

University of Montana

## ScholarWorks at University of Montana

---

Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, &  
Professional Papers

Graduate School

---

1976

### Osso buco

Larry M. Levinger

*The University of Montana*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd>

## Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

---

### Recommended Citation

Levinger, Larry M., "Osso buco" (1976). *Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers*. 3149.

<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/3149>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

OSSO BUCO

By

Larry M. Levinger

B.A., University of California at Santa Cruz, 1970

Presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of


Master of Fine Arts

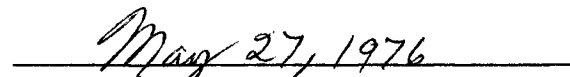
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1976

Approved by:

  
Chairman, Board of Examiners

  
Dean, Graduate School

  
Date

UMI Number: EP34689

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent on the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI EP34689

Copyright 2012 by ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This edition of the work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.



ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

6-7-76

311

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"Automatically, Instantaneously, Painlessly,  
and Bloodlessly" appeared in the November 4, 1975,  
issue of City of San Francisco Magazine, vol. 9,  
no. 17, under the title of "The Samuels Story."

CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS. . . . .	ii
CHAPTER	
I. JOURNALISM	
AUTOMATICALLY, INSTANTANEOUSLY, PAINLESSLY, AND BLOODLESSLY . . . . .	3
WHO IS DEEP THROAT? JOHN DEAN ON TOUR . . . . .	37
II. FICTION	
THE ROAD HOME. . . . .	67
III. POETRY	
ROAD TO BONNER . . . . .	78
MOTOR POOL . . . . .	79
YOU AND ME LADY. . . . .	81
GAMES. . . . .	82
FOR MOM. . . . .	84
RAILS. . . . .	85
THIRTY . . . . .	87
THE FIGURE EIGHT LAY-UP. . . . .	88
THE BURDEN OF JEWELS . . . . .	89

I  
JOURNALISM

AUTOMATICALLY, INSTANTANEOUSLY,  
PAINLESSLY, AND BLOODLESSLY

AUTOMATICALLY, INSTANTANEOUSLY,  
PAINLESSLY, AND BLOODLESSLY

...It's a funny thing--I suppose you've noticed it--the people who lie the most are nearly always the clumsiest at it, and they're easier to fool with lies than most people too. You'd think they'd be on the look-out for lies, but they seem to be the very ones that will believe almost anything at all. I suppose you've noticed that, haven't you?

From THE THIN MAN

"Looka that shit," said Albert Samuels, Jr., making a wide ark around a pile of butts, paper cups, and sundry trash cluttering the tree wells and red tile at Market and Powell. "We're gonna get some people down here to clean this crap up. Disgraceful." Samuels moved toward a zoo of freaks, street vendors and evangelists, picked up his gait, and as he walked through the human snag, puffed up his chest and began to strut. "It's a circus," he said. "Looka that!" He pointed to a bone thin youth joined on a surplus blanket by a donation can and a crayoned sign reading, YOGA. "Just what the city needs: a street contortionist." Samuels wedged a pair of small fists inside the upper pockets of a silver suit, stretched his neck up proudly from beneath the



dark blue knot of a silk tie, then nodded at a hunk of stone. "Looks like sculpture, doesn't it. G'head. Try and lift it. Heavy, huh?" He passed a hand over the stone. "It's marble. Marble! We put marble bike racks up and they crap in the street."

Albert Samuels, Jr., is the son of the late San Francisco jeweler, Albert Samuels, Sr. Until recently he was the president and pump behind the still successful firm his father began some sixty-five years ago; now he is a consultant to the new owner, a conglomerate. He is, among other things, a diamond expert of sorts, a linguist, a japanese brush painting enthusiast, and the current treasurer of The Market Street Project. He is a small, neat, gray-haired man in his sixties, who talks quickly, at times abstractly, and with the peculiarity of over-mouthing his words, as if he were speaking immediately after a most enjoyable meal, and his mouth was still back there, enjoying as it were. Today, as he works pleurably on a compressed hunk of Original Joe's french bread, his speech sounds at last, appropriate.

"That was the idea. That my son would take over the firm, as I did from my father." He flopped a slab of butter onto a knife. "But I'll tell you I have the happy faculty of being an optimist, no matter how things work out. I never want to shake the devil's hand till I meet him. My wife calls me Peter Pan."

"HARRY! HARRY!" yelled a fat cook, ward of some ten steaming fry pans. Harry, a thin man in black boasting a head of deep fried, comic strip hair, slithered Frisco style through the crack in the kitchen traffic and loaned a bat-wing ear to the sweaty upper lip of the cook. "BASTING! I gotta have BASTING!" the cook blew into Harry's ear. Harry nodded, swung around in a manner resembling Mandrake The Magician, and ran into the hand of Albert Samuels, Jr. Samuels gave Harry a friendly squeeze on the elbow. "Give us the sirloin, will you. Medium. And listen Harry, bring us some nice butter." Harry nodded and disappeared near the edge of a busboy. Samuels studied the fat cook for a moment, then: "You know most people don't know this but that young man is a graduate of the hotel and restaurant school here. Most people don't know that San Francisco has one of the best hotel and restaurant schools in the world here. Most people don't know this."

Samuels busted off the end of the french bread and gnawed it. "But like I say," he munched, "I'm an optimist. My father was an optimist too. He was still thinking of projects when he was ninety. Do you know he bought Donner Lake in 1919? People weren't ready for it but he was thinking, he was thinking. When he was a very young man he went to the superintendent of The Market Street Railroad and told him his cars weren't operating on schedule. He convinced

the railroad to hire him as a watch inspector, and created a plan for conductors to buy watches along with uniforms. He became one of the largest buyers of railroad watches in the United States." Harry appeared with the sirloin and a pot of coffee. Samuels unbuttoned his stainless steel coat, bent over the food and ate rapidly. "I don't like people calling my father shrewd. He was not shrewd. I'll tell you what's shrewd. My father went to school over here--right over here." He pointed to the wall with his fork. "That was the Lincoln School, which is now the Lincoln Building, which is still owned by the school board, which because it is a school board, it doesn't have to pay taxes like the rest of us. Now that's shrewd. No. My father was the most honest, fairest man I ever knew. He was the most wonderful human being on this earth. You have to remember that my father started business in an age that was not what you would call an equitable age. But he was a man of balance. Do you know Kipling? Walk with kings without forgetting your common touch? That was my father's favorite poem."

"How the trees coming along?"

Samuels turned from his plate to find a crooked looking woman in a brown smock standing over him. "They're fine, Edna." He turned back to his plate.

"Must be very nice the garbage cans," said Edna. "Nine fifty a piece must be very nice."

Samuels shoved a pile of gravy soaked chopmeat in his mouth. "Can't have too many garbage cans on Market these days, Edna."

"Guess not," said Edna, and walked back to her spot behind the cash register.

Samuels swallowed some coffee, sighed, gestured an upturned palm at Edna's rear, then rubbed two fingers on his forehead. "But you want to know about Dash-eel Hammett. Well, he worked for us and several times--but one stands out particular in my mind. And you know I'm not known for a bad memory. I used to run errands for my father on Saturday. I was--let's see--fourteen. We were at 879 Market then. Now I would never be a man to comment on another man's habits, but if memory serves me correctly Dash--my father called him Dash--liked to drink and drink fairly heavy. Now if I recall on this particular Saturday he hadn't been to work for days. Well there was an employee meeting at the St. Germain Hotel that day--in those days the St. Germain was a 90's type place on Ellis between Stockton and Powell. It was frequented by politicians and merchants--people like Magnin and Tom Finn and Tim Reardon and James Rolf, Jr., who was mayor--they called him Sonny Jim--a very small man who wore cowboy boots to look taller and always wore a white carnation. In the thirties he was governor of California. He was succeeded by Angela Lossi, the florist. Anyway, my father found Hammett somewhere

and got him to come to the St. Germain. I remember sitting across from Hammett and if the impressions of a child are of any worth, he was a salt and pepper gray fellow, moustache, thin--almost emaciated looking. He was wearing a garish suit--some Pendleton type of thing--with a knit stripe tie. He smoked heavy. I'm sure he was a chain smoker. But he seemed to me, looking back, a dynamic and vigorous man."

A fatman in a seersucker suit seemed too interested in Samuels. He sat at a booth smothering an ice tea with his belly, popping his eyes out from under a painter's cap, gnawing on a large kitchen match. Samuels went on, unaware.

"Now Hammett worked for us in the advertising department. God, I don't know, maybe 1925-6, in there somewhere." He tugged at a cufflink. "Now let me see...it must of been around then. You see my father was an innovator. He was the first jeweler in the west to use large newspaper ads, big ads, like department stores. Up to this time people used handbills. Everybody thought he was crazy, but they worked. He once advertised a silver sale and sold ten thousand in one day. Now my father for a long time wrote his own ads, and he coined the lucky slogan. Samuels was called the House of The Lucky Wedding Rings. There was no talismanic value to the rings but it was the idea of the thing you see--Luck. About twenty percent of the marriage licenses in San Francisco ended up at Samuels. In every ring was engraved, A.S. Lucky.

That's Albert Samuels lucky. But this wasn't just a gimmick. These rings had revolutionary styles: the carved wedding ring, the diamond-set wedding ring, the slender ring--these replaced the gold band. The prices varied according to the quality of the diamonds. My father bought, sorted--I mean with tweezers and a glass--maybe a million diamonds. He went for quality and prices people could afford. Getting married was a lifetime adventure to him. In fact, I'll tell you, the first lucky wedding ring--now this was a sixty-seven year marriage that ended only by my father's death--was the one he gave my mother. He used to throw a theatre party every year for all the couples married with lucky wedding rings. Of course eventually there was too many of them to fit in the theatres here and he had to quit doing it."

Harry stretched around the corner like a rubber band; Samuels looped a finger in his lapel. "Freshen this up will you Harry." Harry stretched back to the stove, grabbed a pot, took aim at Samuel's cup. "Good, good--fine, fine," said Samuels.

"Innovation," said Samuels. "My father was the first jeweler to notice the blue glow. You don't know the blue glow? Well this is a phenomenon in diamonds. Some diamonds turn a glowing blue under ultra-violet rays, which is sunlight. This was an exciting idea--a ring set with these diamonds. And the diascope and diagraph. This was a process of

transparent microphotography that projected a diamond magnified thousands of times on a screen. It allowed a mathematical computation of imperfections, an identification source for insurance companies. But you know it spared the customer from being at the mercy of the expert. He could see the flaws or qualities of the diamond himself." Samuels held up a finger. "Innovation." He reached for his inside pocket, pulled out a piece of metal that looked like a leather punch. "Now this my father and I worked on together. This machine automatically, instantaneously, painlessly, and bloodlessly pierces a woman's ear and sets a gold earring in the hole. I have this franchised now but at one time we had a sign out: 'Ears Pierced While You Wait.' At one time we pierced over a thousand ears a week!" Samuels smiled at the gadget. "Now watch this." He loaded a small gold earring into a steel fulcrum, grabbed onto a Joe's menu and quickly, with some degree of pleasure, pierced it with the tiny gold dart. "See that? While you wait."

The fatman tipped the last of his ice tea into a throat wrapped in blubber, let the ice fall back with a clunk, set the glass down and coughed three times. He reached for the innards of his wrinkled jacket, groped there, then pulled out a wire ring notebook and a golfer's pencil. The pencil disappeared behind an enormous thumb as he scrawled intently, popping his eyes from under the beak of his hat to Samuels,

then back to the notebook, transferring all the while, the soggy kitchen match from one looping jowl to the other.

"But you want to know about Dash-eel Hammett," said Samuels. He fondled the ear punch, then pointed it at the ceiling. "Precision. My father liked precision. Now that clock you see out in front of our present store, which has been outside Samuels since the day of the Panama Exposition in 1915. My father designed that clock. It's one of the most accurate clocks in the world. It's going to be a landmark soon, I'm telling you. Precision. My father used to make the medals for the conventions. You know in those days they wore medals; nobody ever heard of a plastic nametag. And these were beautiful things, multi-colored things with silk ribbons. My father made them by dropping a die from the fourth floor to the basement. This struck the metal and the female side made up the design. Precision." He held up the ear punch, then placed it in his pocket. "Precision."

Samuels turned suddenly, studied the vicinity that up till that moment, the fatman had occupied, then stretched, loosened his tie, and called for more coffee. In the center of the vacant table sat empty ice tea glass, and beneath it, a piece of notebook paper.

Samuels took a swallow of coffee. "I'm telling you there's a history here. The story of Samuels Jewelers is a history of San Francisco. But you want to know about Dash-



eel Hammett, right? Right? Well let me see." He drew out a Marlboro regular, lit it with a cardboard match, wrapped a hand and the cigarette around the coffee cup. "Well, Hammett was advertising manager at one time. This was a job that was very much like a think tank. The advertising manager would come in with us at about eight or nine, watch the business operate, open the mail--this sort of thing--and he would think. You see the mail was very important. We had a thing called Bouquets--that's a good letter--and Brickbats--that's a bad one. And we'd file them. We filed everything. We have microfilm of sixty years of customers. If one of them loses a ring, we can help them find it. Anyway, we used these letters for ads. If it was a good one, we'd publicly thank the person and promise to keep it up. If it was bad, we'd publicly apologize and promise to correct it. What I'm trying to tell you is that this was a way of dealing with people, a way of being a firm that always had the public in mind. This was a family business." He puffed on the Marlboro, rubbed an ash off the sleeve of his coat. "Well, let's put it this way: If you get a bad hamburger just try finding Mr. MacDonald. But you can find Mr. Samuels," he pointed to his chest, "here he is."

"But you want to know about Dash-eel Hammett, right? Well, as I say this advertising program my father started--

do you know we even had radio bits. That's right. There used to be a program called Who's Dancing Tonight sponsored by Samuels. Art Linkletter would interview couples while they danced and we'd advertise the Lucky Wedding Rings. We had four stores then and one of them was on Maiden Lane, which used to be Morton's Alley, you know, and was over-run with houses of illegit, if you know what I mean. Now Maiden Lane was a famous street in London and New York where the jewelry industry was located. So my father had Morton's Alley changed to Maiden Lane and he used to advertise on the radio, 'Come down Maiden Lane to The House of Lucky Wedding Rings.'" Samuels smashed the Marlboro in an ashtray, leaving the tip still alive. "Harry," he called, "check please."

Out on the street Samuels lit up another Marlboro and pointed it at the porno houses of the Tenderloin. "We're gonna get rid of this crap someday," he said. "Someday there's gonna be trees here, maybe a park." He rounded the corner and crossed Powell, began to shake his head back and forth. "Looka that! Christ." A gnawed remnant of a baloney pimento sandwich sat with its crusts apart on the edge of the Samuels Clock. Samuels climbed up the base, hooked a glowing black shoe on a rivet, and slapped at the sandwich as though it were a fly. He stepped down, clapped crumbs from his hands, then kicked the sandwich into the gutter, then again, down Market, out of view from the gaping

entrance of Samuels Jewelers. "You have to teach people not to be pigs," he said, rounding out his shoulders and tugging on the center button of his coat. "Looka that," he said, pointing to an old wound in the base of the clock, a crystal of wrenching grooves spreading out from a rut in the glass that enclosed the clock machinery. "It's a different ballgame. Now they throw rocks at the Samuels Clock."

Information you are seeking lies  
healthy and vigorous within me.

The Barnacle. 4 P.M.

Such were the readings on the notebook paper left beneath the tea glass by the fatman. Out at the Barnacle he sat, or inhabited as it were, an entire corner to the rear. Beneath the lanterns and nets, ship's wheels and oars, the great seersucker balloon of blubber was luminescent in the minimal light, spreading itself over the table like some log-sided crescent moon. Near the belly stood an Everest of razor back clams in a pond of garlic broth. The fatman worked surgically on the fare with the prongs of a tiny crab fork and the excavatory activity of a pronounced lower lip. "So," he exuded, placing a shell in a curved ceramic bowl, "we have been--shall we say, under the influence of one Albert Samuels, Jr., on this gray, San Francisco Day." The

fatman was then to release a laugh perhaps unknown in the most varied gatherings by the bay: "Yaw, yaw, yaw."

"Yes, we are made quite aware of the necessity," he went on, "of one's family jewels. Yaw, yaw. But not, certainly, a heedless fashion. It was an age of commerce. The jeweler was as one's physician. One's watch would tap the hip of son upon son; one's ring safe under velvet in the attics of the future; one's jewels; yes, quite like stocks. One did not ask if it was gold, but how many carats this gold. And, hmm hmm, it was an age of elegant ladies, friendly ladies, confidential ladies." He held up a clam shell, dangled it over the bowl. "It was not, hmm hmm, an age of tinsel." The shell hit the bowl with a crack.

"We should then begin. Hmm hmm. Unlike Mr. Samuels, I know of no method to, hmm, pierce the subject instantaneously, yaw. yaw. But let us begin by examining the precious stone. Mr. Samuels, aware of your ignorance, hmm hmm, no offense of course, aware as he was, found himself reluctant to discuss, let us say, technical matters. Simply, the rough diamond has no fire, no brilliance. Only when the diamond cutter's art is brought to bear does the diamond come to life. Fifty-eight facets, or flat surfaces, on a perfectly round diamond, so arranged enable the diamond to concentrate light rays from all directions, bending them to the stone's center

and reflecting them back through the top of the diamond in a shower of vari-colored fire. Hmm hmm. You'll forgive my enthusiasm." A Filipino in a white apron stood before the fatman eyeing the mound of empty shells. The fatman observed the shells, then the waiter, and, slowly, like some great loaf of bread rising in an oven, his jowls emerged as a broad grin. "My dear fellow," he chuckled, "such nuance. Delectable, in fact. Yes, another plate if you please." He passed the pile to the waiter. "So be it," he went on. "We shall require light from many sides, for it is craft when truth displays itself with a measure of fancy. Hmm hmm. Now then. A man, of course. One Berger, 1880's sort, a clothier who per chance occupied the same building of our Mr. Samuel's Market Street concern. But, hmm hmm, we must you see, consider other enterprises of the time. The building in mind, after our Mr. Berger's brief but happy career, a somewhat unsavory place known as the Baldwin Hotel, where one Mamie Pleasant, a most mysterious madam, mellow with merry-making, yet, shall we say, never quite what the trouser seams, yaw yaw..." He stopped, popped his eyes violently beneath his cap, pinched his mouth to a plug, rose, smacked the bowl of broth flowing on the table, reached for some bills and dumped them in the wet. "Yet one perceives," he continued hurriedly, "the bee does not release the stinger flippantly,

but with much consideration, and at that," he wriggled his mass from the table, "and at that with some degree of ritualized, shall we say, dignity..." He moved with a lumbering gait, like some beast in a darkened, vine strewn hunk of earth, terrified, too big to hide, too slow to outrun. He careened toward the door, clipped the waiter who showered clams to the edge of the room, then crumpled himself through the door like a load of laundry squashed in a hamper.

Out on the street a fog blanketed several feet of reality, shined up the sidewalk to a New York gray. A load of teenagers boogied by in a fatrubber Camero; they swerved to clout a prowling cat, missed, wiped out a mailbox and headed on. The headlights passed over what looked like a pile of wet newspaper, but was in fact, the fatman. A .357 had vacationed in his chest, left him littered with lead. A gold pencil was upright in one hand, a scrap of notebook paper crumpled in the other. It was awkward but readable:

#### Jeopardy Divine

Jeopardy Divine lived in the Sunset with a lady who kept birds. She liked to languish near the fly casting pool in Golden Gate Park and spend three, maybe four days a week at the Zoo, leaving her ten speed locked to an ashcan on Forty-fourth and Vicente. She was young and blue-eyed and

baby skinned and peach colored and all this was slammed between a Niagara of wheat colored hair that grabbed and hooked here and there like it was painful to let go. When she wasn't overcompensating for some mood brewing deep within, she moved with a lot of hip and the grace of a sugar-cured woman.

Jeopardy's grandmother was Tragedy Divine, a lean and some say stacked woman who was born in a red top taxi and had a gift for running errands. Tragedy shot a man when she was eighteen and made a few friends doing it. One of them was Full House Malone, a diamond dealer with a block of cat houses in Honolulu. Full House offered Tragedy the Queen Bee Room at the Salt Water Inn, and in three years she celebrated her twenty-first by unloading various "real estates" and buying up an alley near Turk Street. It was said that Full House had an underground hook on Tragedy but nobody could say for sure. They both ran a big slice of the same game and crossed each other with courtesy. Some say it was a little more. Some say it was Full House who eliminated all of Tragedy's suitors, creditors, and muscle-men. No one knows for sure. They found Tragedy and Full House in a Cadillac Viking that looked like a screen door in the badlands of Oakland. There was a case of champagne on the floor, a small bag of rare stones in one of Full House's

spats, and a waxed envelope wedged in the high heel of Tragedy's shoe. The note was addressed to Ankles Moran, a cripple who was a small arms marksman with a Ph.D. in Anthropology. Inside the letter were the means and the instructions for the care of Tragedy's illicit daughter, Empathy, who was then no more than a babe. A cop whose mortgage Tragedy paid in full saw to the letter, and Ankles Moran saw to Empathy and most of her income. Ankles disappeared for Brazil on a rainy night in February and left Empathy on the steps of the Jewish Community Center near the South side of town. He strapped a bag to her waist. Inside was the Gorelli diamond, a picture of her mother taking tea at a country estate on the peninsula, and a diary in her mother's handwriting, which began with the sentence: I seen more dirt than a four-pound gopher with the clap.

Empathy died of congenital heart failure while love-making in the luscious downtown suite of her secret lover, Bixbee Harrison. She left a silver box to Jeopardy, who was born to her some twelve years before. Inside the box was a ring, a poem by William Blake, and the diary of Tragedy Divine.

Jeopardy tipped her tongue at a cloud of cotton candy. "Uhh," she moaned. She had a habit of moaning when she ate, and moaning when she talked. There was nothing to suggest the moans indicated pain, but rather a deep appetite held in



check by some fragile tension within. "I know my grandmother mentioned him in her diary," she offered, "Dashwill was it?" It was especially nice to her that he was a bounty hunter or "something very sexy, uhh." She began to stroll through the guts of the zoo, turning her hips into each step, nodding to her feet, flipping too much hair from a cheek, poking at the candy fluff with her pink tongue. "My grandmother was a business person which was not like today, you know. She took business very seriously, uhh. Here. I copied some stuff from the diary." She pulled out a paperback copy of Fear Of Flying, flipped it open and from the center, removed a folded pile of wide ruled paper. "It was through some kind of sale..." She stopped reading, looked down at the ground, dropped the cotton fluff in front of her feet. Her face was sullen, puffy; the mouth was closed, it seemed perhaps forever over the silken tongue. "But you know," she exploded suddenly, "he had this head of pure, I mean pure white hair..." She was back again now, the hair flying, the tongue licking the words on their way like tiny postage stamps. "Look, I wrote it down: Pure white hair. And she says also that he was outstanding--that's the word she used--outstanding and, uhh, seasoned. A seasoned type, she called him, uhh. And he wore shirts with stones for buttons and white things over his shoes--spits or something--and a hat

like Groucho, you know? And he was, oh this is it: A good footprinter." This was funny to Jeopardy: the laugh displayed a group of tiny white teeth in a wrestling match with her tongue. "And let's see," she went on. "He ate at a place called The Bay City Bar and Grill on Turk Street. And uhh." She looked carefully at her notes. "On Mondays my grandmother did her banking. She wore silver and a velvet coat and took a tough man with her named Plum, who was in the pants business and made custom furniture on the side." She stretched herself and peered at a dark fellow selling peanuts. "My grandmother passed this grill on her errands and could usually--let's see--usually see the pure white hair above the heads of the others. He was a tall man, you see, and uhh, she says he was not the type you would go up to and put your arms around. A loner, she says. He was a loner. A seasoned loner, uhh." She clapped her hands together. "Oh, let's feed the elephants!"

She gave the dark man an eyefull and some tongue which made him stiff and deep voiced and weak and fatherly all at once. He ignored her, then coached her on her aim, then chuckled at her throwing arm, then gallantly offered her a free bag of peanuts. Then, when she suddenly became serious, her thighs all a quiver, her tongue pressed against her upper teeth with the concentration of a lawnmower on grass, he copped a visual rove over her hips and up the cleavage that

hung on the iron railing so ripely, like avocados on a south California tree.

But Jeopardy got bored. She scattered the peanuts before her, then spun around and dumped the rest on the pavement. "And," she said, smiling minutely at the dark fellow as if to say thanks for looking but very much your tough shit, "he did her a favor once--Dashwill. Here. I got it copied here." She oozed from the railing and read from her notes. "The guy unlocks a door and two guys follow him and wire him and they move out with everything. Simple. They tri..." Jeopardy was having trouble. "They tri--let's see--tri, uhh, trian, uhh--tri--ang--ulate, uh huh, triangulate there in a bathroom window in the Plaza Hotel that is just a beauty right down. They go in and they dust everything. The stuff is fenced off a bed on fourth street within about twenty-five minutes. I bailed Chace and had him get hold of my seasoned friend." She stopped reading. "Did you hear that? Uhh, *seasoned* friend." She bent herself to the notes, allowing her hair a holiday on her chest. "Isn't this exciting! Uhh, where was I?" She studies the notes, then lifted her head. A blank look filled her eyes. "Oh, I don't know!" She dropped the notes to a pouting hip, looked sideways twice, buried the tongue behind a pinched and sullen mouth. "I don't want to talk any more." She slid against a tree trunk, braced herself with her legs apart. "I just don't

want to." She watched the nothing in the ground, appeared to see through it, into more and more nothings, appeared to be traveling, from nothing to nothing to nothing. The peanut man walked by, rang his bell, rolled an eye at her bacon, got nervous and rang his bell too much. She raised her head like an old cannon, poked open the corner of her mouth with the pink of her tongue, blew him an invisible round of sugar, began to rattle about a man she'd met in La Jolla, a Mr. Finn, who had done her a favor one evening and, in reply to her offer to repay him, had quoted his good friend, Dashwill Hammett--this unusual memory in the wake of the peanut man's passing, and then, up suddenly on her toes, the hair alive once again and hooking up with the fruit cocktail of her face, "Oh!" she told the world, "I know--let's see the tigers eat meat!"

Porchlight Finn was one of the best light men in the safe cracking business. He was known to be steady, innovative, cool, and a master at anticipating his partner's moves. He held the flashlight on the Collier job, the Butte payroll job; he was lightman when Peewee Durham broke the First Security vault; for the Brewer jewel job he used a physician's nostril light. He was the best, the very best.

Porchlight Finn sat behind a martini at a linen covered table in the Tadich Grill. He wore a three decker herringbone

suit with a paisley liner, rubber bottom shoes, and a hunk of sapphire in his tie. He weighed in at about one-forty, spare change and all; if a wind was up he'd a got dizzy. "Sure, we'll talk," said Finn, biting off the end of a fat Garcia and blowing up a match on the belly of the table. "I knew Hammett and I knew 'im good. He was the only gumshoe with a brain and a liver. He had style, real style. I like that." A small man moved through the Tadich door. Finn lifted himself an inch or two, reached into his suit coat, watched the man sit down with a lady in green, then pulled his hand slowly from his coat. "You know," he said, still eyeing the small man, "I got a business now in..." He stopped, looked around the room, then around the table; he turned his ear to a pile of breadsticks, a napkin, the cigar, then focused on the martini. He picked up the olive like it was a bomb. "Olive, yes?" He carefully pulled out the pimento, then tapped the olive on the table. A tiny transistor plopped out. Finn held it up to his eye. "It's a miracle, yes?" He dropped the device in a glass of ice water, had the waiter remove the glass. "I knew a guy--they bugged his condom." Finn laughed at this. "Ha ha ha." He was one of the few people in the world who said, ha ha ha, and was not born in the pages of a book.

Finn lolly-gumed the cigar, ordered a pounded rump steak and a bowl of chowder, got a fill on the martini sans

olive, and pointed with his cigar: "Now Pinkerton--this was way back, maybe 1845-50, he was walkin' a beat in Chi. They call him big nose Al, the Scotsman. But he gets Frank Reno the train robber and it makes his brain swell up. He calls himself a private eye, has Frankie McCoy the sign man draw a wide open eye on his door and write 'We Never Sleep' under it. Next thing, he's big--biggest detective agency in the country. Now Hammett roamed around the states for Pinkerton and came on to Frisco around '21, maybe '22. He worked with Pinkerton outa the Flood Building on Market. This would make him twenty-five, maybe twenty-six. He had a wife he met in the hospital while he was gettin' over some tee-bee." An ugly man strolled through the door. Finn reached inside his coat, waited, then set his hand back on his cigar.

"I hear he's a writer" Finn went on. "I hear he don't like bein' a gumshoe no more. Next thing, he goes to work for Samuels the jeweler. He writes ditties all day, stuff like two lovers kissin' on top of a globe sayin', 'A Samuels diamond puts you on top of the world.' Ha ha ha. But Samuels, he likes this, yes? So he does ditties all day and gets drunk all night. He eats a lotta coffee and soup, sucks a lotta butts, hangs out in the fog, and his lungs give out. One day he comes to work on the bum, forgets his legs, blacks out, gets blood on Samuels' floor. His wife, she don't like

this. She's got a kid. She wants Hammett alive, yes? There's an argument, some pans flyin'. Hammett moves out, gets a room at the Sanford Hotel on Bush Street."

The chowder arrives with sour dough and butter. Finn ripped a hunk, held it under till it died, then plopped the sog in his mouth. "Now we got prohibition, see, and a lotta people got rubber pockets sosey can steal soup. Hammett's writin' good stuff but the creeps are payin' a penny a word. So he keeps doin' the ditties for Samuels. This is maybe '23, '24. A couple years later him and the wife are back together and they have another kid. He's rid of the crudlung, livin' in a decent place on Eddy Street, got himself a nice office upstairs at Samuels', even got an assistant, a Miss O'Toole who's a beauty see, and some says there's hanky panky upstairs, yes? So he's keepin' busy. On the side he's playin' cards, craps, goin' to the fights. Couple times he goes up north and hunts in the cold. Next thing, I hear he's makin' some money writin'. He quits Samuels, moves up to Nob Hill a few blocks west of the Mark. He sits upstairs and writes the big one about the Italian bird. Outside the breadlines are goin'. Next thing, him and the wife break up again and he bags for New York to write for a rag..."

The door filled with a neat man in a gray suit. Finn made the reach, stopped, reached again, then raised a hand,

called out "ay!" and waved the butter knife in the air. The neat man walked to the table. "How's it kid?" he said, and sat down.

"Now this," said Finn, dropping an arm around the neat man, "was Samuels' credit manager in--what?--'27?" The man nodded. "I been tellin' about how it was," said Finn.

"Then you must be ready for the bin, eh?"

"Ha ha ha," said Finn. "You know there's a Hammett hump goin' on."

"Yeh. I heard. He's probably glad he's not around to talk."

"Ha ha ha," said Finn, "ha ha ha ha." He raised his cigar, called "Yoo hoo" to the waiter and ordered muscatel for his friend.

The neat man brought his hands up from under the table, sucked on the muscatel, set it down, and drew out a cigar. "I'll tell you," he said, looking at the band, "Albert put up with an awful lot of crap from Hammett, but he got his money's worth." He bit off the end of the cigar. "Hammett was a good worker. And you know, he was like a son to Albert and I think Hammett loved the old man. He came all the way up from Hollywood once when Albert was sick. Come up in a limousine." He cracked a match on a hat rack, kissed the cigar, rolled it in the flame. "Albert had the ability to



attract to him men of greater ability than himself. He was of the rare philosophy that you never hire anybody that doesn't know more than you do. You don't surround yourself with stupid people so you can look good. Hammett was a good man in the ad department. He could out-write Albert ten thousand to one." He began to chuckle. "I remember one time Albert said to me, you son of a bitch, as soon as we've picked your brains we're gonna throw your ass out of here. He knew where the talent was and he knew how to make it work for him."

"Yoo hoo," sang Finn. The waiter brought a martini and another muscatel. The neat man swallowed the top half all at once, then placed one hand under the table and the other on his cigar. "I'll tell you," he went on, "it hurt me like hell when I heard Dash had to take some time. It wasn't his style. He like to keep it simple. I always thought there must of been something more to that whole jail thing, something they weren't telling the public." He pulled heavy on the cigar, brought up smoke in thick clouds, then chuckled and turned to Finn. "Those were some days, eh Porch?"

"Ha ha ha" said Finn, "they was, they was."

The neat man leaned back, set the cigar on his lip. "It was a wide open burg in the twenties. I never sat without facing a door. I knew guys that were at the track in the

morning and at Remedial Loan in the afternoon. The cabbies pulled five bucks a load to the houses and the bootleggers worked out of the luggage factories. There were teamsters in the police department, D.A.'s on the bum, cops and lawyers and hookers playing roulette in the Marina, and payoffs in the sqaure. We drank Abbot's Bitters with fizz and I'll tell you, four of 'em and you could lick God. And down South--jesus! Drunk at one, sober at three, drunk at nine. Fist fights at eleven. Screwing anytime. Gambling anywhere. Hollywood was on fire; somebody lit up a pile of money and poured booze on it. And back East, in Chi, it was Capone and Bugs Moran..." He swallowed the last of the muscatel. "I'm telling you: Day was night and night was day and nobody gave a flaming hump. There was scared people and crazy people and rich people and stupid people and they switched places every week. You'd a gave three years of your life for a good night's sleep."

Finn blew smoke on his soup, released an ash on the butter plate. "Yeah," he offered, "but you can't make hamburger without grinding up a little meat. Ha ha ha."

The neat man smiled, tapped his cigar in the ashtray. "Make no mistake," he said, "it was a tough, ugly, lost world most of the time, and Hammett made a point of stayin' on top of it. He wasn't the kind to go blind behind the wheel and he paid for it with drink and bad nights and a

bird's eye view of his own limits. Now I hear some wop got hold of a pulp rag and is gonna do a big issue on Hammett, and only a drunk mouse with the crabs knows what that'll be. But I'll tell you this: He never played anybody's game but his own; he never lied, he never faked, he never stopped. He was his own man."

Finn rubbed his hands beneath his cigar, dove at the last of the martini, then: "Say, look. The ex-cabbie does a wig tonight, yes? He lives out in Portreo with a lota egyptian dogs and he get's lonely. Every month he has a wig, invites all his old fares. C'mon, let's blow. Let's have some fun!"

It was a big house on a hill with high ceilings and oak mantles and glazed cane racks and brass cuspidors, and along one wall, the old mirrors from the Funhouse twisted up fat people and made them thin, small people and made them tall. In a corner near a giant Boston fern Nick Charles played the Maple Leaf Rag on a block-long Baldwin, while a soft eyed woman ran painted nails along the back of a Saluki dog that looked like Vanessa Redgrade. A plump maid with bold green eyes and a loose, full lipped mouth, wore black and a lace bow and carried a pile of chicken livers over her head. A meaty man in a bow tie floated brandy over grenadine, pecan

amer, soda, and a twist, and piled the punch on a platter carried by a Filipino with junky eyes.

The roll call was impressive. There was Moth Gironni, who crashed Quentin two weeks before; Pepper Lavon, the pickpocket; Oboe Defries, the shy hitman who once played in the Philharmonic; Bill The Nose, wearing a new scar; Bobby The Bourbon Reese, in a tie as orange as a sunset. Waxy Bossell was there, a bag of diamonds and two forty fives in his belt, and Breathless Bodine, the stoolie who popped a trunk in the East River, swam home and took a bus to Rio. In a corner sat Labrea Pits, the L.A. shark, who once took a finger for payment, and his partner, The What For Kid. Peter Collinson, the orphan booky, stood alone in the center of the room and Lazlo Lowenstein, still pale from a stretch in Leavenworth, stood making faces at the mirrored wall. Candy Verrelas was there, popping sourballs, and Dorothy Garland, delightful in red shoes, poked a long nail in the muscle of The Ben Gay Kid. Bog Humphreys sat in a fatback chair, Ecstasy O'Neil at his side, while Gladys Pips, Laughing Sally and Montana Decker giggled near a door. In a smaller room stood Albert Samuels, Sr., tall, confident, dignified, handsome in silk vest and diamond stickpin, pin stripes and stitched hanky, a Market Street Boys pin in one lapel, an Elks pin in the other. And around him, like a ring around Saturn, stood the Divines, Tragedy, Empathy,

Jeopardy, The Fatman and Mamie Pleasant, Albert Jr., and the Neat Man, Porchlight Finn and Big Al Pinkerton, and a modest, most lovely Peggy O'Toole.

Lazlo Lowenstein poked a manicured nail at Bog Humphreys. "May a stranger offer condolences for your partner's unfortunate death?" he asked.

"He may," said Bog, "so long as he stays a stranger."

"Ha ha ha," said Porchlight Finn, poking a finger at Laughing Sally. Sally bent low, then way back in uncontrollable hilarity.

The What For Kid walked over, bent over Bog with a pinched mouth and serious jowls: "I want to make this perfectly clear," he began.

"Shat ap!" said Pinkerton, "Am I sick ta deatha yar god damn rattlin'. As it is, Ah never gat any sleep."

Albert Samuels, Jr., pointed his Marlboro at Pinkerton: "Your father is your best friend," he said.

"Yar father is yar god damn shadow," said Pinkerton.

"Walter Needum was the best shadow," said Labrea Pits. "He coulda shadowed a drop of salt water from the Golden Gate to Hong Kong without losing sight of it."

"That's cute," said Ecstasy O'Neil, "very cute."

Pits got mad. "Get this dame outa here," he yelled.

Bog stood up. "Now look you crumby little two bit rat,"

he grabbed Pits' tie, twisted it around his fist. "This is my broad and nobody, I say *nobody* talks to my broad like that, see?"

Waxy yanked on his forty-fives, fired and put one hole between the eyes of Bog Humphreys. Gironnie pulled out a cannon and blew away Bossell and two mirrors. Reese emptied a revolver and brought down Pinkerton, Peggy O'Toole, The What For Kid, and the chandelier. Pistols exploded in the dark; a big gun roared, brought down a hunk of ceiling; a barking .38 blew apart the piano and two dogs; a dozen guns emptied themselves into the center of the room, dropped Laughing Sally, Oboe Defries, Porchlight Finn; a bullet kissed a hole in the doorframe, blew wood on Billy The Nose, blinded Pepper Lavon and Dorothy Garland; a machine gun settled down to business, grinding up the house, biting out chunks of curtains and the front of Montana Decker; a .32 said something in protest, said it four times--the chopper answered back, cut up Breathless Bodine and Ecstasy O'Neil. In the midst of the melee, Albert Samuels Sr., put on a wool topcoat and bowler, brushed off his sleeves, and walked casually out the door. Glass broke around him as he walked down the street.

Samuels walked toward 18th and Arkansas. A fog licked at his knees, erased storefronts, then stop signs. Near an alley on 18th a kid broke loose in tennis shoes, dumped a can full of garbage. Samuels stopped, eyed the alley, then turned to his rear. A tall man in wide hat stepped from a door way. "Got a light?" he asked. Samuels pulled out a sterling gadget; the man bent over, cupped the flame, blew smoke from an unfiltered cigarette, then stood tall and tilted his hat. He was white haired with a lean face and shoeshop eyebrows' he had a good nose and a handsome, strong mouth. He was Dashiel Hammett.

The two didn't look bad for a couple of dead men, and though they hadn't seen each other for some time, they got on famously. They laughed, threw their heads back and laughed, talked quietly, seriously, then laughed again, and touched one another's arm, and sighed, and shook their heads, and pointed at one another in the fog, and finally, aware of appointments and equally agreeable to moving on, they shook hands. "They ought to get off it," said Hammett, dropping his hand from Samuels'. "Off my case. It's silly. It's tiresome. Daydreams. Nostalgia. An unwillingness to face the future. Frittering away the present. I know all the signs. Pretty soon you wake up and it's all run past you and nothing's what it really is, not even you."

Samuels smiled, straightened his hat and tie. He placed his hand in Hammett's again, nodded and turned a corner into the fog. "Oh Dash," he called into the mist. Hammett's footsteps stopped. "Some journalist found the Falcon. He's going to put it in a magazine."

"I know" said Hammett, "I set it up."



WHO IS DEEP THROAT?

JOHN DEAN ON TOUR

## WHO IS DEEP THROAT?

It was an unassuming little motel John Dean had chosen. Squatting on the edge of town, wedged between a roadside collage of pizza huts and dirty burger stands, it offered a margin of distance from possible student demonstrations. The lodging was in keeping with the rather low profile Dean had arranged for his lecture at the University of Montana. There were to be no press conferences, no broadcasting or filming of the lecture, and no security till he arrived at the gymnasium for his speech. University officials had invited Dean to dine at the Longhorn Restaurant, a local steak house boasting a hybrid of Montana-Texas decor, but he had declined the invitation. Word had it he preferred to nap for a while, and dine on a sandwich he'd saved from his flight.

I had arranged for a short interview with Dean before his lecture, and sat at a place called Bug's Cafe waiting for him to awaken from his nap. The place was full of men, all laborers of some sort, hovering over stews and beef sandwiches and steaming coffee. I listened to the talk for a while, talk of lumber and railroad, cattle and horses, wives and kids and fishing season. It occurred to me that these were *The People*, Tricky Dick's people, the people he and his staff supposedly represented, made decisions for that would inevitably affect their lives. A ways up the road napped John Dean, ex-counsel

to the President, co-conspirator in one of the most threatening abuses of political power the country had known. In a few hours he'd talk to the children of some of these men, and walk away in one night with more money than they could save in a year.

I was not, of course, the only one in town entertaining such thoughts. The university had been receiving a good bit of mail from average citizens concerned over the use of their tax dollar. The Montana New Socialist Party was not exactly mellow with the realization that an ex-con could walk into a town with some thirteen percent unemployed and pick up thirty-five hundred dollars for an hour's worth of rap. The American Indian Movement was not particularly over-joyed with the prospect of a member of the administration that handled Wounded Knee dropping in for the evening and picking up a sizable sum that might be used for an Indian Studies Program on campus. Yet the lecture would go on. Missoula, Montana, was, in spite of a somewhat conservative appearance, a fairly liberal place. Crowded in with its lumber mills, ranches and railroad depots was a hodgepole of gambling joints, X-rated film houses, Freak stores and health food restaurants. Among the suburbs and rodeo grounds, Yellow Fronts and sportmen's shops, lived a substantial community of artists and writers. Missoula was often referred to as the Berkeley of the Northwest, a hyperbole no doubt, yet

not an inaccurate attempt at definition. It was a town in which many levels of consciousness were unfolding at once, and without an unusual amount of difficulty. It was not a town to deny John Dean the right to speak.

The motel room door opened wide, and John Wesley Dean the third, ex-White House counsel, ex-lawyer, ex-con, stood exceedingly neat in a beige worsted suit and blue rep tie. "Come on in," he said, shook my hand, looked up at a snow covered mountain, took a couple of deep breaths, and closed the door.

The room was nouveau plastic, fake rattan drapes, flower flocked bedspread, two foot lamps bolted to formica dressers. It was incredibly clean, looking as though no one had been there at all. There was no luggage, nothing but a plastic garment bag and trenchcoat lying on the bed.

Dean sat down at a formica table, lit up a hundred milimeter menthol and blew out a cloud of smoke. "Gee, that's a beautiful mountain," he said enthusiastically. "I'll bet they ski up there. Take off your coat, it's hot in here."

I set my taperecorder on the table, took off my coat, and sat down. Dean pointed to the taperecorder. "You'll find you'll learn a lot without that thing," he said with a smile. It was one hell of a smile, toothy and dominated by unusually large uppers that gave a faint whistle to his

speech. "You know Hays Gorey at Time never uses one of those, but the reportage is very accurate."

No doubt tapes were a noxious subject for Dean, yet I went along with his request. He seemed more at ease without the recorder and began a spontaneous chat on his lecture tour.

"I think it's been a good tour all in all. Of course I've been heckled once or twice over fees." He took off his glasses, set them on the table and ran a hand over his face. It was an unusual face for a man fresh out of prison. Young, absent of tension, it looked smooth and soft, and to some degree, vulnerable. "Anyway, as I said the fee issue has come up and I understand that's an issue here too. Is it an issue?"

I assured him that it was in fact, an issue.

"How much of one?"

I began to wonder who was interviewing who. It was obvious he was concerned about the issue and I asked him why.

"Well you know people think I'm commercializing Watergate. I was heckled very badly about this one night. You might say that lecture was a disaster. I'll tell you, I won't speak if that happens again." He began to cough. "You'll have to excuse me. At the last lecture the microphone went out and I talked for several hours without it." He rose and began going through his pockets. "Boy, I sure wish I had some throat lozenges." I noticed then, the fit of his clothes.

He might have looked like an ad-exec or a V.P. at Ford were it not for the fit. He looked, just too small for his suit, a bit like a boy wearing Dad's threads. "You see," he said, seating himself again, "this is not a prepared lecture. These are my personal observations on Watergate. I believe that's of more value to students than discussions on fees. I was talking to Mo about this the other day. You know it wasn't too long ago that I was a student, sitting out there in anonymity, and believe you me I could have never expected what happened to me did happen. Now I'm certainly not one to preach about Watergate--I have absolutely no credentials for that, but if I can share some of the mistakes I've made, maybe there's something to learn from Watergate."

I was struck by Dean's amiability. He was at ease talking, immediately engaging, and spoke with a tone of conviction. It was hard to imagine him the White House gadfly, spending hours on legal shenanigans and screw your enemy lists. In fact, it seemed easier to look upon him not as a Watergate conspirator, but as an ex-student, a man with a sore throat, Mo's husband.

"After all," he went on, "it is possible any one of us could end up in a Watergate."

I was not so sure of that possibility. I had been convinced for some time that it took a very special moral unconsciousness to produce a Watergate. I asked him to clarify that statement for me.

"Well, when you're ambitious you have a difficult time with your integrity. Looking back it's surprising to remember the little things I did to rationalize my behavior. I remember Jeb Magruder came into my office before his grand jury appearance and asked me to help him prepare a false story to the grand jury. Well, I told Jeb, if you want to go down there and do that, that's fine, but I can't encourage you to do it." Dean smiled. "Then I sat down for an hour and coached him to perjure himself."

I asked him if he was suggesting that everyone is ambitious enough to rationalize illegal behavior.

"Yes. Under certain circumstances the potential is there. You know, I was pretty much in awe of my position. Dealing one on one with the President can be an awesome affair. You have a tendency to work from politics rather than integrity. Under those circumstances it didn't take much for the President to turn me around. But I found my integrity. The decision I made ultimately when the choice did become mine was that I just wasn't going to lie for them"

I asked him how much of that decision was practical.

"You mean did I want to save my ass? Yes, I wanted to save my ass. However, I did a considerable amount of soul searching in the process. It was a very serious decision. After all, I could pull down the *President*."

I was looking for more, of course. Something about good old every day decency, a little nausea over enemy lists and weirdo political pressures and burglaries and manipulation of agencies. A splash of buggering amazement inside my skull: Of what consciousness was Dean that of all the ponderables before him in those hours of decision, his most overwhelming concern was the welfare of Richard M. Nixon? I asked him if he hadn't had any moral quiverings about his actions *before* he contacted the prosecutors.

"Of course. I knew I was being used."

It was a strange answer, and it threw me. I found myself supplying Dean with a better one. "I assume," I said, "that you have never been tested like that before in your lifetime."

"Yes. That's true."

There was a knock at the door. A man with a butterfly moustache walked in, followed by a fatman in a blazer. They were the security team the university had assigned to Dean. Dean rose and adjusted his tie. "Well," he said, "It's time for me to go. I hope I've been of help to you." He turned to the fatman. "Is there time for me to stop for some throat lozenges?"

"I have one more question," I said. "How would you like to be remembered by history?"

Dean smiled. "I guess if I had to write my epitaph, order my tombstone so to speak: He was an honest man."



There was a half hour before Dean would speak. I walked up to Bug's Cafe, ordered a beer and looked over some of my notes. On one page I had scribbled the following:

Ambition = Watergate  
Integrity = Not lying for them  
Soul Searching = Pull down the President  
Moral Quiverings = Being used

As I stared at these scribbles I had a mounting realization that I had not *really* talked with Dean. There was something about his language that prevented it. Though his remarks were clothed in some righteous sounding rhetoric, they were at last, banal; they lacked a sense of motive outside the confines of self, some recognition of the nature of action in terms of results, results that not only affected Richard Nixon, or Dean himself, but the American people. I began to wonder, then, what kind of moral awakening Dean *had* had? I had done some research on Dean before his arrival and remembered now, as I swilled the last of my beer, an interview with Dean conducted by his respected Time correspondent, Hays Gorey. Gorey had asked Dean what thoughts had been running through his mind during his week long testimony to the Watergate prosecutors. Dean recalled an incident from his childhood when he was playing with matches and burned down the garage. His father asked him if he had done it and he said he had not. "But of course my father knew I had done it," said Dean. "He sent me to my room, saying,

'John, we'll talk again when you are ready to tell the truth'. While I was in my room, he sent the fire marshall to talk to me. He must have been ten feet tall, wearing a big blue uniform. I can see him to this day. He said to me: 'Now John, you haven't told your father the truth.' The impact of the blue uniform as the authority of the law was enormous. I said to myself: 'The jig is up.'"

I sensed in Dean the remnants of a lingering psychological division, that odd capability he showed for condemning Jeb Magruder in one moment and coaching him to perjure in the next, still gouging some unfathomable gulf between language and action. The words were good enough--ambition, integrity, soul searching, yet the rationale behind them was deficient. The jig was certainly up for Dean, and one must commend him on his choice to speak the truth, yet I wonder how accessible Dean might have been were it not for the enormous blue uniform of the law taking him to task.

Still, what gnawed at me more than Dean himself, was my own bit of condescension there in the motel room, that strange moment when I found myself supplying Dean with the answer I wanted to hear. No doubt Dean's manner, a manner capable of eliciting a rather genteel response, shared some liability for that moment. There was a good combination of vulnerability and affability working in Dean, and it produced a somewhat narcotic effect. But I suspect that a large part of my

response was the need to believe that in fact, Dean's action had been basically organic, some deep moral awakening within. One must be careful with need; it can blind one to the clout around the bend.

Outside Bug's Cafe the wind was whirling down the Missoula mountains. I walked toward my car pondering Dean's statement that "any one of us could end up in a Watergate." It occurred to me that what we call ambition may be no more than blind need, the kind of need that befell me in that moment at the motel, the need to ignore reality. And if Dean had said what I wished to hear, might the last few pages have been written differently? Might I have thought twice, perhaps thrice, about "pulling down" John Dean?

"It's probably necessary to introduce myself as a Watergate figure to make sure who it really is. It is John Dean, and not E. Howard Hunt in John Dean disguise." Such were Dean's opening remarks to the several thousand gathered at the gymnasium. He stood impeccable in the same biege worsted on a platform complete with podium and bell speakers. Behind him stood the fatman and the man with the butterfly moustache, flanked by the extra security of several hard looking university jocks. Over Dean's head hung an enormous American flag.

"When I address the subject of Watergate," Dean went on, his whistle now pronounced over the speakers, "I kind of feel like the latest Bridget Bardot lover. I know what I'm supposed to do, the question is, how can I make it interesting." A roar of laughter. "They told me they wouldn't understand that in Missoula." Applause. "Well, maybe we ought to agree on what we're talking about when we talk about Watergate." He went on to describe a phone poll he had conducted at random, asking several dozen people in the Los Angeles area to define Watergate for him. The opinions of those he talked with stimulated him to construct a working definition: The corrupt use of power by government for political purposes. "Indeed," offered Dean, "that includes a litany of activity, immoral, illegal, unethical, a litany that constitutes a rather sad chapter in the history of this country. Now I've had a lot of time to think about why I did the things I did...things I can't exactly say I'm proud of or my mother was probably happy to hear I was doing. (Laughter) It would be very easy to say I did them out of loyalty to Richard Nixon, but that isn't really the answer, because loyalty was a part of it but loyalty figured into another equation--it was to my advantage to be loyal. The honest answer is I got blinded by my own ambition. I sold my integrity in pursuit of ambition, and your integrity simply

only belongs to yourself." A loud and steady applause followed this bit of confession, broken only by the entry of several Indians carrying posters declaring FLUSH THE JOHN, WHO WILL PAY *YOUR* LEGAL FEES? and HOW MUCH DO YOU MAKE IN ONE NIGHT? Dean recognized them with a smile, watched them quietly seat themselves in the aisle at the center of the gym. A dog broke loose from somewhere and ran up to the podium, sniffing and wagging its tail. "He's welcome too," said Dean, to much applause.

Dean rattled off a rather long summary of the events that led him to speak to the Watergate prosecutors, complete with accuracies on times and dates and an in-depth synopsis of his famous cancer on the presidency rap. The summary was at times, illuminating in its disclosures of representative government:

"In December I began having conversations with Haldeman about it and telling him of my concerns. I remember one where he said, 'John, we've got to get rid of this thing. We can't have Watergate hanging over this second term. What we need is a good public relations scenario that lays some of the facts out, enough of them that people will buy it and the thing won't trouble the White House.' I said, 'Well, Bob, what'll happen as a result of that is that Mitchell will be indicted, Magruder will be indicted, Ehrlichman will be indicted, you will be indicted, and *I* will be indicted.' He

said that doesn't sound like a very good public relations scenario. (Laughter) But you know, this attitude was quite common. For some reason, it was so very much oriented to what was the best public relations face we could put on these things. I remember in late 1970--I happened to read the press schedule that day and the President was having into his office some student college newspaper editors. About twenty minutes before the meeting I was told the President wanted me there for meeting. When I got there, the President said to me, 'John, I've got some of those long-haired kids coming in today and you and I are going to be talking about the budget when they come in.' Well, I'd never talked to the President about the budget in my life and I didn't know anything about the budget, but I said, yes, Sir. Meanwhile, he tells me to sit by his desk and the aides are bringing in budget books and stacking them up on his desk. In walk the students and the President looks up surprised that they're there. (Laughter) And he says, 'John and I here are talking about the budget and I wanted you people to know that the young people in my administration have a voice.' (Moans) Then he walked around his desk and gave a few remarks about his general budgetary philosophy and turned to me and said, 'John, you tell these young people about the budget.' So I repeated what I just heard him saying in some different words and left the meeting very confused about

why I had been there. Well, during that time I didn't get to the barber shop every week and maybe my hair was a quarter of an inch over my collar now and again. So I called Haldeman and I said, 'Bob, why was I in that meeting?' And he said, 'John, the President thinks you look Hippie.'

Quite a long applause for this one, complete with whistles and a rattle of hurrahs. During it, the Indians, led by a tall, braided fellow built like a fullback from the pros, marched up to the edge of the platform and began fumbling with some papers and a portable electronic megaphone. Dean studied them for a moment, then went on talking. He spoke of his bachelor days and an evening he had spent tipping a few in an overcrowded Georgetown pub. He was wearing his White House buzzer that night, an electronic gizmo attached to his belt that rang on interminably till he made phone contact with the White House switch board. He left the pub and went out to M Street, a favorite promenade of students, where he found a phone booth and called the White House. Agnew was on the other end, in a tizzy about an appearance he was making on Face the Nation the following morning. He wanted Dean to coach him on how to handle Watergate related questions. "Well," said Dean to the audience, "the irony of the thing to me was that when I looked out of that phone booth and saw all those students walking around--if they could figure out *who* I was talking to and *what* I was talking about--

but of course I successfully deluded myself in avoiding even thinking about that. Well, the fact that I'll wear the Scarlet Letter of Watergate the rest of my life isn't something I'll look forward to."

The Scarlet Letter of Watergate: A literary allusion in the midst of some rather literary anecdotes and a discussion on the whirlies of ambition, integrity, the complexities of loyalty and moral recognition. One could imagine Dean writing at last the big American novel, a novel worthy of Hawthorne, with Dean himself the pivotal character in a robust twentieth century classic. But such thoughts gave way to the mounting tension at the edge of the platform. The big braided Indian was belting out a stream of garbled rhetoric through the portable megaphone. Dean listened for a moment, then: "Would you like to come up here?" Resounding applause. The Indian stepped up to the platform, placed a sheet of paper on the podium, and in the process, stepped on Dean's foot. Dean smiled: "Excuse me," he said. Again, resounding applause.

The Indian began reading a prepared statement on racism in the Nixon Administration, centering on the events at Wounded Knee. The statement was full of political rhetoric and intellectual excursions minority style, and the Indian was having just frankly a difficult time reading it. The audience began to laugh.



"If you care about this country," someone yelled from the bleachers, "you'll let him speak!"

"Fuck you!" yelled a young boy in front.

A most lovely young Indian woman rose to her feet. "It's not costing you thirty-five hundred dollars to hear this!" she yelled.

"We wanna hear Dean," screamed a bearded fellow in the stands, "fuck you!"

During this volley the Indian kept right on reading, to no one's overwhelming appreciation. He finally suggested that if Dean were serious about moral commitment to the American electorate, he might begin by pledging all or part of his lecture fee to the American Indian Movement. It was not a particularly intelligent request, for Dean was no longer a viable political target. In fact, the request was equivalent to an attempted mugging in a back alley. Yet one understood its origin. The Indians were in a difficult phase as a minority group. They had made some gains after Wounded Knee, but were in a position of little recognition. Unlike the Blacks, they were not able to strike at the society effectively, for they were not yet able to comprehend the relationships of media and power.

"All right," said Dean, "why don't you sit down and we'll talk about it." The Indian moved with some chagrin from the podium, and as he walked across the platform, Dean held out

his hand. Confused, his hard line disrupted, the Indian turned awkwardly, placed his hand in Dean's, while the audience applauded Dean's gesture with much gusto.

Dean moved back to the podium and adjusted the microphone. "I'm not sure," he said calmly, "what the question is other than your desire for my fees. (Applause) But let me tell you frankly that my involvement with Wounded Knee was limited. I was, and I'm not proud of it, busy with the coverup at the time. Now many of the points you brought up are valid points, but I admit I don't know much about it. If you want my fee you'll have to talk with my agent. Obviously this is the kind of thing you might want to discuss in a private meeting. I'm very tired from this tour, I have to get up early and leave, but if you'll accept my apology maybe there is another time we could meet or if you want to write me, I'd be happy to receive your letter. I think that answers the questions you've raised and I appreciate your raising them" Applause.

It had not answered the Indian woman's questions. "I think you can see the attitude of an oppressed people," she called through the megaphone, "you can see what the dominant society does. What measures did Nixon take to incorporate pluralism, which happens to be the great American Dream, that we all have basic human rights, that we will all have a voice in this government? The fact that you served four months for your crimes--we have an Indian brother who is serving *fifteen*

years for purse snatching! I'd like your views: Is this what justice is all about? Is this what democracy is?"

Dean placed a hand in his coat pocket, looked down at the floor for a moment, then, addressed the woman in slow, quiet tones. "Indeed, there is not equal justice in our country. It's a nice thing to say, but it doesn't work that way. Indian Americans, Black Americans, Japanese Americans-- it is a list of horrors." He paused, shifted his weight a little and placed both hands on the podium. "But Watergate is our subject tonight and I'm not really here to discuss..."

The woman began to yell through the megaphone: "We want to point out what's happening right now! The conflict value that exists. Watergate occurred in the past. To us Indians that isn't relevant to our reality..." The audience drowned her out with a steady roar of stomping and clapping. Dean held up his hands and quieted them.

"My problem," said Dean, clearing his throat, "is that I'm not aware of your problems and I'm not qualified to stand here and address them."

"We're asking for the opportunity to present those problems."

"I think you're looking for a forum to develop your problems and I think the people here came to talk about Watergate." Huge applause.

"If you truly believe in justice and equality will you commit what portion of money you have to our group?"

"I wish I could. I wish I could give you a lot more money. I wish I understood your problem better than I do. I'm glad you brought it to my attention and I venture to say I'll think a lot more about it and know a lot more about it the next time we have an opportunity to talk about."

"*Bullshit!*" yelled a boy from the stands.

Dean smiled. "Sounds like Segretti\* back there." Laughter. "Let me say that this is the sort of thing that is wasting everyone's time." Huge applause. "If you want to go on with this I'm ready to go home." Applause.

The Indian woman began to speak again, was drowned out by a lengthy pounding of feet on the floor. The braided fellow and several others began to move toward the platform; the security team moved closer to Dean. Dean remained calm. "Can we proceed with the program now?" he asked the crowd. Huge applause. "I'd like to open up the question-and-answer period."

A standing microphone was wrestled front-center and a long line of students stepped forward and readied themselves for the question-and-answer period. The Indians blocked the microphone for a moment, then, proud and frustrated and alone, pulled back and sat themselves in the center aisle.

---

\*Segretti was an official in The Committee to Re-Elect The President. He was noted for his use of foul language.

As the question-and-answer period got underway, I looked at the scribbles in my notebook again:

- Sit down and we'll talk about it =
- (1) There is not equal justice in this country
  - (2) I don't know much about your problems
  - (3) If you want my fee, talk to my agent
  - (4) I think the people here came to talk about Watergate

Again, this problem of Dean's language carrying a duality, at once *seeming* to have substance, yet settling finally into a kind of titillating banality. It was clear that if one were to really know Dean, know him beyond what appeared to be one continuous image from motel room to podium, one would have to get beneath his language and take a good look at his behavior, which in the case of the Indians, was a series of slick evasions and subtle manipulations of the audience. Certainly the Indians were less than magnetic in their approach, yet I found it hard to believe that a man trained well in the functions and philosophies of American Government, a man who held the position of Counsel to the President of the United States, could find much to say on the illegality of his own and the Executive Branch's actions over the past few years, but very little to say on the subject of human rights. There seemed an enormously competent Dean on this

one level, and a complete failure on the other. The subject was in fact, John Dean, and it was exclusive; the individual took precedence over the collective. Dean was doing more than "sharing" his mistakes; he was reproducing them.

I recalled now, as the first student stepped up to the standing microphone, a photo I had run across in my research on Dean. Dean and Barry Goldwater, Jr., were posed with the swimming team at Staunton Military Academy, one of Dean's alma maters. What struck me about this photograph was that Dean was the only one looking bored, and to some degree, empty. There was a look on his tilted face of, "Well, I'll put up with it," and a dull, far away glum in his eyes. He showed nothing of the go get 'em fire of the other athletes. Pondering that photo in the stacks of the library, I considered the possibility that Dean may have been seeking some confrontation all his life, that in all those years of prep and ambition there was little to test his true fiber. The tragedy of the upper-middle class trail, I considered, was that though it might move a man through the herd with ease and style, it failed to develop a rooted sense of self. It was a trail notorious for its tight pastures, its brands, and the slaughterhouse around the bend. No, one could not gain too much self-actualization in the cow market.

Yet it occurred to me now, as this photo appeared before the mind's eye, that Dean may not have been bored at all, but

waiting, waiting to manuever; and those eyes, so different from the rest: it may not have been emptiness, but lights out, nobody home. Whatever the case, there was most certainly a well oiled screen personality in Dean, complete with a slick and subtle grace and all the lubricants of the rhetorician. It performed its function well on T.V. time, but failed miserably when confronted with real time.

"Mr. Dean," said the student at the standing microphone, "was Nixon paranoid?"

"Well. That's a fair question..." Laughter.

"Mr. Dean. I understand that Americans who traveled to Hanoi were on a special enemy list. I've traveled to Hanoi twice..."

"I don't recognize you..." Laughter.

"Mr. Dean. How do you account for the famous eighteen-minute gap?"

"Well, it looked like it may have been the result of someone unfamiliar with machinery, someone who hadn't driven a car in a long time, been chauffeured around a lot..." Applause.

It went on like this for some time, the questions served up from the microphone and Dean volleying them back with a lively wit. Then the flak started again.

"Mr. Dean. And I'll refrain from giving you a more colorful name. You spoke of selling your integrity for the

sake of ambition. Now that is obviously the root of corruption at each and every level. Now what hope do you have for the future of our system of government, when a self admitted criminal as yourself, will, after serving a token sentence, go out and deliver a fireside chat complete with all the rhetorical tricks of a lawyer to an overly polite audience who leave with the total reassurance that--he's not such a bad guy after all?"

Dean looked down at the podium and smiled. "Well," he said, "that sounded a little like a loaded question, but I think we can handle it. (Applause) I have really come here to tell you the way it is. I'm not pretending to by anything I'm not..."

"That isn't what I asked you. I asked you what hope do you see for our system of government..."

"Well I'm working up to that--as you worked up to your question. (Applause) Let me just say this. I don't think what I say here will affect the trends of history. But maybe there is something to be learned about government. You decide."

The student started to speak again, then sighed, turned and shuffled away, a disgusted look on his face. His had been the only comment of the evening that had questioned the motives of the audience's response to Dean, a response seeming one long duplication of my moment of imbalance in the motel



room. It had been a strangely cooperative audience on the whole, a little too willing with its applause and laughter. If Dean were President he no doubt would have the good wishes and confidence of some three thousand of the common electorate gathered in the gymnasium, for he gave them pretty much what they wished to hear--nothing. The danger in such an experience is that it leaves reality to the imagination, and when coupled with continuous anecdote, apology, and confession, it deflates the critical aspect of thought. The result is a kind of stage show, in which the enormity of specific social action is reduced to popularized and palatable concepts. Americans are perhaps, primed for such experiences. One of the side effects of mass media is repetition, a continual droning of social nightmare into the collective consciousness, till instinctual reactions are deadened. No doubt the first few Viet Nam body counts appearing on the six o'clock news, made for serious indigestion of one's evening meal, yet after four or five years of such nightly shorts, one had either turned off the set, or turned off one's mind, managed to gobble down the meal unaffected, a state similar to the terminal stages of heroin addiction. The net result of this kind of bombardment may be an almost compulsive need for some comment on the state of affairs, beyond the fact that they merely exist, a compulsion made drunk and giddy with the mere admission of guilt, the

mere apology of someone at the controls. If this was the secret need of the audience, then they were up for grabs as surely as I was in my moment of condescension at the motel room, and without significant recovery. Perhaps then, Dean was right: any one of us might end up in a Watergate.

"Mr. Dean," said a thin blond girl, "I would like to ask you were you happy when you heard about the convictions of the other conspirators?"

Dean placed his hands in his coat pocket and leaned back from the podium. "You know," he said to the girl, "I've been asked that question before. The first night I began talking to students a young girl came to me and said, 'Weren't you happy the day you learned that Haldeman and Erlichman and Mitchell had been convicted?' I told her I couldn't say I was happy about the convictions, though I was pleased the system worked. Once I had lost my own freedom I couldn't really wish prison on anyone. Yet not too many years ago I would have said I was quite happy. It wasn't too many years ago I was quick to jump to judgment about people. I could read about someone in the paper and form my own opinion about them pretty damn quick. But prison gave me the time to think about things I should have a long time ago. I told that young girl what I was doing when I heard about the convictions, so she might better understand my answer. I was in my room in prison, reading a book. I urged her to

go to her school library and dig out a copy of the book, Somerset Maugham's The Summing Up, and look to page fifty-three. Now if you'll bear with me for a moment, I'd like to read you that page:

At first sight it's curious that our own offenses should seem to us so much less serious than the offenses of others. I suppose the reason is we all know the circumstances that have occasioned them, and so manage to excuse in ourselves what we cannot excuse in others. We turn our attention away from our own defects, and when we are forced by untoward events to consider them, find it easy to condone them. For all I know we are right to do this. They are a part of us, and we must accept the good and the bad in ourselves together. But when we come to judge others, it is not by ourselves as we really are that we judge, but by an image that we have formed of ourselves, from which we have left out everything that offends our vanity or would discredit us in the eyes of the world... There is not much to choose between men. They are all a hodgepodge of greatness and littleness, of virtue and vice, of nobility and baseness. Some have more strength of character, or more opportunity, and so in one direction or another give their instincts freer play. But potentially, they are the same...

Perhaps we should close here..."

"Mr. Dean," called a young boy from the microphone, "can you take one more question?"

Dean smiled. "All right, one more."

"Mr. Dean. In Bernstein and Woodward's book the person responsible for leaking the truth to the Washington Post was code named Deep Throat. Mr. Dean: *who is Deep Throat?*"

Dean chuckled, shifted his weight a little, looked down at the podium for a moment, then up at the boy. "Well it isn't me, I'll tell you that. (Laughter) Now I'd like to

close here, and let me do so with this point: You will have a voice in the government. It won't *all* be decided in the back rooms. So speak up. Ambition is not a bad word. Ambitious people get things done. But I have this wish: That those ambitious people keep their heads better than I did. I wish you good luck and thank you for being a very nice audience." Huge applause.

Out at Bug's Cafe I sat downing the last of my third beer. At a table nearby sat a group of students having a late supper. They were discussing Dean's lecture and one fellow felt he had learned much from the Maugham quotation. It was a wise bit of perception by Maugham, yet I sensed some misdemeanor in Dean's use of it. It tended to remove the focus from Dean himself, and place it on the audience. Yet one must be more than willing to suppose that some awakening, spurred by testing, had motivated Dean to read it. We do judge from the safety of our own images, images that more than likely hold little viability without public testing. Dean's momentum from the Staunton swimming pool to this evening may have been the slow realization of that fact, and if so, a confrontation that quite possibly put him in possession of some knowledge his audience had yet to possess. But there are times when one might do better to call a spade a spade, and *then* consider the potential darkness of one's

own soul. It was questionable whether Dean's audience was capable of really perceiving the message in Maugham's thought, without first perceiving clearly the man who read it.

The snow begins to fall outside the window of Bug's Cafe, and as I sit a bit light headed with my fourth beer, I have this unusual daydream: Dean is in the phone booth on M Street in Georgetown. He is wearing a block sweater with a scarlet *w* on it, and is reading from page fifty-three of Maugham's book. The students are promenading before him, hand in hand, hopeful faces intent upon future. It is a lovely night, fresh and clear and so full with laughter and rich conversation that no one seems to notice Dean. He reads on anyway.

II  
FICTION

THE ROAD HOME

## THE ROAD HOME

Rain hammered the cloth top of the car and streaked the windshield, blurring the snakey outline of the coastal road. Bernie moved close to the glass, rubbed his knuckles at the moisture, then shifted into fourth gear. He heard a rumble of water beneath the car, felt the rear wheels give, and eased off the gas. Kit tensed and turned to him.

"Bern. Be careful, honey."

"I am babe. I am." He drew out a handkerchief, rubbed the glass hard, then settled back in the seat, loosened his tie, sighed and blew air at his brow. He looked at Kit.

"You know, you were great tonight."

Kit smiled. "You like your wife, huh?"

Bernie looked at her and smiled, placed a hand on her knee and patted lightly. Kit leaned over and kissed his ear. "Who was the one with the jewelry," she whispered.

"Oh, that's Bergazi's wife. She's alright once you get to know her."

"I bet."

Bernie pulled from her. "You weren't doing so bad yourself, you know."

"What does *that* mean?"

"I saw you with Hank."



"Well, that's what you wanted, wasn't it? A little pawing--some wifely promo..."

"It was a little more than pawing."

Kit threw her head back and laughed. "You're really upset, aren't you. I think you're jealous." She laughed again. "You're jealous," she teased, "aren't you."

Bernie grabbed the shifter, wedged it forward and sailed into a curve. "Shut up," he said.

Kit glared at him. "Hey. Come on..."

"Just shut up."

Kit lit a cigarette and turned on the radio. She moved her shoulders to the music, humming along and tapping her thigh. Bernie watched her for a moment, then: "Turn it down."

"Why?"

"Turn it down."

"You turn it down. I like it up."

"Damn it." He reached for the radio and quickly, like a glass slipping from a wet hand, the car left the road. He wrestled the wheel in a long slide through mud and rock, panicked, hit the brakes, felt the wheel jerk from his hands and the car give way, give and buckle at the edge of something hard, then twist, turn upside and roll. He felt Kit's body over him, heard her scream, then a crunching sound and glass

going and then he slid and blasted through the torn top and onto the mud and rock and wet.

He was cut there, he could tell, cut behind somewhere. His head maybe. Didn't know for sure. Might be other things too. Broken maybe. No. Coming back. Legs moving. Arms okay. Something on face. Glass. Shake the glass off. Lift the head. Yah. Okay. *Not bad this winning, winning out on motion unknown, motion so utterly odd no one ought to live through it.*

Kit. Jesus. Kit.

"Kit? Kit?" He reached with both hands, ran them through the broken glass, along the twisted seats. The hands passed over something soft, warm. "Jesus, oh God." He kneeled in the mud, wrenched the door open. Kit was pinned, a fender crumpled on her hips. "Baby, oh Jesus, baby--hey." He brought his hands to her face, called to her, shook her head, called to her again, then leaped from the car, stumbled, raised himself and scrambled up the muddy embankment to the road.

"Hey! Hey somebody!" The road was empty, and just the other side, washing blind under the rain, was the sea, groaning as it does at night, licking rocks and groaning under dark and rain. He ran toward it, toward what seemed idiotically for a moment, an answer to his call, then realized that this way, toward the sea, was wrong, offered nothing, could do nothing.

Now he looked for those farms he'd seen on bright white Sunday drives, farms washed in salt and wind that stood out reaching from hills so rolling low and filled with grace they took his breath away and made him look behind his silly life not long enough, he thought now, not long enough. And find one now, here, this ruddy blackened night, find the one you hoped you might have, the one glowing at you Sundays, glowing life so simple you might have hated what you'd done to living, had you not sensed dull somewhere that choice is chameleon, and inside the slatboards of houses high on hills, wives go hungry for a bus south days on end, the men, bitter edged on work and small means, spit before the hard coaxing of the land.

"Hey! Some-bahdy!!" Nothing. Not a road or a light, the farmers, exhausted, to bed by nine. He runs anyway. Up and up the road, looking. Back, back down, farther down, looking. Nothing. "Oh, God." He grabs at his hair, runs for the car.

He slides through the wreckage, looks for blood. He touches everywhere. He wants to find it, the place, soft and open and damaged. Find it, work on it, know it, deal with it. But finds nothing, so listens, hears the heart. The heart beats; the lungs are still. Somewhere--from somewhere--something he'd read, heard, yah, something about three minutes without air and the brain...

He moves close, and hands gently on her face, pulls her mouth to his and puffs, pulls away, puffs, pulls. "Kit! Shit, damn it!" He shakes her head, presses hard his mouth to her's, blows, feels her belly rise, blows again, and again. He looks at the face. Calm. Peaceful. *Like a nap, like an afternoon in the sauna, like the mornings, thousands of them, head on the pillow, eyelashes fluttering, faint smile. He looks at her while dressing, thinks of the slick ladies at work, the beds and the ladies and this lady, in early light, lashes fluttering. This bed of theirs--different, complex, permanent.*

"Kit! Kit! Talk baby--c'mon, now--talk to me!"

Careful now. Gently. He palms her forehead, moves her hair from her face. He pulls her head to his and blows. *Like so many times, mouth to mouth, eye to eye, but never this, this strange passion now, this kiss on the edge, desperate, blowing life, crazy crazy life, his to hers, breath to breath, the belly swelling, letting go, taking in, giving up, breath for breath, year for years, this loving, coming in, coming out, giving life, dying.*

"Kit! Kit! Can you hear me, babe. Hey!" He holds her face in his hands. "Can you hear me!"

An urge now to beat life into her. *Like wild love-making after drinks in big houses by the pool, hips in girdles and silver earrings, small stares across a room loaded like trick dice...well they're all a bunch of phonies, but who can think that everything will come from one man, one woman. Rock me hard and we'll call it good and slick and*

*sleep proud. And get up and the bed is old, lived in, stained and dull again.*

"Jesus, baby, *breathe!*" He takes in air, takes it hungry, takes it with rain, raises up and lets the rain pelt him, cool him. He turns his neck, pulls it from the wet grip of his tie, tears at the knot. Buttons fall from the shirt. He yanks at the tie. The knot tightens. "Damn it!" He stops, calms himself, works carefully on the knot, and from somewhere behind his eyes, he sees a telephone, the dial clear, white against a black phone, an old phone, a farmer's phone, plank wall nearby, a standing lamp, coffee. He sees himself dialing, sees the ambulance white, the red light flicking at barnyards, competent hands, the blanket, heavy, gray, warming her... *The oven hot each night, hot and ready with hen and roast, how they flew and roamed, you can almost tell...the young hand twirling a baton, son raising grit in a go-cart...the rude plumber, sink still broken, must have a talk on the sink. What a time it was shopping, salads at lunch and Macy's has a dress and maybe you ought to tell the boss about your idea, it's a good idea. Tie striped low and yes, what an idea--thirty thousand can be forty, but the boss, he's moody and wears plaid and getting on with him is low, so damn low, but hanky panky aside, I can*

*handle him*

*handle him*

*handle him*

*Yes I think you can*

*Wonderful*

*Let's eat*

*Kids, let's eat*

*The oven's hot*

*The oven's hot*

He pulls her to him, blows, pulls back, blows with a wish to reach inside and fix it, pull off that slink fox go get 'em this year's fashion and speak to her close inside and tell her to get fixed! Tender he'd be, *as in bed, down low licking like a big cat the taken meat, probing for the live spots, feeling her raise up like a young mare in season, dank and wet and flowing, breasts high under full lungs; those breasts, exposed in vanity mirror through Roebuck nightie, flat against elbow at night, hunkered into brassieres, pressed and slick on the child's face... How the girl did suckle...got to get her on a bottle soon, honey, I want to have another, baby, two years apart...do you think I've lost my figure? They'll have to have good schooling...their little brains convoluting like egg bread in a bakery window fresh and laced in wax paper, ready for the big bite.*

To fix her, like a carburetor or a fuse.

He crawls in the mud for what, he doesn't know, finds a tire iron and is happy, crazy happy. He hooks the tool on the edge of the squashed fender, pulls, pulls, slips, lacerates his hand, roars angry, slams the iron against the unyielding metal, slams it again, and again, then stares,

blank, exhausted, rain splattering his eyes and face and neck, splattering this night, awful night, splattering it to pieces.

He hooks his fingers beneath the crumpled metal, kneels, strains upward. Bend it he would, like the boss if he could, bend it up and away, free those hips--he knows there's better-- *down in copy, the divorcee, round like a ripe plumb*. Wants to bend this metal up and free those old, slapity, familiar hips. How they curl sometimes after a few belts. *In the heat of afternoon, bottle of wine, rubbing thighs soaped in the shower--his nuts rocket those two like men to the moon--two, out of one place, two, different, go-cart and drum majorette--his nuts, held in her hands, like wash, and baked potatoes, and lipstick, and Redbook in the afternoon with coffee. White kitchen table, potted plants, reading on hysterectomies and Spock and women's problems--I hurt here, must be a cyst. Down low the doctor probing, very competent. She walks crying to the bedroom. They don't know, she cries. A cyst--high--a glob, hung up somewhere. Have to go in--inside. I'm frightened. My husband, I'm frightened...*

He lifts hard and nothing gives, not an inch, the fender dumb, flat across her hips. He moves again to her mouth and blows, this time steady, rhythmic. *To give life as lover. Pressing, giving. JESUS KIT CHRIST BREATHE BACK!* Is he taking or giving, he's not sure, sucking or blowing, maybe it's all the same, he thinks, maybe it's all the same.

But who knows, who knows, WHO KNOWS WHEN A MAN MIGHT BE CALLED OUT IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT TO WORK WITH LIFE LIKE SO MUCH CLAY? *She was good at the wedding, good at something feminine, and how lively he was, the ice falling back from the raised glass with a clunk, and everyone grand in tux and chiffon. Old buddies slapping backs, bourbon on the loose. Her father talking straight business from the hip and mother so happy for them...*

"Kit! Kit! My God, my God."

He's kissing now, no blow left. A kiss, *before love-making; a kiss, back from those trips East, natty little ladies in over-crowded rooms, upstairs a bottle and chit chat--the secret, far away business of the businessman. Present for the kids--clock radio and Evel Knieval sweatshirt and how was your trip?* A kiss, like so many. He feels his short, hot breath come back on him, and presses lovingly on sleeping beauty, presses and touches lightly a cold cheek. Equal they are now, this one alive, this one her three minutes used up. He touches her hair tenderly. A kiss, like so many. A kiss--light, aching, regrets, absurd--goodbye.

"She's gone buddy. C'mon now fella, she's gone." What a face they have, cops in tender moments. He staggers, watches welders spark light to torches and cut up his car like a hunk of cheese. "C'mon, buddy, let's sit in the



car now till the boys get things taken care of." He sits. Thump thump the wipers. Red light turning, rain pelting off the big black hood. Ten-four radio bleep under sawed off shotgun mounted well like a hat rack. "Cigarette? They got some coffee downtown. Say, what happened fella? What the hell happened?"

III  
POETRY

## ROAD TO BONNER

We head for unknown country  
top down on this body by Fischer.  
Buford plays fiddle in the marshmallow seat while  
fishermen wave from high water and  
what's this?  
Z sailing down the road in his crate truck  
tipping his hat!  
The fiddle hums like nature is somehow hick and  
in the canyons the water sings a western tune.  
We pass the rum around,  
our high hats catch the wind and whistle,  
skies open like lonely women and  
let the rum pour!  
give me the whole fucking sky in my lap  
I want to french it and feel it up  
but up the road my father stands in suit and tie,  
his big thumb beckoning.  
We screech and stop,  
hand him a rum;  
he hops in and  
complains about the noise,  
spills rum down Buford's fiddle,  
offers up a deck of cards for gas and oil.  
My hat flies on a hairpin turn,  
rolls down a gravel embankment.  
He rides low like these fatso springs,  
his bumper scrapes sparks across the road.  
I play with the push button windows,  
watch the speed limits  
in his eyes.

## MOTOR POOL

I hike my Levis  
kick the shit offa my boots like  
Paul Newman  
and walk in.

Aint nobody lookin tougher  
cept a lady in denim  
pool Q  
layin cross a thigh.

I plug in a quarter  
rack em up  
jerk balls around like  
fast nuts  
under cups  
point out four or five pockets  
BLAST  
and smirk.

She fires in the 15  
and the 1  
straddles from behind  
pokes in the 9  
shakes her hair and blasts the 2  
chalks up  
taps in the 7 and 11  
banks the 3  
hard enough  
to combo the 4 and 5  
Im lookin mean  
dreamin of that kinda meat  
in bed  
fast and accurate and  
DARING  
when the 8  
flips outa the far pocket  
busts a glass on the bar  
does in a plumber  
totals out the jutebox  
knocks off my knee cap.

Im hoppin around on my high heels  
singing to my knee  
NEXT  
she says.

For Paul Zarzyski

## YOU AND ME LADY

Your blouse and my shirt on the line  
catching wind;  
your arms holding me,  
kneading bread,  
holding your head as you cry--  
my arms struggling  
angry,  
spreading in laughter,  
clowning for you,  
reaching for you.  
The wind dies and we are still  
together,  
sky and river and farm  
the only things between us.  
Till wind blows us up again,  
two cloth balloons hanging on air,  
our lives flapping with every gust,  
you and me lady,  
hanging on in the late afternoon.

## GAMES

I sit in the basement eating the T.V.;  
 you're upstairs eating the phonograph.  
 Your music vacuums our floors;  
 I digest people winning trips to Hawaii:

Russel Fish you are a biologist,  
 do you work with fish, ha ha;  
 Stephanie Wyzinski you are a nurse and your hobby is karate.  
 Fruits and vegetables are our subject--  
 alright Russel Fish,  
 your fin  
 ah spin  
 ha ha.

You're tired of me wanting--  
 you want to be wanted because you're wanted when you're wanted;  
 I think you study things too much,  
 dwell on your lesser virtues.  
 Our lives crash like a bus and a Lincoln;  
 you cry over twisted chrome:

...in Greek lore the OTHER love fruit...  
 it is the radish, the apple, the tomato?  
 YES it IS the TOE-MAY-TOE!  
 Russel Fish,  
 (pull back the curtain Walt)  
 you will sail in luxury six days...

I think of all those winnings out there,  
 to be copped in the fruit game--  
 wild nights of brown skinned humming,  
 coconut oiling the days slick;  
 I'm wasting my time, these gangland rumbles between floors.  
 We meet at the coffee pot and grumble;  
 we will not be the one  
 to speak first.  
 The house awaits surrender.

Ohhhhhhhh Stephanie...  
 you are not our winner today but  
 you will take home this dishwasher-blender by KITCHEN KING...

It is time to cope;  
you will never by my Hawaii  
nor I your kitchen king.  
Throw the dishes in the blender.  
let them crunch and shatter--  
we'll get by  
on paper plates.



FOR MOM

I ask for bacon  
shrunk  
dried on toast.  
I get spam  
from a can.

You bless me with your touch.  
I open like a book  
on hockey  
pluck  
pluck  
I wake up in the goalie's mouth.

## RAILS

Walking home with bread under arm, my heels touch  
tracks running all the way to Topeka.

Red lights wink at men drooped from iron,  
freights weighed and ready

to punch through rangeland

80 miles south of Gallup.

I hear your voices roll on shining rails.

Your belly-laugh, Eleanor,

talk of magic, Sid, granite in your throat.

Your plans, Josie, bitten as a ripe peach.

Two men tear the ties

with silver-tipped bars. My toes

straddle switchovers--mattresses to Abilene,

logs to Fresno. We sneak

to beds, cold brass over head.

The springs hawk the night. Josie dear,

proud child, your soft thighs humming,

your anger neat and edged

as the space between your teeth.

How I wish the rules would let you

come to my bed. The derailling

near Bisbee vibrates under foot.

Hogs defecate the box car floors.

An old lady, crushed, shocks the joints in my knees.  
We hide in the boiler room,  
shoulders pressed; fingers reach for warmth  
like tracks from round houses,  
spokes going out to seek the rim.

## THIRTY

Passing quietly while I slept  
this ten thousandth day on earth  
bumps a windy afternoon.

Walking through woods, leaves hide the paths.

How pasture opens with my steps!  
clear run to rocky edge.

The mare follows  
grumpy for grain;  
I reach for her,  
run my hand over withers  
down soft neck:

In her one moon eye my image,  
woods walked behind.

A simple thing  
though groaning years: reaching  
the eye receives  
reflects the gesture and  
all behind;  
in other eye's moon,  
land I cannot see  
crawls beneath wet leaves  
toward tomorrow's sun.

## THE FIGURE EIGHT LAY-UP

The best defense is man to man. We play zone.  
Erogenous. Demilitarized. O.  
The odd kid who can't dribble  
never looked better. Fat girls cheer  
from bleachers and the Dixon team is bully,  
plans a stomp after the game. Pride is precious  
near farms. No town likes to lose.  
This is how lungs give out  
full court, how the fouls stack up.  
Points mean nothing. Fans  
go home arguing bills, mortgage,  
what's stale in bed. The best shots  
go out with the garbage.  
A tall man might have better luck. Ball handling  
is best near the rim. We score so rarely  
from the inside. Gym floor lacquer cannot hide  
the awful story  
of scuffling for a two point edge.

## THE BURDEN OF JEWELS

You wear the ring, glass,  
hard as ice,  
blue today. Blue  
as our river centered  
in the middle of town.  
This time the mood of stone's heat  
is smooth. You stand one eyed  
and fear the way tweed talks,  
the weary steps to your coat.  
We take the plunge,  
recite the poem, and those wild streams  
make their way to Virginia. You speak  
at last, home, the old map discarded.  
In this world the fog my hand falls through  
gives way to clouds, high and drifting.  
You tell what I know: your mood is music,  
the strings are thin  
as hair, as skin. Without blue  
you shade the light with hands that reach  
beyond the altar. Now the walk home,  
solid. The poem gives ground  
and legs, so long kneeling, glide.  
My twin, we share that space again.

For Madeline DeFrees