He walked until he reached a small grove with a clear stream running beside it. There he lay down and slept....

Somewhere along the line drugs have ceased to be a hope and have become a problem. From the childlike innocence of the early and middle sixties, when smoking a joint was a delightfully risqué form of entertainment and self-discovery, we have rapidly descended into the jungle of narcotics which we face today: uppers and downers, MDA, cocaine, heroin. Right here in River City.

In its infancy the "drug revolution" was, perhaps more than it was anything else, a religious movement. It came at a time when people, especially young people, were

questioning social values. Was getting and spending truly the ultimate goal of life? Was it right that one man should live in poverty so another man could be rich? Should a government that denies an 18-year-old boy the right to vote, drink or sign a contract be able to force that same boy into a uniform and place him in a situation where he could be killed? Wasn't it a sham that the average uptight citizen (meaning our parents, our teachers, our businessmen, our politicians) would turn green with shock at the mouthing of a good old four-letter word, and the next moment tell us we had to kill hundreds of thousands of Asians or our economic system would go belly-up? ("Now remember, son, it ain't murder, it's self-preservation.") Wasn't it hypocrisy to speak of American Freedom when millions of Blacks and Indians and Chicanos and Puerto Ricans and poor Whites were locked into a system in which they had virtually no freedoms at all?

The problem, as we saw it then, was that our society was by nature a brutal and aggressive thing. The solution, as we saw it, was a complete change in life-style; a restructuring of basic cultural philosophy. We did not have to be aggressive, we decided. Through self-awareness and consciousness-expanding, we could build a culture based on peace and love. And the psychedelics, especially marijuana and LSD, were to be the catalyst; the doorway to the new consciousness.

For a very brief time, psychedelics were truly a sacrament, a holy purification that brought people together in communion. We were hippies then, flower children, determined to live simply and lovingly, full of evangelistic zeal, convinced that by spreading drugs we could change people, and thus society, for the better.

We had not reckoned, of course, with the complexities of life. We were children, and questions and answers came simple. Acid made us peace-loving and gentle (we thought), so why shouldn't it do the same for everyone else? "Go home, and turn on your mother and father," Tim Leary told us. "When everyone uses LSD there will be no more war and hate; we will live in harmony." He also told us not to trust anyone over 30. Not many of us noticed that he was himself a middle-aged man.

Looking back, it seems there *was* a sort of purity in the early hippie days. We were a spinoff from the Great Society, related but not connected to Mainstream America, existing in a timeless dimension of our own creation. We had laid aside the beliefs and dreams (though not the money) of our parents, and were not yet worried about our own futures. We were on a quest, individually and as a group, for the Meaning of Life. Somewhere, hidden in the crevasses and cubicles of our own minds, in the written words of the ancient Oriental philosophers, in the eyes and touch and untapped souls of each other, was the Answer.

It was called the Den, this flea-and-lice ridden, rotting old frame of an apartment building. The landlord squeezed 20 people inside its crumbling infested walls, and there were three or four times that number who wanted to live there. In order to move into the Den, you had to be bequeathed a room by someone who was moving out. There was one tiny bathroom with a shower in it. There had been a dirt floor room on the basement level which had doubled as unplumbed bathroom and storage area, but then Joe and Jack hung a blanket over the entrance and moved in.

We didn't mind the building's filth. In fact, it was almost a point of pride with us, a badge that identified us as dropouts from the plastic-coated culture. This was the place to get drugs. Chris or Joe or somebody would hop into a rusting, creaky old ghost of a car, push it wheezing and gasping 18 hours to Frisco, and score. On his return, there would be a celebration of sorts, Den dwellers and the regular visitors getting loaded for free, then counting out the dollars and dimes from next month's rent reserve or this week's food money for their own personal stash.

The Den was the center of Bellingham's underground activity, a vital link in the West Coast Underground Railway. Almost every night we would have at least one crasher heading for the Canadian border. Sometimes they would stay only overnight, other times they would stay and share the life for a week or more before moving on. Alex and Stephen, who lived next door in the Den Annex, would fix them up with rides across the border. In the summer, when traffic was heaviest, we would sometimes have so many crashers they would overflow the rooms and litter the hallways. Even in peak season we never locked our doors: the crashers didn't rip us off, and often they left us their dope before going on to Canada.

There were problems at the Den. Every one living there was involved in the agony of growing up and discovering himself. But there was a great humor there, at least sometimes an unmistakable aura of joy, and a vital spontaneity and sense of adventure. There was, for instance, the Fourth of July parade, when we put the biggest and loudest record player in the house on the porch, played Jack's John Philip Sousa album full-volume, lined up 30 strong behind Kathy in her old high school drum-majorette costume, and marched triumphantly down the Garden Street center line. Or the countless afternoons and evenings we would gather on the porch and pass a few joints around and make music with whatever we had available: two or three guitars, a bass, mandolin or banjo, maybe a mouth harp or a flute, and hands clapping and tambourines shaking and boxes beating and soup pans and spoons thumping.

There were quieter joys too, like just sitting alone with someone and talking and saying things you'd never said to anyone because you'd never trusted. Or looking at a girl and seeing she was fat and pimply and ugly and then looking a little deeper and seeing she was beautiful, too.

We stayed stoned, but on our own schedules. There was no pressure to use any certain kind of drug with any particular rate of frequency. All the psychedelics were available to us: grass, hash, mescaline, acid, psilocybin, peyote. There were some among us who were strictly acid freaks, others who would use nothing but marijuana, still others who tried them all, and even some who were on the wagon and only drank wine.

When San Francisco hit the skids we were sad, but didn't feel our own existence was particularly threatened. The death of the Haight had an effect on our lives, certainly. It was viable evidence that the dream could go sour, that a movement built on the delicate foundations of peace and gentleness could easily be destroyed by hate and greed. But we also knew, or at least sensed, that Haight-Ashbury was an unnatural freak, stepchild of the media, a shell of reality that probably had more in common with Disneyland than it did with our own small movement in Bellingham. Take a ten-cent balloon and pump it full of thirty pounds of air and it'll blow up in your face every time. San Francisco was a bandwagon, an idea that was snatched up by the nation's newspapers and magazines and twisted and fed and gorged until it became a grotesque, self-destructive creature that might have been created by the Marquis de Sade.

Bellingham, on the other hand, was a tidepool, tiny and unnoticed yet rich with life. Where San Francisco had notoriety, we had anonymity. We had time to experiment, to strengthen our foundations, build and grow. We knew each other, and we trusted each other. San Francisco was only a symbol, we felt, and we didn't need a symbol to grow and prosper. If a peaceful revolution was to succeed, it would be not through the ups and downs of a media-created monster, but through the steady, nurtured growth of thousands of inconspicuous Bellinghams across the country.

Things started to sour bad during the last half of the Johnson administration. The man who had been elected partly as inheritor of the Kennedy mantle and partly as a peace candidate was showing a magnificent disdain toward public protest against the war, and the deafer his ears became, the more violent became the demonstrations against violence. As Vietnam became more and more a reality in the mind of the nation, the sense of frustration and impotence which had always been present in the youth move-

ment began to grow and seethe. It began to be apparent that peace and love, admirable as they were on a personal level, were damned ineffectual as political levers. It was about this time that "hippies" slid into obscurity and a person became either a "freak" or a "radical." The freak was more closely akin to the old-time hippie than was the radical, who took sometimes to the courts, but more frequently to the streets in active confrontation with local, state and national government. "Revolutionary" demagogues, again fed by the media, urged the young to forget about non-violence and get to work smashing the state. The hair, the rag clothes and the allegiance to drugs were the same, but otherwise the revolutionary and the old-time funky freak had little in common.

It was about this time, too, that we began to lock our doors and refuse to take crashers into our homes. You couldn't trust a longhair anymore. Stereos and guitars and sleeping bags started disappearing from people's pads, dope burns became more and more frequent, and the paranoia thermometer inched dangerously close to the boiling point. More and more freaks were strapping knives around their waists, and they weren't all for fishing or mumbletypeg. The game was beginning to get rough. Independent dealers were beginning to carve out their business territories, and on more than one occasion the carving took flesh-and-blood form. Bellingham had become a prime business location, and a lot of people wanted in on the action. Out-of-town suppliers came and tried to cut local pushers out. Sometimes they succeeded and became established on their own. Other times they disappeared overnight, and nobody ever heard from them again.

It must have been some time in '69 when we noticed we were no longer a minority. Or if we *were* still a minority, you couldn't tell it by sight. Every mother's son, it seemed, had long hair and beard, wore Levis and cowboy boots (later replaced by logger or hiking boots). All the girls had given their bras to Goodwill and were bouncing merrily along beneath men's work shirts and brightly patched and embroidered bluejeans.

At the college, administrative officials weren't worrying so much about kids drinking in the dorms, because the dormies were all smoking dope. By the next year, in fact, people were estimating that 85% of Western's students were either smoking grass regularly or had tried it at least once. And, as the child leads the man, a large percentage of professors soon followed.

Nor was the mass adoption of drugs confined to the college. The younger working class -- millworkers, dockworkers, construction workers, fishermen, mechanics -- found it a very pleasant substitute for (or addition to) booze. Businessmen and professionals were not immune to the

drug bug, either. As one prominent executive explained, "My wife is an undisputed alcoholic right now, and if things continue as they are, I'll be in the same shape within five years. I figure the only hope is to switch to pot."

"Steve and John and Susan and I snorted coke last night," Norma said. "God, it was a gas. I can see why a person would want to get strung out on smack. Coke lays you back so far you just don't want to do anything. It's so-oo-oo nice, just laying back and feeling your body."

"Where'd you get the coke?"

"Oh, John picked up a bunch in Seattle to deal up here."

The Great Northwest MDA Convention took place in the summer of '70. Even the two Bellingham pushers who attended didn't know who was putting it on, but whoever it was had enough bread to rent one of the West Coast's best-known ski resorts for the five-day event, not to mention giving away hundreds of dollars worth of the drug for conventioners to sample. Whoever had their fingers on the supply didn't want the new drug to fizzle.

Tom and Rod were believers when they returned to Bellingham. MDA was fantastic. "What it is is synthetic smack," Rod explained. "It gives you the same kind of high but it's not addictive, and it doesn't cost near as much."

The drug spread fast that fall, especially among the older freaks. Almost everybody liked it -- often too much. "It was different from any drug I've ever taken," Ted said. "At first it was a super-mellow layback, but it was speedy too -- I mean you could run around and do things on it. It didn't hold your body back. But it felt so good, man, you didn't want to stop. I started dropping four, six, eight hits at a time. I'd go on incredible jags -- 48, sometimes 60 or more hours without sleeping. I'd get so fucking tired, man, but there was no way I could sleep till I came down."

MDA died that winter. People were afraid of it, and except for tiny quantities it disappeared from the market.

Time was, back around '65 and '66, when a person could walk the streets of downtown Bellingham with a joint in his mouth and even pass a cop on the sidewalk without having to worry about getting busted. City officials aren't quite that naive anymore. Busts have been getting more and more frequent, and the city and county, working in concert, even used undercover narcs to gain information for two large raids in 1971. Still, local officials display an amazing lack of information about or understanding of the drug scene.



Mayor Reg Williams, 56 years old and recently re-elected to a second four-year term of office, is disliked and mistrusted by freaks and liberals, but has a huge wellspring of support from the predominantly middle- and working-class citizenry of Bellingham. He is a man who believes in the rightness of the American tradition, in the rightness of business, and in the rightness of his own political and moral convictions. He is a strong believer in folk wisdom and often makes his point in a conversation by using pat little phrases of an updated and politicized *Poor Richard's Almanack*. To some people they may sound cliched, but they are not cliches to Reg Williams. He believes them. He has the kind of bullheaded honesty and belief in himself that one has to admire. "Every morning I get up and look in the mirror," he says, "and I say this to myself: 'Yesterday I tried to do what was right, and today I'm going to try to do the same.'"

Part of what Reg Williams considers right is cleaning up drugs in Bellingham, but he doesn't know how to do it. "I do not approve of the use of marijuana at all," he says. "I smoke cigarettes, and that's bad enough. Marijuana may and probably frequently does lead to the use of something stronger. You know, a person smokes a lot of marijuana and the more he smokes the harder it is for him to get a good enough high from it, so he goes on to something bigger. But there's one thing you have to remember. Drugs are not going to help you solve your problems. You can get high and forget about them for awhile, but when you come down they're still there. You still have to face them."

The mayor is proud of one thing in regard to the drug situation, however. That's the strong stand he took last year on the distribution of food stamps. "The state's distribution procedures in the Whatcom County office were appalling before we forced them to tighten up," Williams says. "Anybody could walk in and get food stamps just by saying they needed them. Now I think a person who can't find a job and needs help should be able to get food stamps, but all these hippies who've never worked a day in their lives and expect the government to support them are a different matter entirely. All up and down the coast they got the message: 'Come to Bellingham. Easy food stamps.' And we were simply flooded with them. There aren't nearly as many now that the stamps have tightened up. Now, when I go by the welfare office there are hardly any hippies there. This nation was built on the basis of the people supporting the government, not the government supporting the people."

The city is doing all it can to erase the drug problem, Williams says, but it lacks the necessary funds to make an all-out effort. The mayor wishes he could do much more. "I consider the drug problem a cancer that destroys not only individuals but nations," he says. "If drug use continues to escalate, it could destroy our nation."

Assistant Chief of Police Bill Tooker is a tall, broad-built, rawboned man whose public manner is no less rough than his physical appearance. He is not, at least on first contact, a very likeable man. He has a bullying arrogance about him, a seeming contempt for anyone who distracts his attention from his own thoughts. He is also harsh in his opposition to drugs and the drug culture. "If it were up to me," he says, "I'd go out and bust every dope peddler I could get my hands on, whether they were pushing quantities of heroin or a single lid of marijuana."

Tooker is a beleaguered cop, sensitive about his job and, in many ways, deeply irritated by the general public. "Drugs are not primarily a law enforcement problem," he says. "They're a social problem, and people shouldn't put the burden on the police to clean them up."

He is unhappy with the lack of help police get from the public: "We get a lot of rumors about smack in town, but that's all we get — rumors. The public is not cooperating with us as far as drugs are concerned. Nobody's willing to go out and make a purchase for us; nobody's willing to give us the names of pushers."

"It would cost us about a thousand dollars to arrest a heroin peddler and put him through the courts. Then he'd get six months suspended and start all over again. What good is that? It's a losing proposition."

Jane Mason is not only one of the youngest and most inexperienced prosecuting attorneys in the state of Washington, she is also one of the few female prosecutors in the country. Though she is reluctant to admit to any expertise in the field of drug control, she has handled more drug cases in her brief term of office than all the previous Whatcom County prosecutors combined.

The main problem with controlling drug traffic, she says, is a lack of money. In order to bust people, undercover agents must be hired and purchases must be made. Local government has only so much money, and other problems have higher priority. As it is, something like 25% of the prosecutor's work load has been drug work. "We'll take any drug case we think we can successfully prosecute, marijuana or heroin," Ms. Mason says.

Local law enforcement agencies seem to be uncoordinated, underfinanced and uninformed where drugs are concerned. There is little effort expended trying to discover who the major dealers are or even what drugs are being used, and for the most part the only people arrested are those who have somehow been careless, more likely than not an occasional user or a two-bit pusher. The big boys aren't being touched, and recently, rumor has it, one large-volume dealer was given a concealed weapons permit and police protection because of threats on his life.

Armand is a large, boyishly-good looking, intensely likeable man. Like a lot of other freaks, he's a Vietnam veteran. And like a lot of other old-timers, he's more of a beer freak now than he is a doper. But he's an insider, and he knows more about what's going on than any ten average freaks. He's an ex-dealer and was an Organization runner at Fort Lewis five or six years ago.

"If the cops really want to keep smack out of town," Armand says, "they'd better leave the big local dealers alone. It's simple economics. If you get smack in a town, who brings it? The Syndicate, right? And if the Syndicate moves into a town, who gets screwed over? The independent dealer. So who's going to bust his ass keeping smack away? The guy who's dealing quantities of soft drugs. He's worked hard to set up his own territory, and he doesn't want to be muscled out. I'd say the handful of big dealers in Bellingham has done more to keep heroin out of town than all the law-enforcement agencies combined."

Dave sat in a large overstuffed chair in his living room and sipped from a jug of homemade hard cider. He's been everything from a bartender to a steelworker to an advertising executive to a roofer, with a few steps in between. "Yeah, I know of at least one place in town where you can get smack. A house on the South Side. There's some kids from Fairhaven College living in it."

"Are they uptight, or is it a pretty loose thing?"

"It's pretty loose. They don't ask questions. If you want it, you can get it."

"Is it real stuff, or is it watered down?"

"Far as I know, it's smack, all right. I don't know where they're getting it, but it does the job."

"Who's buying it? Other college kids? Local freaks?"

"Near as I can tell, mostly college kids. Some from Fairhaven, a few from Western. Who else has time for smack? I think it's part of Fairhaven's 'total living experience.' The college kids are just here on a vacation anyway. They don't care much what happens in town; they're going to be gone in a couple of years."

"I don't think the freaks are touching it, for the most part. They're either local people originally or people who've already dropped out of insane asylums like Bezerkeley and L.A. and New York City. There's a lot of freaks in Bellingham who've seen the kind of bad scene a hard drug trip can turn into, and they don't want anything to do with it. People come to Bellingham partly because they don't want to hassle that kind of shit. No, I don't think the freaks are into smack. It's the college kids. They're the ones looking for kicks. Freaks just want to lay back and enjoy life."

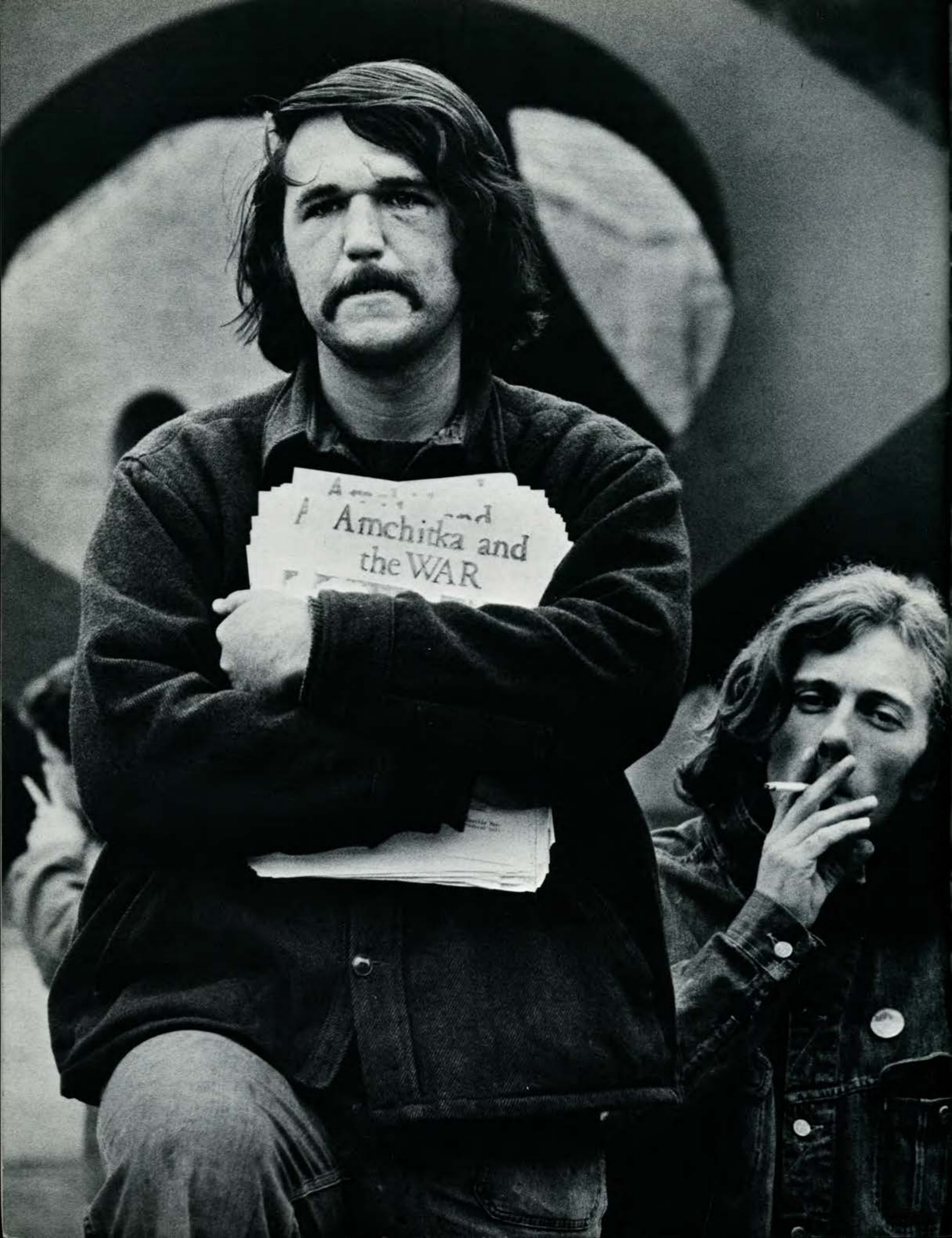
You can't put your finger on Bellingham's drug scene. It's gotten too big for that. There are hundreds of interwoven little scenes, each with its own particular ethos, each with its own personality. It's impossible for any one person or small group of people to guide the direction of the drug movement. Like any other monolith, it has developed a life of its own, independent of the people who are involved with it.

There are thousands of beautiful people in Bellingham who still believe in, and live, the dream of peace and love. They use drugs and enjoy them. They find their own acceptable levels of indulgence, just as their parents did with alcohol. There are many others who misuse drugs, who escape into them or find they can't escape from them. Many people find that drugs don't change them into gentler people but merely accentuate undesirable traits they already have. And some become so confused through the use of drugs they lose the ability to think, to make a decision. No drug, marijuana or heroin or any other, can eliminate man's natural urge toward violence. Often (as, for instance, with the Manson family) a drug can trigger that already-existing violent urge. There is no such thing as a "harmless" drug. A drug alters the chemistry of the body, and that alteration can sometimes cause unexpected results. If there is still a dream of love and peace, that dream is based not on the magical qualities of some chemical potion, but on the determination of the people themselves to live in peace and harmony. In Bellingham that dream is still alive. Whether it will stay alive is another question.

....Survivor woke from a long and dreamless sleep. He stood and felt the blood accelerate its flow through his veins and warm his body. The sun seared through the cool thickness of the trees above and sent a thousand dancing spears of heat to the ground. Survivor knelt beside the stream and washed and drank. The new valley was fresh and inviting and Survivor tried to shake the growing anxiety from his head. He turned and, taking a long, thick branch from the ground for a walking stick, began to climb back up the hill. He climbed slowly, gazing all around him, learning the path.

At the crest of the hill he stopped. A small band of men and women and children stood before him. A young woman stepped forward. "We have left the old valley," she said. "We could not live with the fighting and the hatred and the fear. Now we do not know what to do."

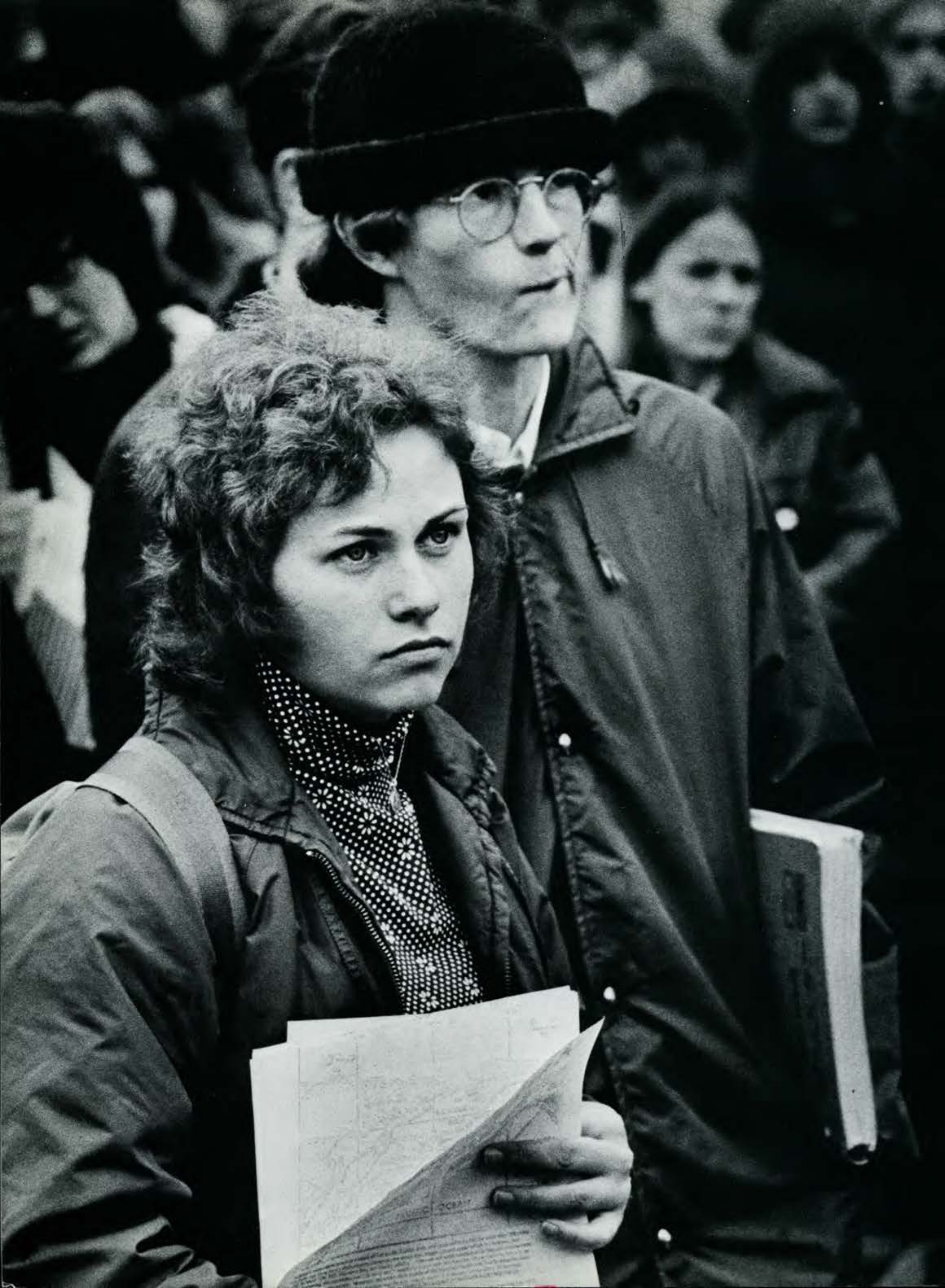
Survivor smiled. He looked round about at the people facing him. "Come," he said. "We will build." They began to climb down into the new valley.



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the WAR

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