

Channel 49
LUNACY IN AMERICA

'Young Ski,' would-be-opportunist-turned moralist-clown and his alter-ego buddy, 'Dr.' Winthrop, (who has even greater ambivalence and less ambition) live in an era beset by an economic malaise that coexists with resurgent elitism. There is much decadent fun and foolish sorrow in such a time. The individuals peopling the 'Insecurities Business' have personas borrowed from economic philosophers and Greek gods. The female characters are ciphers for fallen women representing America. There is much parody and perhaps some illumination behind the semi-serious espousal of the principals relating to 'Sexual Finance.'

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Back in the days when 'Money' woke from it's nap beside a younger America... MAY 1980 -- APRIL 1982

LUNACY IN AMERICA

Or Gillhensky's Law

By

Young Ski

With

John E. Winthrop, DD

The following is a chronology of my essay concerning LUNACY in America. --Young Ski

BOOK ONE

NUMBERS

In discussions with Dr., Winthrop who had attempted an amateur psychoanalysis of me based solely on crib notes of Freudian personality theory stolen from Psy. 201, we pinned down my basic problems before 1975 to traumas that happened in the preceding 26 years.

"Now," I had thought, "we are getting somewhere." I unburdened myself. At twelve years of age I had wished to become an Air Force pilot. During my fourteenth winter I had constructed a largish, glider-plane-thing in the cold basement of my parent's house (hoping to accelerate the fantasy of flying off somewhere to greater illusions). The following summer was spent trying to write obscure science fiction stories in the sweltering attic of my Grandmother's boarding house. All was failure. My plane could not fly, my writings could not suffice as writings. At eighteen I became a Top Secret Air Force radar operator and finding myself thrust into the turmoil of geopolitical forces beyond my control concentrated all efforts in the quest to lose my virginity.

At the time of my ad-hoc analysis I had worse problems. No money, less future than past. But, Dr. Winthrop was making progress.

"It was cultural" he had said "societal" he had bemoaned "global!" He warned. "America had become a new person" Yes, that was it.

We would have attempted more breakthroughs. But Winthrop experienced his own neuro-breakdown. He was unable to express his difficulties in language so his coming to me for assistance was made impossible. I already knew his problem. He was lonely.

IN THE BEGINNING (1972)...

I had gone to Dr. Winthrop who was then a tyro literary agent for advice on my novels. As usual, he was ahead of his time.

"Mr. Gillhensky nowhere in your manuscripts is there any hint of the main protagonist assisting in the death of his son," he said.

"No shit," I replied.

"But Larry how can you, a male writer imitating serious fiction, be successful without *sonicide*?"

I asked what my alternatives were.

"There are none!" He answered "unless you are a woman."

A woman wasn't expected to write about sonicide. A woman writer had only to hike up her SKIRTS (Dr. Winthrop was fond of anachronisms), place a mirror between her ankles stare into the reflection of her own gaping vagina and write of whatever came-to-mind such as the imperfect orgasm. Dr. Winthrop called this CUNTISM, the main artistic force of the 70's.

"If I am incapable of cuntist literature and unwilling to consider artistic sonicide what else is there?" I asked.

"Suicide!" He shouted, tearing the curtains off the windows in order to wrap them about his chilled body. The dust cloud that escaped choked him causing the Doctor to rack himself with coughing spasms designed to approximate asthma. He wished sympathy from me. I ignored his ailment.

"Write about suicide?" I asked.

"No, commit it."

Then he disparaged against my writing for being too illiterate for some but too literate for others.

"Give up writing and get a job," he advised solemnly while he took pills from six different vials and attempted to swallow them en-mass. Quickly he spit them out in disgust onto his desk.

"Doing what? All I know is military radar operations."

Winthrop thought my question over carefully as he mashed the pills up with a paperweight and drenched the mess with applesauce so he could eat it with the spoon attachment on his Swiss Army knife.

"What are they for?" I inquired of the medication.

"They are for everything... But are only placebos. Sugar pills."

"Why crush them? Take them with your tea," I said.

"They are much more effective this way," Winthrop replied.

Having realized the Doctor's limitations I took the fellow under wing. On his part Winthrop abandoned his neophyte literary agency and turned his attentions to job counseling and mental therapy for me. (*Actually* we were students together), soon we became buddies.

IN SEARCH OF A SUITABLE CAREER

The sirens on the street corner were begging to be fucked for love of money. Their torn shawls and long stained garments fluttered and flayed in the dirty breezes as they tugged on suit sleeves asking passersby, "Hey Mister can you spare me a load?"

Later, drinking cheap wine from paper-bag-hidden bottles they laughed wantonly while leaning against one another, fresh stains spreading in downward crescents between their thighs.

Professor Winthrop was enthralled with prostitutes. He tried borrowing money from me in order to seek a tryst but I reneged and he went forward with his own note fresh from the inner soul of his worn, wing-tip shoe.

Unfortunately, he ignored the ones who pleaded for his attention considering them unworthy of his sordid interest. Instead, he insisted on a careless rebuff from the most haughty and drug addicted one of the bunch, a tall, scabbied twit named Lisa who blew cigarette snake into Winthrop's face.

Immediately I invited her to accompany us to a sleazy bar around the corner where the good Doctor and I plied her with cheap booze and lied to her about our intentions, "I'm doing a paper an sociology for the White House."

"I'm a boy scout. I have to have orgasm for a merit badge."

"What are your views on the coming financial collapse of the Western World?"

She didn't answer our questions, She mumbled paranoid incantations in a scratched and throaty voice, Her most sublime observations concerned "*those fucken' bastards always trien' to do you in,*" etc.

Winthrop, overcome with illicit passion grabbed her under the table in the crotch area. Quickly she slugged him to the floor, Winthrop confusing her violent aggressiveness for defense of chastity proposed matrimony. He inquired of her religious beliefs and surname

in case he would have to make changes in his own.

I pulled the good Doctor aside, "You can't marry her, she's infected with alcoholism, drug addiction and probably venereal contagions yet unknown to medical science."

"She is AMERICA, and I love her," he said. I didn't agree and stated as much.

"Then what is AMERICA?" Winthrop questioned.

"America," I began, "is fruit upon the bountiful plain. Besides, she is not incorporated

"Then let's do it!" He shouted.

"Get a corporate charter - profit sharing and pension plan. Lisa Slut, PA. Hooker," I added.

"Get her a consulting job with an international oil company. She'll be rich! We'll both marry her!" I exclaimed.

He returned to the table and attempted to rouse her from a mumbling slumber so we could tell her more lies about our intentions.

"I have a grant from the Fort Foundation to study the effect of clitoral stimulation upon the federal deficit."

What ever piffle came into our heads we tossed out to her stimulating our manic giggling to new highs. She mumbled, "Get off me, pig," and fell into a troubled doze.

Later, alone, I returned to my private poverty.

Poverty can be a lonely business for, with the exception of lunatics like Winthrop, few wish to share the joys of poverty with miserable acquaintances. In my humble habitation passing the time consisted of staring at an empty cereal box or day dreaming to radio music. The cure for this, I believed, was to become RICH and FAMOUS, thereby curing poverty and loneliness.

I started practicing to be rich and famous by rehearsing lines for the TONIGHT show at odd moments in-between making faces at myself in the mirror or inventing sexual fantasies engaging enough to fall asleep with.

I discovered I could be a witty and charming fellow while lounging in my foyer. This led to bouts of nagging depression.

How does one become rich and famous beyond the adoration of the hypothetical masses not found in one's foyer or bathroom? My fantasies had come up with no workable solution. My Vietnam experience was over so there was no chance of me winning ten medals of honor; those who did had become insurance salesmen or derelicts anyway.

I would have to do something on my own. I dusted off my three unpublished novels but

found nothing to my liking, Panic. I tried to write a masterpiece in the next two hours. My aim was to create the greatest novel in the world. After an hour and a half I only had 30 pages completed. I quickly killed all the characters in a surprise ecocide and made it into a short story. Who buys short stories?

In the next hour I converted it into a teleplay and ran out into the street ready to become rich and famous.

First, I showed it to my gas station attendant who admitted he couldn't read, so I offered it to a fellow having his Cadillac filled with premium gasoline. "I don't read this shit. It ain't about money," he bellowed.

I attempted an on-the-spot rewrite intending to change the lead character's name to 'Money' But the Cadillac-fellow drove off waiving his right to a window wash.

A Volvo pulled up. There was a pensive fellow with a slight beard at the wheel.

"I have a story here about charactericide in a threatening environment."

He looked at it briefly. "You should have this typed and spell the words correctly," he advised.

"Fuck you, I'm an artist! Next time I'll use crayon! I won't be compromised by rules or machines!" I shouted idealistically.

"I happen to be a television producer, I insist on certain standards, If not met I will not consider the property which is probably stupid anyway." In moments he was gone.

"Talent needs work," one of my semi-senile professors had once told me at the state teacher's college for women I attended on the G.I. bill. I would just have to work!

I looked up all the words I couldn't spell in a thick dictionary and changed the ones I couldn't find to words already invented. Then I typed the piece laboriously on my 1905 Underwood at the pecking rate of ten-words-a-minute. In two weeks I was ready.

I took a train to New York City and went straight to NBC. (Having decided to go commercial all aspects of oral sex and genocide were underplayed in my revised teleplay). I debated upon an approach to suggest the best time slot for my creation.

The elevator operator asked me what I was doing there. "Take me to your producers," I said, confidently.

I made it to the Personnel department where I applied for a position cleaning latrines, a field of endeavor I felt eminently qualified for.

"Should I leave this script with you?" I asked the one who handed out the employment application forms.

"No, You need an agent."

"I'll sell it to you cheap," I said.

"No NEXT PLEASE!" She called out over my shoulder. A line of people were pushing and shoving forward, hungry for a prestigious elevator operator's job or even to clean toilet bowls and urinals. Hungry for \$ 2.75 an hour in \$ 6 an hour world.

Slightly daunted I went to the William Morris Agency. A trainee receptionist there glanced at the first page of my work.

"At least you can spell as good as me. The morons might even like this," he giggled nervously. "Got to remove this risqué language" The trainee said with an effeminate air.

"Oh really?" I tried to put some swish into my voice. Maybe he would represent me at NBC, I thought.

"But then again if it was really any good someone would have done it already, or stolen it." He returned my manuscript.

"What would you suggest?" I asked.

"Get a job."

"I want to be rich and famous."

"So do I." His blue eyes fluttered at me. It was time to leave.

I asked Winthrop to read my manuscript. He suggested adding sodomy and nuclear war. "Try filming this yourself with a rented home movie camera. You never know, silent black and white pornos may be coming back."

Winthrop had been right, They were all right, '*Get a job.*'

I became interested in the concept of money because I had none. I eventually found work in low finance, specifically as a salesman in the Insecurity Business. (The film version of 'LUNACY' will present my initiation into the Insecurities Business in the most surreal fashion, as a rite of baptism into the pagan Mithraist brotherhood of the Bull. The blood of one's clients tasted as lies upon the lips as they commit financial suicide at one's beckoning. All taste the blood or find another job quick!)

The initiation into the world of Insecurities was reminiscent of basic training. We learned to sell, sell, sell before learning what, or to whom or more importantly, why. It was kill, kill, kill the enemy for money... who was the enemy? Everybody with bucks.

The training regime was made starkly realistic by the vast multitude of managers who were former military officers. The concept of expendability was thoroughly drummed into us. Everyone save the firm, was expendable. The firm was sacrosanct --bodies were to shield if from harm (fall before the sword if need be).

In months I was considered 'trained,' assigned a number, given a desk amid a row of desks. A telephone was provided.

They said unto me, "Make us commissions. We will pay you 30 % of the 2 - 6 % we charge your clients for the privilege of doing business with us. Sometimes, when the

charges are inscrutably hidden we will pay you 6 % of the 10 % you bring in to us - or often times pay you nothing. Remember, if it is easy we will pay you nothing.

The harder the sale (and more imponderable the product) the more you will receive, If you are not successful you will be terminated and your seat and phone given to somebody else - perhaps even your number! Your name will be held up to ridicule and for us you will be considered dead."

"What was I to sell?"

"Insecurities."

"What is an Insecurity?"

"Something that is not secure, that fluctuates in value."

"Specifically what? A product?"

"Yes and no. Not a product that we make, but one that we SELL. Shares of dubious equity in corporations, or items of debt sold by sellers who are our best clients to those who are buyers usually our millions of piddling clients that like you, are expendable."

"You're talking about stocks and bonds, right?"

"We are not talking about stocks and bonds. The stock market corrected for inflation (and with a real dollar value) has since 1968 returned to where it was 50 years ago. The bond markets have crashed three times. Fools who bought long term bonds (from us) have suffered paper losses of 1/2 TRILLION dollars while they wait for maturity (usually after they're dead) of depreciated dollars worth one tenth of the real dollars they invested. No, we have repackaged these simplistic concepts into 56 unique products and services."

"All related to the stock, bond and short term debt markets, right?"

"Naturally."

"Why would anyone buy this shit?"

"Because we've hired you to sell it. If you don't, we'll fill your place in ten minutes. If you do well, you can make a good living here. And then, of course, we'll LIKE you. FACT: For you in this corporation -(smile)- we don't want you to THINK about anything other than SELLING. We have already done your thinking for you. If we 'make' (devise) a product, it is good. And you shall sell it or be gone. A thought about the goodness or evil of a product is a forbidden thought to you. It is unclean for you to think forbidden thoughts."

"Remember, people buying the things we have to sell to them will at some point feel they have lost money. They might become angry with you for making them feel insecure and naturally, they will blame you for this. Continually prospect for new clients always expecting to lose the dissatisfied ones you currently have. Use your phone, the more calls the more prospects, the more prospects the more clients, the more clients the more

commissions, the more commissions the more we like you, the more we like you the better you will feel."

"A hundred thousand calls should yield a thousand prospects, a hundred clients, \$ 60,000 gross commissions \$ 20,000 for you. Make THREE hundred thousand calls and we might START to like you.

"It's a NUMBERS game -(smile). It's so easy."

I had my doubts over how easy it was going to be for me. True, some salespeople didn't make ANY calls and strangely, were the best liked, but...

On the other hand, if the process of selling the unknown to strangers was viewed as legal thievery perhaps it could be accomplished in massive quantities.

In order to morally justify this numerical chicanery to myself I thought it best to take from other thieves: 1) Physicians who made a half million dollars per year doing God's work and ripping off Insurance Companies. 2) Lawyers ripping off Insurance Companies. 3) Accountants ripping off the government and their own clients. 4) Insurance Companies ripping off the public.

Soon, however, I would find out that the above mentioned were used to guys like me trying to rip them off and would have nothing to do with my futile efforts to gain their confidence so I could do to them what they would rather do to me. Secretaries, answering services and unlisted home phone numbers made my calls an impotent menace, My 'prospecting universe' had shrunk to the foolhardy and unwary '*Let the buyer beware.*'

Rather than face reality I embraced the quest for the elusive Mr. Big. The zillion dollar fellow, with unlimited financial resources, who would take a liking to me and become my benefactor. Then, I too could cease making silly phone calls to strangers AND become well liked.

GILLHENSKY'S LAW

Lunching under Winthrop's carport (he had no car) as a light drizzle fell I tried to share with him my ambivalence, Yes, I felt exuberance over my fantasy of capturing a Mr. Big to lead the way toward big commissions in the Insecurity game. Yet, I also brooded over the moral correctness of mixing with such high stakes foolishness.

Winthrop had difficulty following my conversation. "Well, if you're raising new capital I guess it's all-right," he mentioned.

"That's not exactly what we do. Mostly we maintain a secondary market to provide liquidity for existing Insecurities."

Winthrop shook his head, not comprehending.

"We buy and sell things for the commission. Or my firm, Mostly Bull, makes money shoring up failing utilities who are unable to make monopoly productive."

Winthrop was appalled. "That sounds like stealing!" He exclaimed.

I said hopefully, "Maybe you could get a job with them."

"Certainly not. Quit this instant! Stealing people's money is immoral," he said.

I lost my temper. "Quit and do what?" I shouted at him, putting down my banana-butter sandwich. "Go back to unemployment? Writing teleplays in my kitchen and throwing them in the garbage after a brief performance in the foyer? I've got responsibilities I need money!"

"Calm down," he urged.

I calmed down.

"What about the people's hard earned money you'll be subjecting to squander? After all - you, no offense, don't know anything about Insecurities except what Mostly Bull tells you."

"Hard earned!" I snorted. I bit furiously into my sandwich only to see a terrorist banana slice fall in slimy glory onto the pant's leg of my best and newest suit. The banana slice had insulted the dress code of Mostly Bull.

"Winthrop, money is only hard-earned by those who don't have any of it," I said and then paused to consider what I had said. Unfortunately, it made sense. In a *poor* society 100 % of the population works at staying alive. In an affluent society 20 % of the people grow the food and make the products. everybody else angles to sell a service or get in on the action (like me). More clarification came to mind. I stared at Winthrop's humble face. My emotions were benevolent. Something was happening in my brain. After only a short term in the Insecurity Business I could formulate rules of economic behavior. My jaw fell open. I spoke, "Thems that works the least hardest makes the most money."

"What? Excuse me?" Winthrop asked.

"Thems that works the hardest makes the least money," I finished.

Winthrop looked concerned. I rubbed the banana stain on my pant's leg, "That's Gillhensky's law." I said. One of them, anyway," There would be more. I finished lunch quickly. Mostly Bull required my presence into the evening hours.

MOSTLY BULL OFFICE

There was a cosmos of individuals in the Mostly Bull office that employed me. I was a '*new guy*' or one of the hundreds of baby turtles not expected to survive the scramble toward the sea, let alone, two years to adulthood. As such, most of the bigger denizens of Mostly Bull didn't bother to learn my name. Thought they were thankful I was there with a handful of other '*new guys*.' I was a potential meal. Every failure of a new guy who was prematurely flushed out of the system had stumbled over at least one good account that some other salesman would stand to inherit. So, while no one cared what my name was they nodded at me near the urinal in the men's room, with a glint in their red, shark eyes,

'Welcome aboard, food. When the going gets rough, we'll eat you.' On my part I could wish that strokes or plagues of typhus would decimate their ranks opening up their excellent accounts to the likes of me.

At the top of the pecking order were what was known as the *Big Hitters* or just the *Hitters*. Not that they played baseball. They didn't. They wrote 'tickets' which consisted of putting digits into little boxes on a multi-carboned order form. This was the purpose under heaven for the existence of Mostly Bull.

Sumner was the biggest hitter in the office. He possessed a special obnoxiousness that few people could match. His tie knot was so tight I thought it had been surgically implanted in his throat. A brass bone of some sort insured that his collar could not be opened by some curious onlooker wondering how a man could live with a hang-noose roped over his windpipe. But Sumner not only lived, he thrived. His hair was short and lips perpetually puckered. His call words were, "On the phone! Work, work, work! Mostly Bull! Make cold calls!" Though Sumner did not have to call cold strangers. His valuable time was always taken up handling the large number of orders that his wealthy friends, relatives and accounts phoned in.

Sumner's view of things was simple: "Those who had the most should get the most." Many of the better leads referred into the office went to Sumner so, obviously, his view prevailed. And, already, his account-holding books numbered more than two sets of the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Sumner's volume of business had become so huge that he needed two assistants to help him answer all the calls and write all the tickets, Yet, the more he had, the more he wanted. Others complained "Give us some of the good leads and we can become big hitters too!" They said to management.

Management said, "Shaddup!" and began reviewing the complainer's records suspiciously, "Aren't you happy here at Mostly Bull? If not, then you can leave and we'll re-assign YOUR accounts to Sumner. We like Sumner. He aren't even sure of what your name is."

Other complainers tried logic. "Sumner can't possibly service that many accounts in an effective manner. Some of the accounts he presently has can yield more numbers to the FIRM if placed in the hands of those with more time to devote to those accounts."

Management was not swayed by logic. "Taking away Sumner's accounts would be communism And we hate communism," they replied.

"But, you threatened to take away *our* accounts and give them to Sumner!" They cried in anguish.

"That's different. Taking away your accounts is Free Enterprise because they really aren't your accounts; they belong to the firm. Sumner is part of this firm. We like him. We don't know your name, and we don't want to know your name till you do more numbers and start acting like one of us. Stop complaining and produce!"

Sumner believed with all his heart and soul that the firm and the Nation must *'feed the fat and starve the weak'* anything less was a vision of the anti-Christ dancing in hell with Karl Marx and Joe Stalin.

Not that Sumner was religious, mind you. The wafer would never fit into his mouth past the tight pucker of his lips. I suspected that either his anus had been misplaced on his body at creation or perhaps the latter was even tighter (kept his shit together). Sumner said little about politics knowing money to be a greater mentor. Once he ventured the opinion that an individual be allotted votes according to the amount of money he had. After all, Sumner reasoned that was the way corporations worked. And why should the people who actually owned everything put up with the careless votes of the weak and stupid who wanted Sumner to pay taxes to support their lazy, indolent ways?

Sumner hated paying taxes. "I work hard all day writing tickets and making money. Why shouldn't I keep all of it? (After the firm got it's huge cut) Management agreed.

Another super-hitter, Spencer, was less strident than Sumner. Spencer was full of confidence in himself and less patriotic toward the firm. He not only begrudged paying taxes, he begrudged the firm the lion's share of the commissions they always got for HIS conniving,

It was suspected that Spencer might eventually go to another firm to get a better deal but since he did big numbers management was polite to him. Yet Mostly Bull counterintelligence kept close tabs on him and was prepared to step in and seize his accounts and records the moment they sensed a separation.

Spencer was aware of his situation at Mostly Bull. His attitude was, "Fuck them. Fuck everybody." Spencer was non discriminatory in his view toward all men - he could care less about any of them. He was a fatalist too, "The cream always rises to the top. And I'm the cream, so why should I worry about it. Fuck 'em all."

Spencer never left Mostly Bull. The thought of Sumner taking his accounts away gave him nightmares. The thought of losing his accounts and cream status to become warm sour milk caused him great concern. So he stayed and snarled and management begrudgingly fed him too. After all it was expected of them.

Pierce was the least offensive of the big three producers. He often admitted "I hate prospecting I hate making cold calls, I'm lucky I don't have to." Then he would smile.

New guys anxious for the secrets of success beyond the dictum 'work-on the phone-make cold calls' would ask Pierce for advice.

Pierce would shrug. "I was friends with a big hitter. He got sick and asked me to look after his top accounts. They're my accounts now (smile)."

"What about your friend, did he get well?" Sensitive, new guys asked.

"His business is his business and my business is my business. He would have done the same thing to me, unless he was stupid and if he was, why be friends with him?"

New guys would try to become friends with Pierce but the hitter was too smart for them, "I'm busy! I'm not here to socialize. I'm here to make money!"

If an eyebrow was raised to his brusqueness Pierce would defend himself, "It may not be nice or fair but I didn't make the system. I'd be foolish to defy it and lose everything wouldn't I?"

Below the big three hitters was a category of lesser hitters and then a middle-ground full of question-marks. Schopenhauer was one of those question-marks. He was the only one of the old timers I got to know well. He was a brooder.

I often shared a beer with old Schope and listened to his morose, though truthful, observations about the Insecurity business.

"Let's face it," he would admit, a sour unpleasantness besmirching his face. "We could be fired tomorrow and see our hard efforts (and slender rewards) given to that bastard Sumner. It can happen, There's those who have a silver spoon and those who chew the cud and the miserable rest of us."

"It's not fair," I would offer to seem agreeable.

"It's not supposed to be The big fish eat the little fish. - I know that. Guys like you and me got to be careful. It's treacherous waters out there."

"Why don't you leave this crazy business?" I'd implore, expecting to either be fired or get lucky and find Mr. Big, myself.

"And do what? Scramble in some other line, This is all I know. I'm not a kid anymore. This is it. Life is meant to be tough on most of us. I'm gonna stick it out and go down swinging. They won't get me easily."

Determination setting in, he would sip the rest of his beer in quiet solitude.

Toward the end of the question mark category were the salesmen who were madmen. Fellows of different ages and backgrounds with varying dependencies on an assortment of drugs or (usually) unlimited quantities of alcohol. Lacking motivation to be pimps or plain crooks they were drawn to the Insecurity business by the thrill of being able to swindle the foolish. They came and went, abandoning firms and clientele with the same ease they abandoned wives, children and silly girlfriends. On any given afternoon between the hours of twelve and three these wild cards were 'out on appointment' in some strange bar where they would be just as apt to deal for stolen merchandise or try to screw hookers for-free, as perform any other duty. Lady luck or a senile widow with a small fortune growing smaller seemed to always come through for these guys. Though, even here, family connections to money could be detected. Schopenhauer had warned me to avoid running with this pack. A new guy could get himself terminated in a hurry if he wasn't careful.

Most new guys didn't make it anyway. Within months this became obvious to me. However, one new guy became a Mostly Bull star. His name was Mike (Make) Good.

His success story was a case of great dumbness married to a total lack of scruples. This plus a cocaine connection to an ex-college buddy whose father was a crooked Mr. Big put Mike far out in front of me. While he knew very little about Insecurities beyond the commission-getting he was a persuasive salesman. He would happily sell cancer to a perfect stranger for the right pay-out. His better qualities included a charming candor concerning his attitude toward hard labor and sincere effort, "Work rhymes with jerk!" If he had nothing better to do he would waste time amusing and intimidating his co-workers with tales of all the guys he'd beaten up and women he convinced to put out (him first and then his buddies).

The people I became friendliest with were the new guys who did not make it. These were the troops whose names were lumped at the bottom of the monthly production runs posted on the wall.

Carlyle should have made it. He came from a well-to-do family and had a splendid and expensive education. Unfortunately for him he was too much of a snob to scramble for money. "Really, -- capitalism should be symbolic of the creation of the finest product, not in the selling the sublime to the ridiculous. How absurd. This business is the epitome of the failure of the modern technocratic marketing mess. A person of proper breeding should not subject himself to such a lowly and unproductive task."

Carlyle preferred to solicit the patronage of his mother so he could do no work while drinking imported liqueurs and criticizing with cruel passion the vulgarities and chicanery of the corporate mob. He was a friend of mine and was fired early in his career.

His buddy, Rushkin was also a failure at the Insecurity business. Rushkin was both more idealistic and more practical than Carlyle. He often lamented the unfairness of the business and re-planned it on a utopian model, "Those leads should be distributed equally to everyone. If they hire a man they should help him as much as the next man, who ever he be." Rushkin discussed that point with the manager once. He was fired shortly after Carlyle.

Neither Morris nor Thoreau could give two shits about the serious plight of anyone including themselves. It was difficult to see why Morris had come into the Insecurity business. Possibly some impulsive burst of curiosity had led him to Mostly Bull. He had a degree in Horticulture and looked forward, warmly, to the prospect of being fired.

Thoreau also welcomed the getting-fired-opportunity as a crazed soldier seeks death-his-bride. When Thoreau decided to put in an appearance his arrival was timed to coincide with the start of the lunch hour. His departure to the conclusion of the lunch hour. Perhaps he was shamed by the lack of variety in his wardrobe though I doubt it. It was true that Thoreau owned only one suit, a charcoal gray thing he inherited from his grandfather.

The bunch of us would often gather for beers. The conversation was lively with dangerous ideas, If Rushkin happened to plead some dictum of utopian management Thoreau would sneer, "Management is best that manages not at all!"

"But it can't work that way!" Rushkin exclaimed.

"I know," Thoreau declared and laughed. Then he and Morris would raise their beers and toast each other, "To getting fired!" God knows what they're up to today.

Time went by in the Insecurity business. I learned valuable lessons. I saw the not-so-bright, virgin in everything except greed, get lucky and become successful. I watched their constant, empty-handed, trek into the manager's office and then out with handfuls of leads and re-assigned accounts.

When Carlyle, Thoreau, Rushkin and Morris left most of what few accounts they had went to Good and Sumner. Schopenhauer felt so threatened by this he took to locking his desk drawer every time he went to the men's room. "Watch out for Good." Schope whispered to me. "He's on the feed." His pained eyes bobbed a bit before mine. He debated internally over whether he should have shared that confidence with me. He threw caution to the wind, "Don't mix with him. Don't say nothing negative 'bout the business. What ever you do don't breath a bad word about the firm. It'll get back."

"To who?" I asked.

"Management. He's on the feed. -- Got to go," Schope took off in a fast hustle. I followed.

"Schope!" I called.

He wouldn't acknowledge me till we reached the train station. Once there he checked to see if anyone was watching.

"He's on the feed. Be careful or he'll have your accounts -- or mine!"

We walked together a moment.

"Doesn't it piss you off that he's on the feed?" I asked.

"Naw, you get used to it. See it all the time. New guy comes aboard, runs across a client ready to self-destruct. Churns his balls off making big commissions. Doesn't get sued. Management likes the act, puts the guy on the feed. That's the way it is."

"But they bomb out eventually, don't they?" I asked.

He laughed. "Are you kidding?" He stopped walking. "The last fast-track guy to go through here is now the assistant regional manager! With his eye on *me*; that bastard!" His face curled into dark anger. We walked quickly.

"They won't get me that easily," he warned.

Something else was falling into place, Something known a long time ago but obscured in the democratic myopia America had been before I had gone to Vietnam. I had returned, confused, to a society that was plunging through an orgy of absurdity and was unable to suspect it.

It was a lesson my foolish schooling hadn't taught me, possibly because it was something that hadn't ought-to-be, -- 'Thems that don't needs, gets.' Them's that needs don't gets,' It

was a hard lesson to swallow. Using beer as a medium, I swallowed.

S.F.

Perhaps as early as 1965 Dr. Winthrop may have dabbled esoterically into the relationship between sex and money as part of his great dissertation. But no evidence of the essay remains. The Doctor dimly recalls his mother, Dr. Winthrop, finding a crumpled mess of papers in the washing machine back in those Great Society years.

None-the-less, I claim credit for discovering (or re-discovering) the social- economic phenomenon known as SEXUAL FINANCE.

I happened across it accidentally, while on a visit to company headquarters situated scenically near the southern tip of Manhattan Island.

I was elevating toward the training department in order to have my conscience lowered and brain re-propagandized with Mostly Bull's six month follow up for new Insecurity salesmen (Account Inexecutives).

The firm wished to parade our more successful comrades before us for praise, ridicule the 15 % of us who had already failed, and warn the 10 % of us on probation to get with the program or die. Then they wished to re-instill the optimism they had left us with a half year earlier.

Soon, they would have us rising to our feet, chanting happy choruses of "SELL! SELL! SELL!" as speaker after speaker told us that all markets were heading up and we should tell our few clients to Buy, Buy, Buy whatever products that Mostly Bull was sell, sell, selling.

As usual, I had my head up my ass, was daydreaming and used the wrong elevator bank. Eventually I found myself on the wrong floor.

As soon as my wing-tip shoe sunk into the plush, red carpet I realized I was in the wrong place. But disguised in a three piece suit and with a tie knot that penetrated my esophagus I could pass for almost anyone. Falling back on military experience which had taught me to pretend I knew what I was doing (that's how I got hired at Mostly Bull). I reconnoitered the area.

What I came across was the exclusive lounge for Big Commission Producers known as the Charlemagne Bull Circle of Big Hitters. There were pictures all over the walls of the late Charlemagne Bull and his top sales people playing golf at Baltrustrol, lunching with mere Presidents of the United States and just smiling wealthy smiles. Here and there were plaques honoring this or that big hitter who topped a million dollars in commission income (trading \$ 50 million of Insecurities).

The halls were silent behind me I slid into a leather lounge chair and listened carefully to the hum of conditioned air. One of Charlemagne Bull's private sayings was inscribed in brass on the arm of my chair: 'We're already the biggest prostitute on Wall Street, let's become the biggest prostitute on Main Street!'

There were mementos of CB, all about, Every square yard contained some saying or bit of apocrypha concerning this shaker of the Insecurity World.

I could imagine his voice as a braying bull violent in its sexual lust intoning orders for bullishness.

Absently I picked up a magazine from the mahogany coffee table. The periodical was titled, 'Exclusive Wealth' and the lead story was, 'How to corner the market in money!' Interested, I flipped to the story.

On page 34 I was able to open the magazine only two fifths of the way. Part of the subtitle assaulted me, 'Using a TRILLION dollars...' Part of a second subtitle was also visible, 'Drove short term rates up 500 %...' Yet, some vile substance had stuck the pages together. It was certainly not chewing gum.

Aggressively, I snapped the magazine open. There before me was a color photograph of stacks of money interlaid with gold bars and Treasury Certificates. The ruinous adhesive had been supplied by some Big Hitter who had ejaculated in ecstasy over so stimulating a scene.

Could this be possible? Then it fell into place. Yes, this demand to accumulate wealth had little to do with familial responsibility, capital formation or other ideological nonsense. There was something biological and instinctive to it.

I envisioned Institutional Bond Traders, Merger and Acquisition Specialists, Underwriters having priced their pre-sold, over-subscribed offering above the market price brimming with the enthusiasm of their victories, congregating singly or jointly to imbibe quantities of expensive alcohols think vibrantly of profits, commissions, bonuses, after-tax-revenues, net income per share, drop their trousers in unison, flip through pictures of bonds and foreign bank accounts as they rolled thick green wads of fresh dollar bills around their extended phalluses and shrieking with the call of mortal doomsday masturbate themselves to kingdom-come giggling and shouting in their euphoria for sweet death and final destruction. Finally, they would shoot their creative juices forward in swinging elliptical arcs where it splattered harmlessly on washable wall paper to dry into oblivion. Yes, that was the scene conjured up, though, it would be difficult to prove.

I dropped the magazine onto the table, considered wiping off my fingerprints but decided that doing that would make ME look guilty and rose to leave.

An attractive woman of 32, probably an executive secretary was there. My face reddened, Did she know? I was flushed with shame as if I had been caught committing a sexually financial act. I almost admitted only having ambitions of sexual finance while I still clung to naive virginity.

"Hello," she cooed, eyes full of glistening wonder. She was ready to serve me. The battle was won.

"You must be from out of town," she said approvingly. Obviously she believed me to be

a big hitter, a million dollar a year man.

"Yeah," I growled. I was from hopeless Newark across the river. Of course, to her, out of town was Houston, Denver, Anchorage or Tokyo.

"Cocktail lounge opens in ten minutes, if you care to stay..." The smile on her face was stronger than nagging wife or screaming kids. But I was only play-acting to avoid embarrassment.

"Got to get on the phone. Do Numbers!" I croaked. She approved. I strutted toward the elevator my legs slightly bowed to accommodate the huge set of Bull balls I had suddenly been mistakenly gifted with.

The down elevator arrived immediately. I stepped in. Her warm eyes were saddened at my leaving.

"See you next time I'm in this town!" (Town? Nothing was too big for me, small clients were major banks to the likes of me). She waved forlornly as the doors closed.

Two floors down I broke into a sweat and repulsed a wave of high-pitched giggles. If she only had known who I wasn't, had seen my three-line excuse for a sales production run flashing a few minor digits that an idiot couldn't confuse with NUMBERS.

I hoped she wouldn't see me sitting in the auditorium with the other new guys. I wanted the sweetness of success to linger awhile

I was getting into the "Learning Curve" as Schopenhauer would often say. His face usually screwed up with repressed displeasure he often remarked about such things. I briefly outlined my thesis concerning Sexual Finance. He shook his head slightly, his gaze a thousand light years away, his emotions better understood on some lonesome prairie or forgotten forest.

"Maybe that's why I can never pee when Plutus (our manager) is up there hosing down the urinal," he said.

I had been vindicated! Almost...

"So you agree?" I asked rushing after him in the grimy train station where the derelicts gathered between rush hours.

"Well," he shook his head, "All I know is that it's rough. It's supposed to be." His mind moved on to new territory. I withheld conversation evaluating the evidence.

But, it made too much sense. For year after year amorphous management types warned happily that BIG, BIG changes were coming to the Insecurity business and America. They weren't advertising their own M.B.A projects of middling and piddling proportions. They were doggy-style miming and aping their betters.

And their betters were ensconced in the 'SMITH-' room or -JEFFRIES' room at some exclusive club. Only creative license could beam me inside past those mahogany panels.

There, the inheritors of the financial world cast aside their dour faces and raved like the ambitious maniacs they were. They cast aside the picture of that 'hippie' Jesus Christ and danced nude around a model of a giant Bull while pouring animal blood upon themselves.

In final fits of ecstasy these barons of the Insecurity and Usury businesses began a hideous drum beat as they banged their boners on the table.

"MONEY!" They croaked.

"MORE MONEY!"

"LESS DISCLOSURE, MORE MONEY!" The religious chorus continued.

"Piss on the 1933 Securities Exchange Act!"

"Piss on the 1934 Glass-Steagle Act!"

"MONEY!" The chant went in rhythmic horror, "MORE MONEY!"

Then in frenetic cadence 'SELL! SELL! SELL!"

It grew wilder and wilder and incomprehensible till the chant unmistakably became "KILL! KILL! KILL!"

I couldn't take it anymore and fled to something recognizable; my desk and inconsequential position behind it. My immediate concern was simply to survive to the next payday.

Yes, there would be big changes for the Insecurity business and America, America would become insecure.

**

I found Winthrop sipping a warm glass of water beside his dandelion bed.

"They're coming up pretty nice," he remarked.

I made a grimace. "I'm surprised roses aren't coming up instead," I said, facetiously.

Small talk aside, I asked his opinion on my Sexual Finance Theory. He wholeheartedly concurred and claimed he had discovered it first.

"Anything that is exciting but creates nothing is masturbation. Speculating and gambling are forms of masturbation," he said smugly.

"I think Freud said that."

Winthrop's brow furrowed. "He did?"

Poor fellow - Winthrop. I thought. "Maybe he didn't. Maybe you did." I said, trying to perk up his flagging spirits by giving him some meager credit for his long lost essay.

He dismissed the entire conversation, standing clumsily, perhaps his head dizzy from too much intense thought or the incubation of some future, fatal malady slowly guiding him to the ultimate manifest destiny, he pronounced grandly, "Come, let us go fuck America."

At first overwhelmed by his magnanimous gesture, I rapidly became excited. Had the good doctor finally stumbled across some new and unique scheme to defraud a significant proportion of the population and make me wildly rich?

I followed him into the cluttered bungalow. In the gloom all things took on the surrealistic otherworldly quantity which Winthrop's habitations usually had.

We found Lisa stirring about in her half slip as she searched for more wine.

"Hello America," he addressed Lisa respectfully.

"Go fuck yourself. I need something to drink," America said,

"She IS America," Winthrop instructed in case I was too dull to get his point, "And I love her."

We were quiet for a moment and then standing at attention broke into a rousing off-key rendition of 'God Bless America.' Winthrop and I had that kind of repartee with one another (something one can have only with one's LUNATIC friends).

Suppressing rage or disgust at our unproductive antics she pulled on a pair of dirty jeans and stuffed a sweatshirt over her head. The slip lay crudely bunched and rolled between this outer-garb. She padded outside in her filthy, bare feet, a cigarette hastily stuck between the lips of her sleep-caked face. Yet, I was sure she could hear the last piercing line oft "from sea to shining sea" through the broken windows of Winthrop's messy place.

Winthrop felt melancholy so we went outside to sit on the steps and watch evening take over.

I tried to console him with my own stories. Once I had sought to love America. Perhaps a different America but I had burst with intent to love her all the same. Embrace her and make of her my essence. Drip her into my pores as if offering no thoughts of my own, bent on servant's knee to take what she giveth.

I was still dumb in those days. Fresh from Vietnam and looking to join the shortest line serving up the fruits of plenty to America's patriotic sons (and daughters).

I joined a new family, a hard working, blue-collar Anglo-Scandinavian, ten generations, sons-of-the-revolution, Methodist-Presbyterian family of veterans, hunters, farmers and faithful wives. It seemed that my inevitable search for kinsmen with a more easily pronounceable surname had been successfully ended. The centuries long quest of wandering Gillhenskys (from Eurasia) to find happiness in Middle America seemed

almost at hand.

Summers were full of barbecued steak, chicken, corn on the cob, beer and sun at the pool. Weekdays were for work (it was the hard kind, but I thought I'd eventually get used to it). I even had a little wifey. It was the new me.

But things happened. People died or went away. Work in the building trades became scarce. No one could afford steak. The pool was sold. I studied mental insecurity in college and in time, found work creating financial insecurity. The new-new me lived upon the fringes of a superior class of people who disdained physical work except for recreation.

This tale of woe I related to Winthrop of how I had rushed to embrace my America, worship at her skirts only to lose the sense of what she was supposed-to-have-been while fumbling to find her.

Winthrop was not impressed with my story.

"I still love her, who ever she is," he said, "no matter what dirt she's done to me, regardless of whether she loves me back."

Yes, it was crazy but we loved her together, neither of us knowing what had become of her,

Winthrop tried to shore himself up emotionally by discussing, in a hopeful tone, the coming Second Depression or World War III (or eight depending on who was counting). I asked if he had any plans toward either his great dissertation or perhaps of obtaining some sort of employment.

"Teaching, as you know, is out," he said, his eye weak and watery in the declining light. "I had thought of politics..." His optimism was edging up in the thin academic voice.

"I even attended a political event recently," he admitted, a smile blooming.

"Really?" I was amazed.

"Sponsored by the Free Enterprise Committee."

A shock of dubiousness ran through me.

"A fellow was up at the podium," Winthrop related, "asking the audience -- 'What made America Great?'"

I nodded.

"So," Winthrop continued, "I told him! I shouted the answer up to this fellow, 'Government Spending made America Great!'" Winthrop expressed his simple smile.

"What happened?" I asked.

"A hush fell over the place. Some people snickered meanly. Eyes turned my way in

disbelief. But, I sought to educate them, add my voice to the debate. I shouted out, 'It's true! It won World War II, secured foreign markets, built the aerospace industry, supplied credit for housing, built the highways for the auto industry and ...' Then this fellow at the podium shakes with indignant anger. He points an angry finger at me and says, 'We believe the answer is, individual initiative, - Throw that guy out of here.' ..."

I laughed.

"Before I knew what was happening hands grabbed me and I was ushered out to the street. I don't believe they were interested in debate at all. Why were they like that?" He asked, rubbing the remembered hurt off his thin arms.

"Winthrop, you're a child - telling people like that government spending made America great."

"It's true!" He defended, ready to run inside and grab sheaves of his thesis for proof.

"It's also true that most people who buy Insecurities lose money and become insecure. But I can't tell people that, Mostly Bull would fire me. I've got to tell them to buy Insecurities so they will make money and feel secure, or else I'll be unemployed again and stuck here with you living in condemned housing."

"I hate lying," he said.

By now it was dark and Winthrop went inside attempting to find a candle and match to produce light. I heard much banging about from the untidy kitchen.

I entered at my own risk and recounted, gaily, a fiction about Mostly Bull putting up a religious shrine near Wall Street, "A giant Bull with an erection AND nipples, hermaphroditic like many other pagan gods. A billion dollar golden calf will suckle at it. It will accommodate a half million worshipers a day, twice that on 70 million share days at the exchange!" *{A 1979 extrapolation; a typical trading day on the New York Exchange was about 20 million shares! -editor}*

"Amazing," Winthrop mumbled.

We heard voices at the door. Winthrop lit his candle in time to see Lisa stumble toward the bedroom with a fat petty officer from the US Navy.

"She's searching for the mode of expression that suits her best," Winthrop said.

"Just trying to find herself," I added.

Winthrop laid his face into his arms upon the food encrusted tabletop and sobbed wretchedly.

"I've got to be going home." I said softly,

Covered by night I urinated in the uncanny Professor's dandelion patch. The rush of my meager stream onto the earth brought me to philosophical thought. Without any great familiarity with Hegel I found I could rephrase him: 'The only thing that man learns from

history is that man learns nothing from history.' - Gillhensky's law once again.

Lisa spoke harshly to her companion, her words assaulting me outside, "Get off!"

Nonetheless the old bed springs started squeaking filling me with revulsion in sympathy for my colleague and friend Winthrop. I wandered in the dark toward the train station humming a bar or two from 'God Bless America.'

**

Another day at Mostly Bull. My one good account, Billy Dirko, a young fellow with money and a penchant for throwing it at the market, was away on vacation. Probably getting laid, I guessed while I had to cold call strangers and debate the merits of Insecurities.

"The country is going socialist," one stranger warned. I had to humor the man, obviously he had money or wouldn't care.

"Don't you want to invest in America's future growth?" I asked, attempting to remain buoyant."

"No. A giant depression is coming."

I felt like agreeing with him for different reasons. I wondered what Mostly Bull's sales training program would suggest at this juncture.

"Well, let me refer to 'Das Kapital' and get back to you next year," I said.

"I won't be back into the market for the next decade," he warned, "the market is rigged."

"Decade? Okay, let me mark it on my calendar...Ten years. I'll call you on a Tuesday - about ten A.M."

"I might be dead."

"Have a good time."

Next phone call. I consulted my leads. I would have rather been doing almost anything else. Even watching radar scopes for the Air Force seemed more palatable than trying to part fools from their money for Mostly Bull.

Winthrop called (collect) from a pay phone. He liked to break up his day this way.

"Hello Mr. Big" I said cheerfully "Two thousand shares of General Monopoly at the market! - You got it!"

Winthrop laughed.

"Mr. Big, I suggest we buy into International Oligopoly here, at 50 times inflated earnings. It would make a nice addition to your portfolio. Let me pick up 10,000 shares for you. -- No? Then fuck you!"

Winthrop wanted to talk about sex and politics. I listened, I thought of jokes for him. "Listen buddy, what if the great comedian Karlo Marx had speculated more successfully on the London Stock Exchange like Ricardo and Keynes had? Maybe he would have ended up a liberal Republican and the Russians would be Democrats..."

Winthrop launched into his tirade on Soviet hegemony. It was loose talk like that which got him kicked out of liberal organizations years ago.

"Hey fellah - the Russians aren't revolutionaries they're conservatives," I instructed.

Foolishly he called my assertion absurd.

"Any nation that expects its citizenry to go to bed at ten o'clock is nothing but conservative. They just export revolution. Japan makes cars to sell abroad; the Russians make trouble -- It's a good business though. Trouble is an easy product to sell, even I could sell it. It's a giant step beyond Insecurities and more exciting too.

"Will the sunbelt always be Republican?" He asked.

"No. The South and West of drought and depression will always be Populist and vote for William J Bryan and Franklin Roosevelt. When people lose their money they always become Democrats."

"In America they might. In Europe when people lost their money they became Fascists or Communists. Could that happen here?" Winthrop asked.

"Yes, but, hopefully only after I leave."

"Where can you go?" He asked,

I can start making some calls and stop thinking about such things."

Winthrop was bad at political ideology. I usually had great fun getting him confused. "And also remember that it was the conservatives under Alexander Hamilton in this country who wanted a STRONG central government and a CONSERVATIVE in Germany named Otto Von Bismark who created the seeds of the welfare state."

"So what are you telling me?" Winthrop demanded.

"In the next depression we can blame everything on the conservatives again," I said with a laugh.

"You don't make any sense."

"I make more sense than you -- claiming to love a prostitute." I volleyed back hoping he wouldn't tear the veins out of his wrist with his teeth. I waited anxiously for his reply.

"You're just jealous," he replied sanely.

"I am jealous. But not JUST jealous," I admitted and corrected.

"What are you doing tonight?" Winthrop asked.

"Going home early to be miserable."

"Oh," (Pause) "Why don't you stop by here. Lisa is out."

"Wish I could." I considered it... "But heavy doses of misery await me on the home front. Keep up the good work and just remember."

"What?" He asked.

"The world is mad." We concluded our conversation and I considered going out to lunch with Schopenhauer for the next two hours.

THE WORLD IS MAD

Oh yes, the world is mad and always has been, Schopenhauer confirmed that at lunch. Plutus, our manager, was away somewhere, at a Mostly Bull management seminar probably had to do with intimidating the sales force for more production. With the cat away old insecurity himself, Schope, felt allowed to play.

"Well, I'll do a shooter and a brew," he consented in fine style at the cheap, but tasty, little bistro we frequented when we frequented anyplace.

We ate and drank saying little. Schopenhauer distrusted too much conversation knowing the frailty of the human constitution to say what could not be unsaid or re-explained satisfactorily.

"Let's face it, man is weak. The flesh is always willing," Schope would often remark. How right he was.

We took a little walk, he and I, to ward off the complacent buzz that had settled in our brains. He knew of an old, old bar hidden off the main drags.

"Built in 1915 and unchanged since. I was in there a few years back and beer was still ten cents a glass. Hope I can still find it, or it hasn't been burned down."

Down the olden streets we went. Fruit was for sale outside of small grocery stores. Smells and sounds lent a strange long-ago familiarity. The sun streaked into my head and melted a grain of *deja vu*. I zoomed back into the 1950's almost as if I had picked up the Kondratieff wave and rode it backwards.

We passed a two story, brick school built seventy years ago. Impressions painted themselves upon me. I had come back to where I had started. Despite all the distance I had tried to place between then and all the nows I'd seen, I was no further from myself then when I started my meandering journey. Why are human beings always running away from time when it is all they really have? Schope wouldn't comment on that.

We found the bar and even there beer had tripled in price. But all was not lost. Memories came back. Memories of 1954 when the silent bombs fell. It had been my first air raid drill in kindergarten, Maybe in the very school we passed or one just like it. "Into the hall

ways! Boys against the wall! -- Girls behind -- Don't turn around! Don't Turn Around!"
Meanwhile, outside, the world was being blasted by the silent bombs.

And on this tour with Schopenhauer I could see the damage: decrepit buildings and two foot pot holes in the streets. The silent bombs had taken their toll, '*Don't turn around!*'
What was there to see? What secrets did I miss?

So impressive was the magnitude of the unseen power that it had propelled me the next 13 years. Propelled me into the Air Force. Propelled me to the top of Monkey Mountain. Propelled me to listen to an 'Arc Light' mission. Yes, I wanted to hear the bombs. To know it was real.

Schopenhauer didn't understand any of this. I tried to build an historical case but he took it for hysterics. "Well... This is Newark where you were born. Memories come back. I got 'em too. Mind plays tricks on you. Some things are best forgotten."

I wouldn't let go of it, though. I invoked the past, Schope couldn't shrug me off. His kids had been small during the Vietnam war so he forbade the showing of television news for the duration. "It had to be," he said.

"What if your kids were older? Old enough for the war?" I asked.

Schopenhauer shuddered, "It's a rough world. We've got duties, all of us." And he changed the subject,

Poor Schopenhauer. He realized that knowing something did not make life easier only more difficult to bear.

"I'm glad you brought me here," I admitted.

His pace began to quicken. "Listen," he said, "when we get back to the office let me go upstairs first. Give me a minute. You can come up the back way later. If we swagger up there together they'll know we been drinkin'. It's for our own good."

Schopenhauer had been right. Plutus returned early from the management seminar and was positioned at my desk asking everybody for knowledge of my alleged whereabouts.

"Where you been Geelenski?" He drawled, menacingly.

"Late lunch," I tossed off indignantly and picked up the phone in a rush to get the orders I had been working on all morning. My lack of deference was enough to convince him and he floated away satisfied. My nemesis had always been reality.

I had dialed Billy Dirko's number. I knew he wouldn't be there so I hung up before his secretary answered it. Schope was on his phone deep in serious discussion. Plutus was bothering somebody else. I was in no mood for cold calls to unfriendly strangers who would (rightly?) resent my intrusion into their lives, I flipped through the forty pounds of paper on my desk. Absently I thumbed through a preliminary prospectus on something that didn't interest me in the least. The last few pages were left 'intentionally blank' for notes, I assumed. The urge to scream in revolt was sublimated into a stronger urge. I

drew a little doodle on the top of the blank page. I looked around. Everyone was preoccupied with something. Oddly, and happily, I began to write: *'Why am I on the phone dialing numbers I hope will not answer? Is this my (ha, ha) dialectic?'*

Slowly a story began to form itself...

'INSIDE OUT'

'Riding the train into endless minutes it always ends in time for the charades and games of the day when all the unknown bodies from all the trains take their roles respectively of the houses they came from.

'In the corporation that rents me (or owns me) I function as a creation of precise imperfection. They programmed me with a one directional, unquestioning aggressiveness, (which I feigned myself) and then set me loose amid the maze-like confines of a hundred thousand rules, laws, guidelines and corporate regulations, most of which I must evade in order to do what ever it is they want me to do (I'm on the telephone attempting to sell hypothetical concepts that are in themselves unpredictable). Few prospects believe me. I don't believe myself.

'There's a dark secretary whose hyper-personality repels me. Though on the other hand the hyper-ness permeates everything including her sex drives. Interesting.

'In this fantasy I have plenty of money. And contrary to the laws of money I also have no responsibility which means no role to play. I'm free to be a man-child.

'Money and Depravity

'It's a restaurant high up above the city. Perhaps in the tallest building in the world. The city is wearing night. A dark, felty, covering glistening with far-off pearls of distant mld-ice-light. The city is unknowable.

'My dark, prostitute-secretary is running hyper under her black gown. Her tribes-woman smile is already bubbling with the excitement in her stomach and between her legs (which is a very important place to her).

'The restaurant is elegant and expensive, few of the train people could ever afford it. They would feel out of place.

'I tip the waiters extravagantly throwing money around as if it were only the worthless paper that represents it.

'Amid unpleasant stares we laughingly take our table. What a view we have. My prostitute laughs her crackling hyper-laugh as she sucks mentholated cigarette smoke into her lungs. Her laugh ends with an evil, body-tearing cough.

'We eat sumptuously. Rich, fat juices of pampered animal flesh garlanded with deliciously sautéed vegetables.

'We drink rare wines and expensive plentiful beers, sloshing golden waters over our

dinners to the reservoirs of our bladders.

'She makes gross comments while holding up a limp celery stalk and waving it in front of my face. It's her symbol for what a man gives to her and she bites it suggestively.

'Fortunately, I have enough money and self-admiration to be far removed from the harsh stares of the other diners. Soon, amid bleary burps we conclude our feast and keeping to the glass separated dark, frozen universe we journey by exterior elevator to our hotel bedroom.

'Naked, she lays hyper-stimulating across the giant bed, the draperies parted and the window's city starlight laying splashed over her form. Her teeth smile; readily she's my 'hot poison.'

'Faint then stronger odious scents repel and entice like a lapping continuous tide. A chemical heat that draws what is naturally drawn. An act that I already regret.

'Then sleep in this cold, lonely tower like cold lonely sleep elsewhere, like sleep in crowded small bungalows along a tangle of created streets, a sleep along expanses of going nowhere highways running across minds from city to shore to far open spaces all starting out and coming again home.

'Before and between, my thoughts come together like stock-market transactions hinting of fornication.

I read my story, Did I really belong in the Insecurity business? Did anyone?

Feeling pained with the tension and guilt of a spy, I slid the prospectus into my briefcase. Yes I would have to study it later. No one paid any attention to me. I was still believed to be a dutiful, new-guy, Account Inexecutive. I would have to be more careful in the future. Thinking was forbidden at Mostly Bull if it did not pertain to NUMBERS.

THINKING IS FORBIDDEN MOSTLY ANYWHERE

(unless it pertains to NUMBERS)

Life Goes On

Winthrop needed a woman. Lisa was gone again, and Winthrop seemed to be over his infatuation with her. Now instead of bothering me with his multitude of painful trivia concerning her he bothered me about politics.

Every minute, it seemed, he had a new cause to uphold, a new enemy to combat and I the only audience to bombard about it. He had no money, we both knew that. No will to organize; little knowledge of how to deal with ordinary people whom he feared were superior to him. So, his polemics became a constant stream of difficult talk.

One day he would re-invent scientific socialism the next day he dreamt up some Libertarian utopia for free-enterprise, agrarian contract-makers. On the third day he was a philosopher-clerk in some misconception of Plato's 'Republic' probably at work in the

Bureau of Tyranny -- annoying me.

"Winthrop, stop it," I pleaded being deluged with his manifestoes of aimless unhappiness. I lay his heated scribblings aside.

"But politics is important!" He shouted, shaking with force the piles of paperback books on his make-do bookshelves.

"Winthrop, there are only two political parties. There have only been two," I told him.

"Two?" He paused to count and in minutes was probably up to 150.

"Two," I restated, simply.

"What are they?" He asked in wonderment.

"Diarrhea and Constipation," I said.

He guffawed into gales of laughter.

"Hey fellah, why do you think Oligarchs-of-yore kept exhorting their comrades to display *intestinal fortitude*?"

Winthrop didn't know. But he was heady in his sense of victory. In a near screaming frenzy he counted them off in my face: "Barnburner, Know-Nothing, Anti-Masonic, Socialist Labor, Nazi, Periclean Democrat, Jeffersonian Republican, Menshivist, Revisionist..."

I rose to leave.

"Progressive, Communist Workers..." he counted on his eighteenth finger.

"Two," I restated and exited outside.

"Whigs! Liberals, Tories!" He screamed out at me from the broken window, his face half-hidden by coffee stains created when Lisa tried to assassinate him with a cup of decaffeinated.

I held up my two fingers and smiled in victory.

Poor Winthrop, I would have to demonstrate things for him. Perhaps I could obtain the bull and bear models that Plutus kept on his desk. Explain to Winthrop that the bull represented GREED and the bear PANIC. Then in clashing the models together as one tried to rape and kill the other Winthrop could possibly come to understand the Insecurity business as well as economics and politics.

A block away and I could still hear him yelling, "Dixiecrat, Federalist, Christian Democrat!" His voice was growing hoarse.

"They're just names!" I yelled back to him. He stopped shouting.

"There are only two parties. -- It's part of Gillhensky's Law, 'thems that have and thems

that don't, those in power and those who want in."

He said nothing, his faraway face lost and forlorn.

"Do you believe me?" I called.

"No, but come back anyway. I have no one else to talk to."

Being a fool, myself, I complied.

*

Winthrop was miserable. Lisa came back. She was off drugs and uninterested in either alcohol or promiscuous fornication. All she wanted was marriage and babies, and not necessarily Winthrop's babies.

She disapproved of his asocial life style. Above all she wanted him to get a high paying job and move to a superior neighborhood. Why she changed and why she came back to Winthrop were mysteries to me. Perhaps consorting with oddballs like us had an effect on her intra-personal goal behaviors. Or maybe she tired of the ups and downs of chemical addiction. Or more likely it was the way-of-all flesh visiting Newark NJ.

I was afraid that Winthrop under her new and stern management may have undergone a personality change. Then I would have no one to loaf with. An even worse prospect was one of Winthrop getting a job making more money than ME!

But he didn't. He just got very miserable. He called me at work and talked for twenty minutes about his resentment for Lisa; *why couldn't she accept him the way he was, etc.?*

"Because you're a jerk," I told him.

"Yeah, well I know that," he moped.

"Not that there is anything intrinsically wrong with being a jerk," I added.

"I'm so miserable," he moaned.

*

Some people never seem to be miserable, cross sometimes, but never miserable. Mr. Easy was not miserable.

In the small hierarchies of the Mostly Bull office that employed me was a special and spacious office belonging to the elegant and gracious personage Mr. Randolph Goodwin Easy. In the chain of command he was simply one of the endless Vice Presidents of Mostly Bull and more specifically Plutus' boss.

In reality, Mr. Easy was much more. He was a man who never worked. Born of money and schooled Ivy League. His father had staked him some money to buy a limited partnership in Mostly Bull when the firm was still a calfling during the exuberant days when the Insecurity business was actually making money for some people.

And it made plenty of money for Mr. Easy. For in the gigantic corporation of Mostly Bull Inc. Mr. Easy owned 100,000 shares. A percentage of all the commissions produced in our office went into Mr. Easy's large pocket. His life style was splendid. He had been a golf and martini buddy of Charlemagne Bull. Known mere presidents of the United States and more important folk too, like the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board and his perennial buddies who were Chairman of two massive utility companies, Public Monopoly and General Disservice.

Mr. Easy arrived for work at the crack of ten AM, lunched (imbibed gin) from noon till two and departed a satisfied man at four in the afternoon. His job was to watch himself get richer.

When new Insecurity salesmen were hired Mr. Easy had Plutus lunch them at his private club to give them a little taste of what exclusive wealth was all about. He generally had a smile and twinkle in his eye for everyone - like Santa Claus. But unlike Santa if Mr. Easy stopped liking someone he turned the situation over to his chief elf, Plutus. "Watch that one, maybe get rid of him."

Then Plutus would throw himself into the task of bringing unholy misery upon the neck of the poor Insecurity salesman of mention. "I shall come down on him with the wrath of Plutus!" Saith him as he marched into his own office to summon the victim.

"Your production is way down," Plutus would say, "I want you in here at 8:30 every morning and on the phone till 6 at night. No lunch. If your production doesn't triple by next month, well, prepare yourself." (This usually happened to fellows who were not super-stars and approaching their tenth anniversary with the firm. After ten years their pensions were vested, Mr. Easy always liked to salvage something from an undeserving employee.)

Yet, no one hated Mr. Easy. In fact they would flee Plutus' wrath and put themselves at the mercy of Mr. Easy's wise and tolerant council (if only the king knew, then all would be right!)

Mr. Easy would nod and wink at the story of the harassed one's plight before evil Plutus and then pat their troubled shoulder. "Take a few weeks to find another job," he counseled. "It's all in the numbers. I'm only the boss around here. We all have to take orders, you know."

His supposedly magnanimous attitude won the heart of the oppressed and they would bow to their lord and offer humble thanks for nothing. Then they would beg forgiveness at having failed so great a humanitarian. Mr. Easy would smile and chuckle. "Better luck next time."

Plutus appeared at my desk. His beady eyes summoned my immediate attention.

"Mr. Easy wants to see you in his office," Plutus said.

My heart almost stopped, "Mr. Easy?" I questioned uneasily, "Why?" I wanted to know. I hadn't sold 100,000 shares of General Disservice on the last offering. He wasn't going to

wink at me as if I were Sumner or Spencer and say, "Good job. Here's 500 bucks, take the wife out to dinner and a show this Saturday. Join me for golf Sunday morning at the club."

Just as well, I thought, I couldn't play golf. *"Gee, Mr. Easy, I don't know what happened to my game -- if only I could get that little white ball off the wooden stick."*

"Well, Gill - if you can't tee off, you can't play. What did your father do for a living; how come you can't play golf?"

Perhaps Mr. Easy wanted to fire me personally. He only did that on the rare occasions when patriotic duty called for it, such as if a new guy proved to be skittish about risking other people's money, was a communist, pervert or made a boo-boo that lost money for the firm.

"When?" I asked Plutus.

"Right now," he said.

My knees went weak. "What about?" I demanded.

Plutus didn't know or seem to care. I shoved off.

The corridors were silent and carpets thicker near his office. The door was open. He sat behind his huge desk. Such a big, real wooden desk. So much room, I noticed. Room enough for half my house to fit into -- and this was only for him to sit around for four hours a day. How big was his house? (Huge!) He had the usual array of pictures featuring the late Charlemagne Bull and mere presidents of the United States standing easy like old buddies with Mr. Easy.

"Hello Gill," Mr. Easy said.

"Hello Mr. Easy."

"Yes?" He queried, humor in his gin eyes. What weird joke was this?

"Uh," I gestured.

"Oh," he smiled, "Didn't Plutus tell you?" He asked.

"No sir," I was perplexed, yet ultra-polite in the face of intoxicated dumbness by my lord and master.

"He didn't, huh? Just giving you a little raise against your future production which we expect will be up to snuff. Another hundred a month. - Thought he'd mention it to you." He peered at me from above his reading glasses.

"Yes sir. Thank you sir," I said (profusely) and shook his hand (heartily). I ran from his office feeling more bullish already. And feeling the pressure to produce more keenly.

I would have to discourage Winthrop from calling me and taking up my valuable time, I

thought. Too many negative, non-productive thoughts. "On the phone!" I coaxed myself.

Back in the boardroom Plutus glared at me. His serpent eyes hissed selfishly. If he had his way, my pay would have been cut 200 dollars a month. And he HAD known what Mr. Easy's message was all about. Plutus had hoped I would have stumbled in my nervousness and said something stupid to get the old boy mad at me. Then Mr. Easy could have told his floor manager, "*You're right Plutus, Gill isn't really our kind of boy. - Get rid of him for me,*" It was a Mutt and Jeff routine.

I sat at my desk. Made an aggressive phone call to a prospect and set up an appointment. Then I basked. In moments I stopped basking and called Winthrop at the pay phone near the corner of his block. In ten rings Winthrop was there.

"You have reached someone in the universe," he answered.

"Hi Winny, it's me, and I'm miserable..." Then I bored him for twenty minutes concerning how low I had fallen to kiss the asses of such ignoble people just to assure my own puny survival, doing things I hated and thought morally wrong.

"Another hundred a month?" He asked.

"Yes."

"Gee, maybe I could get a job selling Insecurities."

We both laughed, evilly.

*

In the Insecurity business every day begins at zero on the production run. The ephemeral victories of all the yesterdays have evaporated and one must start all over again to prove one's worth and earn one's keep. Thus the battle to get above nothing on the daily production tally.

If one had made an error (financial boo-boo) then one began the day OWING money to the firm, So it was possible to start one's day below zero.

Therefore, one could say that in the Insecurity business one is fired before one is hired: (*'Welcome aboard Gill, you're fired. Things'll be great as long as you produce. If you fuck up take the early train home.'*) Everything was temporary. When Good's production surpassed Sumner's he could have Sumner's prized office, even his phone and ashtray. In the Insecurity business everyone was insecure.

A typical morning in the Insecurities business:

Phone call: "Hello Mr. Gillhensky? I didn't receive the monthly check you said I would receive from that thing (product) you sold to me."

(Correct Answer - Unspoken A) *'I misunderstood that product - as did everybody else in this office - and inadvertently misrepresented it to you. Therefore you are not entitled to what you thought you were. However, I sincerely needed the sale to avoid being fired so*

your purchase did serve a useful, though temporary purpose.' OR

(Correct Answer - Unspoken B) *'Someone in this unknowable world or some cranky computer coded your account incorrectly. It will take at least a year to re-code your account correctly as no one, including me, is interesting in attempting to undertake this gargantuan task. In theory this could be done in seconds but since this is a lazy, stupid world where nothing works and no one cares, it would take me four hours and much aggravation just to locate the telephone number of the department that may be responsible for corrections (only to find a busy signal bleeping for the next three days). So we would all be much happier if you forgot all about this.'*

Probable Customer Response to Truth: *'I want my money! If you can't get it to me give me back the funds I invested in the first place. Give me back what I gave you!'*

Reply A: *'I'm sorry but that can not be done. We can SELL the product (shares, units etc.) for you to someone else we could care less about. But since it has declined precipitously in value since you purchased it you would lose a considerable sum in doing so. In other words, you have already lost (a third, half, all) your initial investment.'*

Probable Customer Response to Truth: *'Thief! Crook!'*

Reply B: *'Just look at it this way, you took a considerable portion of your (discretionary income, inheritance, hard earned money, life's savings, etc.) and threw it into a sewer. Thank you for your business. NEXT CALL!'* Cut to a Mostly Bull TV commercial of a grinning Mr. Big in a three piece suit waving a huge check, "Good job, Mostly Bull!" He says to the camera.

Answer to Customer (Sound surprised): "Oh? That's odd." (You're only the 80th person to complain this morning). "Maybe the Post Office lost your check. Damn government inefficiency!"

I had an appointment to keep. An appointment made in the haste of aggressive-lust but to be met in the pall-of gloom brought by reality itself.

I allowed myself an extra 45 minutes to find the place and spent over an hour lost in conflicting directions with cars honking at traffic snarls and trucks cutting me off because they could do so.

Feeling streaked with soot and choked by pollution I arrived in the drip of perspiration to my appointment. I was already out eleven dollars for gas, parking and tolls due to use of my auto. This made me all the more miserable.

My prospect turned out to be a young surgeon in the third year of his fledging practice and already grossing \$ 400,000 dollars a year. He had eight secretaries in the next office typing up all the needed forms for the insurance companies who could afford his fees.

Office expenses and his pension and profit sharing plans had sheared the government's claims down to 32 % of his take. Real estate shelters protected much of the rest. He thought he needed me for some 'safe' suggestions for his tax-sheltered pension plans.

"...Not shares of equity," he warned, professing to know better.

I shrewdly advised Government-backed mortgage bonds. Knowing that rising interest rates would soon halve his invested funds in worth and inflation would reduce any maturing principle to a tenth of its original invested value thirty years into the cloudy future. But, I reasoned what was good for the goose was good for the gander. I made a mental note not to ever consult him for surgery so as not to be forced to eat my own gander, (Remember -- dealing with Insecurities makes one insecure).

We talked for a moment. "I should be earning over a million dollars a year soon," he said and then hesitated, "I AM a GOOD surgeon." He added in defense and then almost as if he were reading my mind he wondered aloud, "Sometimes I wonder if I should be making this much money. I just don't know," he mused.

A nice fellow. Too bad. With perfunctory absoluteness I made my own surgeon's stroke. I presented my entire table of battle and dazed him with heavy bombardment. Yes, damn it-to-Plutus, I could sell, sell, sell when I wanted to. I answered his every question and comforted his every concern without telling him anything. I got the order. For the task of subjecting-to-squander about \$ 10,000 of his surgeon's pay I made myself about \$ 250. Mostly Bull made more.

I shook his hand and departed his office feeling both elated and guilty. The secretaries were busy mass-billing insurance companies as I walked into the street.

Outside cars honked their frustrated horns and trucks rumbled past cutting everybody off. The hot air stank of burnt and dead things. It hit me, Billy Dirko sued Insurance companies for lucrative contingency fees. He had a string of hapless, clients who suffered multiple whiplash traumas. Dr. X billed the Insurance companies for surgery fees no average person could afford. Who paid the insurance premiums?

Me. And who produced actual (real) products for the world while I and 250,000 other Insecurity space cadets ruined what ever spare capital that fell between the cracks?

Was half the world sitting on its ass in some corporate or government cubby hole fulfilling a purpose of dubious intent while a drawing a fat salary to accomplish nothing? Had everything worked itself into a huge circle? While the managerial bosses consumed society's surplus they seemed to be justifying their existence (and covering their tracks) by ordering legions of secretaries to peck, peck, peck at battalions of word processors to fill out a zillion forms in quadruplicate all destined to be filed, lost and destroyed, was there anybody left to do anything useful?

Why was I stuck in traffic with an internal combustion engine choking me (and itself) with the stinking fumes of exploded, rare gasoline vapors? Why were all the bridges and roads in the city crumbling into rusty looking sand? (Because it cost too much to fix them!)

Everywhere was the physical corruption of decay. Things just worn out. The newspapers and television were full of the moral corruption of a world that could not fix itself.

So I was a stuck in traffic. If I hadn't been in my obsolete auto I would have been stuck in an obsolete train conked out near a faulty signal or delayed by bad track. Or coming into an ancient station two hours late, all the aging men in business suits lining up silently in the aisles like paratroopers ready to descend into the oblivion of numbers.

The people who were growing rich were, most often, appropriating something from somebody else not creating anything new.

The new 'experts' were silly Monetarists who spent their working hours hollering about the money supply, "Whoops! There goes the money supply! M1B, M2, M3. We were constantly being warned that there were 'too many dollars chasing too few goods.' Didn't they understand that only fools made goods when MONEY could be had by chasing money.

The old/new chant was, *"More Greed! We need more incentive for the holy greed! Greed is good. Greed is god, The bull-god's name is GREEEED!"*

I inched forward in traffic. A realization, somewhat frightening yet almost comforting in its bizarre promise, wiggled to life in my fuzzy brain. No, the nonsense of the world could not continue in its present direction for ever. Once its proportions became completely unmanageable a new flood would come to wash all to its conclusions. It had happened every other time. Cars honked but all I could hear was the silent bombs falling and falling...

LISA IN THE THROES OF SEXUAL FINANCE

Lisa had changed her mind about finding a husband and producing an endless stream of human children falling like watermelons from between her sturdy thighs. She first, entered into a celibate religious order that worshipped Jesus Christ and Mani under the tutor-ship of the prophet 'Dr.' Andaro Ahmed, a former tree surgeon from Perth Amboy NJ.

After three devoted weeks in the religious fold Lisa moved on, The professional life beckoned and she entered a pre-med. program at a formerly prestigious university under their female/minority special admissions program. However, the proximity of the campus to Harlem offended her and Lisa moved on again.

Seeking both professional status AND big bucks without obtaining degrees in medicine or petroleum engineering Lisa answered an advertisement that posed the question, 'Do you want to get rich by MAKING MONEY? -- An exciting field only for the specially chosen few who qualify ... Not for everyone ... dedicated... INDIVIDUALS... determined... goal-oriented ... seek success... wealth... entrepreneurial personality, self-starter, eager-beaver, go-getter, BRITE, etc.' Within four months Lisa was an Account Inexecutive with my firm, Mostly Bull.

In her first month of production her sales-commission numbers surpassed my first year. Lisa had found her niche in the world, selling Insecurities for the Sexual Finance *Industry*.

How had she become so successful so quickly, I wondered. I stopped by her desk to observe while she was on the phone. True, there was a tidy pile of account distributions and leads from her non-secret admirer, Plutus (who boasted in the men's room that he would soon split her open with his massive shlong).

But I had to admit the feed was only half the story of her remarkable success. She had mastered the use of the telephone in SELLING.

I listened carefully to her low, sensual conversation spoken menacingly into the mouth piece of her hand set, "Yes, I know that your stock went down. I want you to sell it. Yes, that's right, and roll the proceeds over to buy this other company, Acme Dynamite.

"Yes, this new stock is a truly explosive situation. -- Wait a moment! Shut up or I won't handle your account! "-- I see this new stock FIRMING in the market. Yes firming nicely. Then, after some Base Building I see a slow but steady UPTREND. Tick by tick the volume growing BIGGER and BIGGER; the bid and ask climbing steadily, -Yes, now it's pleasantly extended we can add to it making it a nice, full position. Perhaps we can add even more to it making it even BIGGER.

"Now suddenly news hits the trading floor -- a buying PANIC develops. It goes up quicker and quicker. LARGER and larger volume. All buyers, few sellers, The stock moves straight up. Four, no, six, no, eight ... My God! NINE points in a day. Nine, full, beautiful sweet, thick, heady points. It's staying up. Up, -- huh, excuse me? ... "No, I can't wait till you find a box of tissues. Your handkerchief will have to do."

I marveled at her. She shrugged off my marvel. "I'm a better whore than you. I've got the right equipment. What I like most about this job is it's so clean. No mess on my hands, my mouth, or you-know-where. It's all nicely left on the other side of the phone."

Shamed by my lack of business I returned to my desk and phoned Billy Dirko hoping for an order. Reluctantly, he accepted my call.

"Lar, I think they want me to use this other broker in your office. Much more experienced. A woman as a matter of fact. -- Not that it makes any difference to me."

I experienced anxiety. But an item on our news wire caught my eye.

"Billy! Listen to this!" I read aloud: "Acme Dynamite has just experienced an explosion in their warehouse that destroyed its entire inventory plus a nearby oil refinery. Trading of its stock has been halted DOWN thirteen dollars a share!"

Billy was destroyed. "Oh no!" He cried. "Why me?"

He took no more calls from Insecurity salespersons for the next four weeks.

Winthrop missed Lisa, if for no other reason than the dictate of Gillhensky's law, 'Man likes to be miserable.'

Winthrop tried phoning her at Mostly Bull but she refused to take his collect calls unless he traded 500 shares of a 25 dollar stock twice a day.

Bemoaning suicidal depression Winthrop turned to me for help. I advised him to date other women.

The first of his experiences was a creature named Wendy Breeze, a 35 year old former life guard finishing her Ph.D. in Decadence at the Old School. Excuse made for possible hyperbole and minor exaggeration in its recounting below follows a reconstruction of the Doctor's first assignation with such a notorious femme fatale:

Winthrop strained through dinner to present her with intelligent options in convivial conversation. She suffered his attempts as she slogged down one half of a bottle of gin blessed by the kiss of an olive and a promise of vermouth.

Winthrop was detailing his (my) thesis for massive debt default and financial collapse when she interrupted him with a belch and interjected, "Key look, I know more than you about almost everything because I attend a better school than you did. So let's (second belch) cut the crap, go somewhere and fuck."

Winthrop obliged, paid the \$ 200 dinner bill and made off with her to a hundred dollar-a-night motel room.

Prepared for sexual release the good Doctor disrobed. However, his lady interrupted his ardor by taking an hour long bath and then did her nails in a black, oil base enamel.

When Winthrop finally approached she sniffed the air and snorted in disgust. She ordered Winthrop to shower with Ajax chloride bleach. That done, Winthrop returned to find her posed rudely on her haunches before the television set with the volume turned up full as she watched a re-run of the 'Gong Show.' Seeing him balk she thundered.

"Get your ass over here! Make that puny putz hard and give it to me! Shit, buster, I went to dinner with you, didn't I?"

Winthrop inquired politely of some *oral stimulation* -- to get him going again. That enraged her.

"What!? I don't just suck anybody's cock, only the one's of guys I know and LIKE!"

Winthrop demurred.

"Hurry up before the commercial is over," she instructed.

"At least be nice to me," Winthrop mumbled, moving closer.

"Hey, wait! I like THIS commercial!"

Winthrop reported this tale during his therapy hour at a cheap tavern where we drank draft beer for 35 cents a glass. He wailed for a solution to his deep-seated inadequacies (or bad luck) with women. He feared the incident would render him impotent-for-life with anything other than his primary digits.

I applied my Fantasy-Exorcism Therapy to his vital need.

"Let us remake this experience in the image of the most searing psychic factor in your personality -- wish fulfillment!"

We ran Winthrop through my abbreviated version of basic training commando style. Left him with a shaven head and horrid tattoos across his body and face including blood-dripping fangs on his lips and chin, scorpions on his cheeks and a huge tarantula over his nose. There were snakes coiled around his arms in this imagery plus battle displays of Vietnam over his chest and shoulders including lists of profanities in 13 languages. A fierce bald eagle covered the top his head, clawed legs reaching over his ears.

We renamed the new Winthrop 'Mighty Mental Meldrick' and dressed him waist-down in the bloused breeches and boots of an Israeli Paratrooper.

Next we reworked the evening-in-question by starting out in Ms. Breeze's apartment having Mighty Winthrop eat all the expensive food in her refrigerator and quaff down a case of beer in order to produce a noxious accident all over her fine rugs and furniture.

Then our boy started a cozy fire in Wendy's Franklin stove using all the existing drafts and notes for her doctoral dissertation.

After quick sex with three unwashed prostitutes just off the boat from Haiti, Winthrop demanded fellatio of Ms, Breeze and upon successful completion added violence to the terrible degradation she had already suffered. (Supposedly-liberal Winthrop was cackling with drunken glee at the scenario I was creating for him). Prior to leaving the apartment, Sgt. Winthrop-Meldrick relieved the prostrate Ms, Breeze of all the money in her wallet and urinated into her collection of fine oriental prints muttering, "Here's to you, zipper-heads!"

Winthrop was so pleased with the alteration of his Wendy Breeze experience that he ordered four more beers and giggled profusely while toying with the idea of painting a spider on his nose.

I pronounced him temporarily in remission recommended more therapy and another try at the opposite sex. Drunk, and weak-willed as he normally was, Winthrop eagerly consented, Such is the battle between men and women, continually waged in the mind.

Under the influence of alcohol Winthrop often suffers from Delusions of Adequacy. At all other times he is capable, under any circumstances of displaying characteristics of Ineffectual Personality, or IP.

When faced with a situation burning with immediacy that requires forthright and conclusive action an individual afflicted with IP, does nothing. Perhaps stammers something profoundly stupid, purses the lips, flushes or trembles but does nothing effective. Winthrop is of this type.

Moments later, after the circumstances have rolled over him he will flee to a deserted rest room and angrily karate-chop toilet tissue or glower threateningly into the mirror. At best, he could practice scaring people with a display of lunacy hoping to prevent circumstances arising that burn in immediacy and require forthright and conclusive

action.

It was under the influence of IP, that Winthrop made the acquaintance of 'Amelia Fuzzbusch,' his next female Dienbienphu.

It began simply enough. Winthrop, in rare good spirits, had decided to compile some additional notes for his project and chose to do a bit of field work. His subject-for-the-day was decadence.

After a casual tour of the go-go bars he turned his attention to 'quaint' Greenwich Village located on the whereabouts of Manhattan Island due north of the Sexual Finance District.

Feeling chipper and full of vim he even tossed off a casual 'Hi' to some female denizen of those odd streets.

"Hoi." Came the response.

"My name is Dr. Winthrop and I'm finishing my stupendous dissertation."

"Love to talk to ya, hon, but I'm in a mad rush. First got to cover the Intermediate, Mad, Gay Songfest and then dash off a quick piece on oral sex."

"A journalist?" He inquired.

"I write." She snapped gum behind the defense of her ample lips as she squinted at him.

"You know," Winthrop began, "my friend, patient, client, patron and therapist, Mr. Gillhensky also writes. Scribbles really into a little notebook."

"Sounds cuckoo. Love to stay and chat. Discuss your whole family," she said facetiously. "But got to run, See ya. Bye."

She made no attempt to hide her negative appraisal of Winthrop, rolling her eyes up as a signal to the world -- *creep behind me!*

Winthrop wasn't upset. He wandered the Village, happily, hoping the big nuke wouldn't land while he was there and retrieved from the garbage a copy of an underground paper called 'Diarrhea Now!' (as if it can wait). Finding a cheap establishment with a sidewalk table, Winthrop splurged and ordered a cup of hot water. He had his used tea bag in a pocket and with his newspaper would settle down to a quiet bit of study and reflection. After all, it was a nice spring-like afternoon.

Within minutes the female writer was there. She plopped into the seat next to him.

"What ya got in there Wingtips? Any acid in there?"

"Only tannic," Winthrop cautiously explained.

"Oh wow!" She was thrilled, "I thought you might be an all-right dude, Are you tripping?"

Winthrop, in from Jersey, nodded yes.

"Wow!" She smiled. "No wonder you came off as an asshole. You're whacked." She patted his knee. "Is my face running?"

"No." Winthrop felt concerned for HER sanity.

"Do you know how stupid I am?" She asked.

Winthrop had no idea of how stupid she was and felt embarrassed to ask. After a hesitation he yielded to his need to be polite. "How stupid are you?"

"Oh, shit, I had the Intermediate, Mad, Gay Songfest on my schedule for today! How dumb! It's next week. Or last week. But not today. And that piece on oral sex? I could (snapped her fingers) knock it out faster than," she looked at Winthrop, "you."

Winthrop choked on his lukewarm, weak tea.

"Well not that fast maybe, but fast. *Moi God*, what a week it's been. -Hey, you into Death-Trip-Explosion Music?" The satchel she carried contained a portable stereo which she turned up to 10,000 decibels.

Winthrop thought it was the big nuke coming to get him. Uncontrollably, he bit into the Styrofoam cup that held his liquid refreshment. His nose bobbed in tea water allowing his brain to conclude that he was going to die of drowning. So his brain opened his mouth to gasp for air and the remaining contents of his cup splashed onto the crotch of his trousers.

She turned the volume down. "Hey what did you do, blow your nose and piss on yourself? You're bad, man. Ate your cup too, I see."

Winthrop was in a coughing fit.

"Hey, *neat-oh*. You do that good: You're *fucko*-all-right, Jack.." She playfully punched his shoulder.

While he coughed she prattled on, this 'Amelia Fuzzbusch' (Winthrop's name for her) whose real handle was Henrietta Tattles but was called 'Tatz.'

She thrust her big knockers up toward Winthrop's face. "Whatever you do, DON'T call me TITS! It's Tatz!" Then she touched upon 20 different subjects in five minutes. "I like Negro men because they are *sooo* Negro, if you know what I mean. You straight or gay?"

"Winthrop," he corrected.

"Don't matter, I don't find you a turn-on anyway. But Negro, Negro? How could I? Such a throw-back word from the 60's. Uh, how awful the 60's were, the war and all!"

"My friend was there," Winthrop interjected.

"How awful. Boy, you even have creeps for friends. I should say *Black* but that doesn't

sound right. To say *Black* men are so *Black* is weird. I don't mean that. Besides, most are really brown - where it counts too! (explicit laugh) I could say, Black men are so *Negro* but that sounds racist. And I am not a racist."

"This friend I mentioned to you?" Winthrop said, "He has a friend, Schopenhauer who says 'Regardless of race, creed, color or national-origin -- I don't trust anybody!'" Winthrop laughed, "He's an equal opportunity paranoid."

Tatz stared at him, "You're really weird. Ugly weird."

If Winthrop hadn't had IP, he would have gotten up and left. But Winthrop blushed and sat quietly as she ranted further.

"I mean about racism; it's not the color of a man's skin that interests me. It's the size of his penis."

Winthrop cringed.

"Where can I get in touch with you Wingtips?" She asked.

Carelessly, he mentioned his street address and when pressed for phone numbers gave mine at work and the pay phone near his house (shack).

"You never know when vandals will bash the public phone in, so you can get in touch with me through my friend..."

"What does he do, murder people?" She inquired.

"He's an Insecurity salesman."

She guffawed. "That's worse. A pig!"

"He's not like that. He's troubled by..."

"Sure he is. *Oink* ta you!" She rose, "Got to run. If I'm ever in the mood to talk asshole-talk I'll contact you. Bye." Scurrying with her weighty satchel she vanished into a side street.

Winthrop fled the big city, hoping to never return.

But bad luck followed. That evening he was summoned to the nearby pay phone by an elderly wino who lingered with his brown paper bag-hidden bottle of low-class spirits while Winthrop took his call.

"*Hoi*, Wingtips. What a day! Got propositioned by an 80 year old guy. He kinda reminded me of you except he's more virile. Hey, want to come over and watch me have sex with a wall? Ten men of mixed races? Only kidding... Sometimes I come on too strong. Sometimes I cum too strong (shrieking laughter). Wingtips, (low sensual tone) I got a hot, juicy spot for you-ooo (laughter)."

Winthrop was both attracted and repelled by her great awfulness. If for no other reason,

he felt that he must experience her to the end of his academic satisfaction. His work called for it.

"Do you mind me?" She asked in a flash of self-awareness.

"No," Winthrop forced, sealing his fate.

"Oh, good! I can ring your chimes, Wingy (laughter)."

After the one-sided conversation was concluded Winthrop had his personal shame and sorrow to contend with, and the unshaven grin of the grizzly wino who asked for money. Winthrop handed him a nickel.

"A nickel!" The ingrate shouted.

"It's all I have."

The wino dashed the coin to the sidewalk where it rolled. Chuckling with maniacal glee the old bum loosened the rope that held up his voluminous, beggared trousers. Then, he aimed in targeting fashion his stream of pee to intercept Winthrop's evasive nickel.

"I can't take much more of this." Winthrop confessed to the dark night.

Having exhausted his supply, the old wino trotted off. Winthrop retrieved his nickel. Money to Winthrop, was too precious to waste, though he felt consigned to rinse it before re-pocketing it.

Alone, the tormented Professor trooped down aged, gaping sidewalks toward home. He wondered if he had 10,000 dollars at risk in Insecurities in the care of either Lisa or myself (so that Mostly Bull could make commissions) whether he would feel any more insecure than he already did. He concluded not and went home to sleep a troubled slumber in a bed full of damp newspapers.

BERTRAM FINLEY

In the annals of Mostly Bull there are many stories. The tale of Bertram Finley is just one:

Bertram was an average hire who came to the firm not long after I. He had no special skills other than the usual ability to talk with out drooling and sign his name properly. He had the sort of training one expects from a typical college graduate turned out at a non-splendid, Protestant college. He had no family connections and was expected to either linger near the bottom of the production list struggling to open up new accounts that would be re-assigned to big-hitters upon his termination, or be fired immediately. (Remember, in the Insecurities business one is fired when hired, and every day begins at zero or less.)

The strange rigors of the Insecurity business often proved painful to the new recruit. Finley was no exception. His spine would curl and eyes flit before him in near desperation when he heard the sound of sales-managers striding the earth behind him.

The sales-managers and assistant sales-managers were usually former West Point, Regular Army Officers who left the service in disgust once detecting that total discipline had fled the military in the early 1970's, (Interesting note: Most of the salesmen born after 1946 had avoided military service entirely, having decided that there was more to lose than gain,)

These sales-management-peoples would prowl the boardroom shouting: "On the phone!" To any new recruit pausing in his omnipresent obligation to Mostly Bull. Sometimes they would corner a new guy and yell into his ear: "Quick! Give me your ten best sales ideas!"

If the recruit stumbled for answers they would yank him from his seat. "Perhaps you don't belong here. Let's take this one to our superior," they would say.

The new guy, tearfully, would explain how his wife was sick, mortgage payment due, had cancer, bankruptcy, psychosis and how much he needed his new-guy-salary-check. "Then, get on the phone!" They would shout and as the new guy began dialing phone numbers to find the customers to produce the commissions that Mostly Bull liked, the sales managers would smile to the rear of the room where Plutus or Mr. Easy would grin and wink back.

Bertram and I either made 'cold calls' or pretended to make calls usually to each other.

"Hey, Ski-boy, Plutus is watching your ass," he would warn me, whispering into his phone extension from across the office.

"Thank you for calling back Mr. Big. Shall I put those 1,000 shares into a joint name? -- Is he still there?" I would whisper.

"Whoops, talking to Sumner now. Smiling. Go to lunch you son-of-a-bitch so I can read the sports section," Finley would relay.

At other times we were forced to call strangers at random to try and convert their money into Insecurities or their existing Insecurities into other Insecurities or even back into money if that was still possible.

"Ask for the order!" Another sales-command-officer, or prick like Sumner, would shout threateningly to a new guy who made phone calls all day but did not have the balls to stick the nice (few) people who actually talked to him with dubious Insecurities.

"What do you think you're here for, jerk-off, to run up our phone bill? Ask for the order!"

And if a new guy was on the phone, and asking for the order but not getting it they shouted the final truism of the Insecurity business: "Get the commission! What's the matter? You don't know how to *close* the sale? Get the commission!"

With tapes running noisily on the wall, squawk boxes squawking, phones ringing, orders and instructions being shouted urgently, people peering into cathode ray tubes to see the 'big picture' my office reminded me of something. If the lights had been turned down any lower I would have been subject to flashbacks, believing myself to be wasting my precious time with the useless air war in Vietnam. Yes indeed, our large, windowless

office reminded me of that concrete bunker on top of the mountain.

Suddenly there was a call to battle. A vice-assistant commander (Sumner) was on the loudspeaker:

"Achtung! Attention! Attention all troops! We are pricing General Disservice Tonight! Due to weak market conditions we must move this offering quickly!"

Aha, I thought, more shares of this weak utility to be foisted upon the public. Were it's nuclear reactors ready to explode? The folks in the Insecurity business had jokes about that: "Sorry, Mr. Jones, your dividends are not retroactive; they're RADIOACTIVE! Ha, Ha."

More than likely, General Disservice was just coming to market to get more money so it could continue paying out more to its shareholders than it could expropriate from its captive customers. Soon, however a new state utility commission would be appointed, one that favored free monopoly enterprise and the electric and gas rates would be jacked up dramatically. In celebration of this future infusion of capital General Disservice's Chairman would give himself a hefty raise and treat his buddy Mr. Easy to a thick steak and a gallon of gin.

Surprise utility offerings were a call to action. Insecurity men all over the planet would begin to gird themselves for duty. First, Insecurity agents had to ascertain where above its normal trading range shares of General Disservice (GD) would mysteriously close on the equity market. Then, they would have to guess how high above the market's closing price the Syndicate (headed by Mostly Bull big-wigs) would price the offering so they could phone everybody living, breathing and willing to buy GD, that this blessed event was soon to happen.

'Coming tomorrow at dawn -- without a sales commission, It's free-of-charge to you, Mr. Wonderful Customer. (Because GD is paying Mostly Bull \$ 2.70 a share to sell it to you). So get your order (indication of interest) in early while we still have some shares left!'

"On the phone!" Sumner shouted, anxious for us to sell GD. because the more HE sold the more leads HE got for getting us to sell it. The more leads, the more prospective customers, the more shares of GD sold. It was a numbers-game to Sumner. And the offering promised a potential number ELEVEN thousand dollars high for him. Not to mention dinner and golf with Plutus and Mr. Easy at the latter's club.

"On the phone! Get out to your accounts. Sell GD!" Sumner orated us.

Finley was perplexed. He had never fought a surprise utility-offering-engagement before and had little idea of what to do. Poor guy.

I got on the phone. "Mr. Jones, your electric utility bills have tripled this year. Here's a chance to own a piece of GD, before it owns you!" So what if there would one day be a billion shares outstanding. "Buy it!"

Phones rang, sweat poured. Mr. Easy roamed the back wall near the big hitters, worry in

his jowls. He was sniffing the wind, hoping the offering would be over-subscribed. That way if the Syndicate (which was beyond Mr. Easy's sphere-of-influence) priced the offering outrageously above the market price they could still find buyers for the shares. If fools were eager to buy 10,000,000 shares of GD, the syndicate anticipating the sale of only 4,000,000 shares would price the issue as high as it liked. Again it was a numbers-game, and only the syndicate knew what those magic numbers were. Supply and demand in black & white before it happened.

Mr. Easy listened carefully to orders the big-hitters were piling in on GD.

"How's it going?" He asked Spencer and Pierce.

"Thousand share ticket right here," Pierce said. "Got 10,000 in since ten o'clock," Spencer said.

"Good, good. Give 'em to Sumner to call in to the Syndicate. Don't hold back, boys. Send 'em in -- so we can get more," Mr. Easy said with a sharp wink.

The big-hitters were doing all right, Mr. Easy concluded. So he turned his eagle-eye attention to the boardroom floor. He spied Plutus moving among the troops. Schopenhauer's head was bent low over his desk, phone to his ear, while writing a ticket.

"Hope that ticket is for GD, Schope," Mr. Easy joked with a point.

Schope was quick. "Yes sir. Two hundred shares, I have fifteen hundred in already." He was a survivor.

"Good, good. Don't hold back now. Tickets to Sumner," Mr. Easy said and moved on.

Plutus doubled his efforts. I felt his breath on my neck.

"Got five hundred done. Still working. Hope to do three (thousand)," I said rapidly, dialing my next call. He moved on without saying a word. I glanced over to Bertram. He was watching the tape. I winced for him.

Mr. Easy and Plutus conferred quietly mid-floor. Mr. Easy grinned and patted his pocket. He was already counting his money, I believed and bellying up to the promise of even more GD shares to be allotted his highly worthy office in any future offering.

"Let's show we can move that offering," the old boy said.

I was getting a busy signal on my next call. Relishing it, I used the opportunity (head glued to the phone) to spy out the rest of the office. Sumner was working with the dispatch of the grim-reaper during a major plague. He was talking on three phones at once, his face gray-grim with a sense of great duty to Mostly Bull and himself. Bertram Finley was idly sorting through his bond leads.

By 3:50 PM the tension mounted. It seemed as if we put on our helmets and clustered about our radar scopes. "There!" Someone shouted, pointing at a target on the scope. GD's shares, which had not advanced more than 25 cents a day in months, were

miraculously leaping forward 12 1/2 cents, 25 cents, 37 1/2 cents!

At 4:00 PM the market was closed. Mr. Easy left for the day and Plutus bolted the door behind him so no one else could leave. We began to work harder in our telephone solicitation for the sale of GD.

"We gonna sell every last share of GD, at least once before anyone of you goes home tonight!" Plutus declared to the office.

Bells and buzzers sounded. Sumner went on the intercom. We could see the thin edges of a nasty smile about his tight lips. "Attention! Attention all troops! As you know, GD closed on the market at \$ 22.50 a share."

There was an audible groan from those salesmen who felt that their customers would suspect larceny in such suspicious goings on.

"Attention!" Sumner reiterated sharply. "The syndicate has priced GD at \$ 22.75 a share."

There was a louder groan from these same salesmen. Plutus moved among them brusquely. These were the men he despised. "You! How many shares have you taken down? How many have you done? -- You!" They fell silent.

"What are you men waiting for?" Plutus rebuked.

Forty phones were viciously attacked by fearful Account Inexecutives.

"Sell the damn thing!" Plutus ordered.

I burrowed deeper into my foxhole calling any potential GD buyer I could think of. My mind was whirling. I could suppose that behind me Plutus and Sumner were putting on their black, storm troopers, dress uniform. Yes, with knee boots, dagger and swagger stick! I wanted to search for them but something told me not to turn around. *"Who you looken' at boy? Suppose you in Vietnam during a ground attack when heads supposed to be down and you start looken' around like a fucken' jackass?"* --My military training sergeant had once screamed at me.

Jackboots stomped in the aisles. I tried to imagine what was transpiring.

"Salesman Finley!" Plutus shouted.

"Jawohl, mein Uber-Salesmench." I heard Finley snap to attention beside his desk.

"Finley, how many shares of GD have you sold?"

"None my Uber-Salesmench!"

"None? None! There is no excuse for this!"

"Sir, my clients do not want this lackluster utility in there portfolios while interest rates go up, making this item shrink in value."

"No excuse!" Then I heard the swagger stick slowly flipping through the holding pages of Finley's meager account book. "Hmmm. You have this client Frau Jones. I think Frau Jones would be needing some HIGH YIELD shares of GD." (High Yield ranged from 8-17 % interest in dividends. GD was worth 9 % during the current offering. Future yields would get much HIGHER).

"Sir, Frau Jones is an unfortunate widow with little funds to risk at this time."

"Shutup! Is not GD high yield?"

"Jawohl!"

"Is not high yield good for widows?"

"Jawohl!"

"Then sell it!"

"J'awohl, mien Uber-Salesmench!"

"And Finley -- do not dare to question the firm's intentions. You can not out-think us. We are smarter than you. If we say it is good then you shall unquestionably obey - or face immediate and painful termination."

Finley must have snapped a vigorous salute. "Heil Bull!" and sat down to dial the widow Jones' unfortunate telephone number.

Battalions, regiments and divisions of Mostly Bull salesmen fought the ground war in this way, slugging it out in hundred share combat. Above us in the Institutional Office squadrons of our elite zoomed out to drop immense blocks of GD into the portfolios of Insurance companies and pension funds with money to waste.

By 8:30 PM most of us drifted from the office to the train station. By 10:30 PM I was home, asleep by 11 and up at 5:30 AM to return by train and be in place by 8:30 to fire the final salvoes. It felt as if I had never left.

At some point in the long day's-night's struggle I lost. Yes, I had my shares in. Sumner had even given me a verbal compliment and a small lead he didn't have time to call. But a resignation had crept in. I realized that this would not be the only battle, the final mission. There would be countless others. General Disservice and Public Monopoly would each be back with new offerings and our office would be duty-bound to carry forward our increased honor and obligation to sell even more shares. There would be hosts of additional products and hard pressured sales campaigns to 'move em out!' It would only be a matter of time before it caught up to me.

Bertram Finley's mind also snapped during his first GD offering, though I couldn't tell toward what end at the time. But pressures to conform with unnatural acts can have strange repercussions.

The offering was concluded by 11:00 AM and over-subscribed to the delight of Mr. Easy

who, incidentally, was back in fine fettle winking and grinning once again.

It was left up to Sumner to decide whose orders would be turned back and whose production run made all the more naked. I was spared. Those who Sumner and Plutus disliked had some or all of their orders canceled. These salesmen came to Sumner in anguish.

"I promised this account some GD," they pleaded.

"Over subscribed! Next time start working the offering earlier!" Sumner warned the complainers.

"Earlier? GD. was 21 and 3/8-a-share two weeks ago. My accounts could have done better an the market!"

"Tough!" Sumner had no sympathy for complainers who were not 200 % for Mostly Bull. In fact, he had no sympathy at all.

The Account Inexecutives who hadn't had their orders filled sulked bitterly. They would have to go back to all the arms they twisted and make excuses. If they were fed up with doing business this way they could always terminate themselves leaving their top accounts to Sumner. Then they could suffer in some more miserable line of work they were even less suited for. Sumner grinned at the prospect.

Once the actual offering was over an absurd 'Tombstone Advertisement' would appear in the important newspapers bespeaking solemnly of the dead and bygone offering. It would list all the Insecurity firms who sold GD, how many shares were finally sold, and contain the lie (in accordance with the Securities Act of 1933) that the sale of GD was never solicited but offered by prospectus only.

The firm would, eventually, pay its Account Inexecutives up to 16 cents a share for their diligent sales efforts provided the money now owed to Mostly Bull by the folks who claimed they would purchase GD, was collected.

"Make 'em pay for it!" Mr. Easy told Plutus who resolved to carry out the will of Zeus.

Plutus rushed to the boardroom happy with his new mission of intimidation. Mr. Easy visited Sumner to massage his writing arm. "Good job on GD."

"Thanks Mr. Easy."

"Stop by the office at noon. We'll have lunch. Got a little something for you."

"Thanks," Sumner said, knowing it was a \$500 check for a night on the town and dinner with Mr. & Mrs. Easy. Mr. Easy winked and walked away. Sumner's eight phone extensions lit up as a blaze of incoming phone calls fought their way to his attention all with orders for him to execute.

Plutus sensed an air of laxity among the troops as he walked the aisles. Finally he'd had enough. "On the phone! Get the money in! You there, Did you sell GD?"

"Yes I did. Five thousand shares in all." The salesman boasted.

"Is it paid for?" Plutus demanded

"Well no, not yet."

"Get the money in before the stock drops and they don't want it anymore. And another thing. Five thousand shares is nothing for a Mostly Bull Account Inexecutive; Sumner did seventy thousand shares," Plutus declared. The man burned with indignation. Humbly he picked up his telephone.

"Get the money in!" Plutus ordered.

Everyone picked up their phones. I dialed the weather forecast. Across the room Bertram had a dull glaze in his eyes. He was dialing his phone mechanically.

Within twenty-four hours GD's shares were down one dollar on the market. In a month the shares were \$ 21. By then Mostly Bull changed its official opinion of GD from neutral to poor. Mostly Bull then forbid its salesmen from soliciting customers to BUY GD, though they could solicit their customers to get rid of GD, by SELLING it.

"You aren't soliciting anybody to buy GD, are you Geelenski?" Plutus inquired.

"Nope."

"Cause the firm hates GD," Plutus informed me.

Within a matter of additional months GD hit \$ 15 a share. My customers were not ecstatic about that, it was certainly no way to keep ahead of inflation by watching money disappear in the market. Mostly Bull had seen to it that its client made money. Its client was General Disservice which received \$ 20.05 a share for something worth five dollars less nine months later. Was it my responsibility if all my customers got screwed? (I was only obeying orders). Whose responsibility was it?

During this period Bertram Finley had changed. He rarely talked to me and never interrupted his real phone calls to accept my fictitious ones. He was making it to the top. The spark of humiliation suffered by having to succeed at Mostly Bull was carrying him forward to triumph over his superiors. His unrelenting determination was working for him. His inhuman phone work uncovered leads. His aggressive salesmanship opened accounts. His star rose. He got lucky and received a large order from some silly lunatic waiting for a call -- some rich idiot with a desire to lose money to Bertram Finley and Mostly Bull.

With one small feather of gain in Finley's scalp Plutus brought the former's name to Mr. Easy's attention. "I hired him," Plutus bragged.

"Good, good. If he's our boy give him something."

He was given.

Finley then put on the 'act.' He knotted his tie super-tight and had his shoes shined every

day. He never let a day go by without loudly praising some policy of Mostly Bull's.

"They only FEED the FAT!" Some complainer was heard mumbling.

"Who should they feed, the weak?" Finley challenged, angrily.

During the next offering of GD (at \$ 17) Finley's total of shares was surpassed only by Sumner. They liked his act. Next came the *'feed'*.

"Give him good stuff," Mr. Easy advised Plutus. "Good stuff, I like his act. Mostly Bull likes his act."

Plutus smiled. Once someone did the act convincingly they became the act. "I will make him RICH!" Plutus declared.

Plutus began visiting Finley's desk twice a day. "Finley, here's something I'd like you to work on. Small manufacturing company -- needs a profit sharing and pension plan. The owner called me this afternoon. I want you to move on it."

Finley would not even say thanks, just take the lead from Plutus' hand and call. That was the thanks Plutus wanted. In ten minutes Finley would stop by Plutus office. "Closed him. Bought \$100,000 in bond funds for both accounts." or "Opened the owner's personal account, put \$200,000 in tax-frees."

"Good," Plutus would say and hand him more feed.

By feeding success they insured it. The more successful Finley got, the even more successful he would become. Soon, everyone forgot that Finley had once put on the 'act.' Everyone naturally assumed that Finley was successful and had always been so, "Went to Wharton, didn't he? -- He's a *private placement*, old man owns a shipping line, lot of family accounts," they whispered about him.

When management took the super-stars out to Lunch at Mr. Easy's club, Finley was a half step behind Sumner as they headed for the escalators.

Soon, Finley found himself filling in for management. He would often shout, "On the phone!" to new guys reading the sports section when Plutus was not on the floor.

Recognizing talent, Finley was asked if he'd like to switch over to management. Without a word of goodbye to the troops he was gone. Sent to headquarters. His accounts were re-distributed to Sumner, Spencer and Good. Finley was on his way to the top.

His first stop was the Marketing Department where Mostly Bull experts sought to refine better ways to sell worse products for more bullish profits to Mostly Bull. The 'experts' (failed salesmen & other retreads with a godfather somewhere else in the Mostly Bull hierarchy) would ask Finley for advice.

"Bertram, what would you advise on this problem?"

He would reply, "On the phone! Ask for the order! Get the commission!" There was no refuting right thinking.

Finley made sure to wear even tighter collars and tighter shoes so he could squeak as he briskly paced along Mostly Bull corridors of power shouting, "On the phone!"

During the next management purge Bertram Finley was made Executive Vice President of Marketing and given a slot on the Board of Directors. Wall Street was afloat with false rumors claiming that Bertram Finley was betrothed to Charlemagne Bull's fifty-two year-old daughter; such was the awe of Finley's climb to the top.

At his first Board meeting, however, Bertram Finley showed the more common American stuff he was made of. He appeared with a large model of something hidden under a drop cloth.

"Gentlemen," Finley addressed the Board of Directors, "I have a NEW CONCEPT I would like you to consider."

The Board members, mostly former generals of the Armed Forces braced to sitting attention. They were usually uncomfortable with new concepts and ideas which they often could not comprehend.

"As you know," Finley continued, "Our firm is identified with the BULL because we say we are BULLISH."

The liked it already and began to bray and snort in respect for the animal they wished to emulate.

Finley pressed on, "However, I think that in order to truly represent the firm as it actually functions in relation to its employees and retail clientele we need a new animal symbol..."

"What?" The Chairman croaked, feeling irritated.

"Here is the more realistic animal symbol for our firm." He lifted the cloth and lo and behold, there before the entire Board of Directors was a gold plated piggy. A genuine little porker with a large, prominent scrotum. "We can call ourselves Mostly Pig." Finley grinned.

In a fury of wheezes and shouts Finley was terminated from the firm and hustled onto the elevator.

"We put our faith into you!" The Chairman agonized. Finley, clutching his pig, stuck out his tongue and rolled his eyes, "On the phone! Ask for the order! Get the commission! -- Oink, oink."

Furiously they pressed the down buttons for the elevator and at last the door shut. As he went hurtling down over forty floors in the high speed elevator Finley went on screaming up at them, "Assholes! Assholes! You stupid, fucking assholes! It's not 'on the phone!' It's lie, cheat and steal! Assholes! You're ruining my country, Assholes!"

When they could no longer hear Finley's screaming from the elevator shaft they sedately returned to the Board meeting. Off the record, it was decided to purge Finley's legacy by

firing his entire department and then remove all official traces of him from corporate records and publications. The current annual report with Finley's picture in it was halted half way through printing in order to have him deleted (at a substantial cost too). The *Ministry of Truth* couldn't have done a better job. With Finley's embarrassing episode (a breakdown obviously) out of the way, the board turned to new business.

"What we need is INCENTIVES, gentlemen. More incentives to produce more NUMBERS." The Chairman said. They then agreed to lower the pay-out for small producers and put pressure on them to leave. The pay-out would be raised on a grid system in order to steal big producers from other firms.

"Let the weak starve!" They shouted in unison, "Feed the strong!"

Next on the agenda, the Board considered an alternative headquarters site located in a rural location 200 feet below ground.

"That way the firm can survive an intergovernmental nuclear exchange preserving the leadership and financial integrity of Mostly Bull. We'll ship duplicates of our computer record-tapes there for storage," the Chairman said.

"But, won't all our customers be dead?" Someone asked.

"So will our creditors! Debits will cancel credits That's the beauty of the double-entry bookkeeping system. In the meantime we can prosper off the float of our customer's credit balances forever!" The Assistant Chairman pointed out.

Yes, forever -- a trillion-year Reich. living on credit balances after the world ends... The story of his final moments, leaked to me by a former salesman hiding away for a weekly paycheck in the tax department, had that ring of truth that only hyperbole can invoke.

I have heard nothing of the whereabouts of Bertram Finley since. Should he, one day, go into politics he'll have my vote.

*

Winthrop insisted that I meet his new female acquaintance. Either he wanted to make me delirious with jealousy over her vile decadence or simply get my certified opinion concerning her degree of lunacy.

I met them in the park for a picnic sort of lunch. She immediately noticed that I didn't like her. This must have subdued her aggressiveness. I considered explaining to her that my aloofness was nothing personal but that I dislike everybody whom I must adapt myself to, And unlike my relationship with Plutus I saw no reason to hide my attitude, but I said nothing.

With Winthrop's encouragement and my ambivalence she told us about herself. The highlights have already been mentioned: Henrietta Tattles, nicknamed Tatz. Though according to her upper body build I would have guessed, 'Tits.'

She had been schooled in exclusivity. Her father was a Vice President of an enormous

international bank. Loosening up under the afternoon sun she laughed a bit, "Do you approve of me?" She asked.

"No. But Winthrop and I like to argue over things," I said.

"I can tell you don't like me," she pouted.

"I don't have to, I'm already miserable. You're job is to make Winthrop miserable."

She shrieked with mirth and goosed the Professor's thigh. "That'll be fun," she said.

Winthrop blushed.

Uninhibited, she told us of her last romance to a fellow known as *Ser*. Ser was so named in relation to his preference for Anheuser Busch alcoholic beverages notably BudwieSER. "If you're up get me a 'ser. Even if you're not up get me a 'ser." He had been an itinerant roofer with large genitals.

Ser and Tatz had been a near perfect match. He had no education she had loads of education. He had no money, she had gads of money. He had no pretensions to the arts, she had tremendous pretensions. She had no penis etc.

They had been ready to take matrimonial vows possibly just to throw Tatz's old man into cardiac arrest preventing him from further adventures in Macro Sexual Finance.

However, on the eve of their avant-garde wedding she noticed a strange discharge in her drawers (underpants). Ser's pre-nuptial present to her had been gonorrhoea.

Tatz did not take this lightly. In the heat of vengeance she consummated sexual relations with three paratroopers from the 82 ND Airborne Division that she had invited home from the bus station.

It was all perfectly timed, for Ser came drifting in from his stint on the unemployment line to find his honey bunch, legs making a V for victory up to heaven as soldier number three lubricated her bore with his stroke. Two other examples of America's contribution to the Armed Forces lounged about sipping Ser's 'sers.

Ser departed but came back. His most prized possession, an obsolete can opener with the monogrammed initial 'S,' was still at Tatz's apartment along with his only change of socks.

Tatz had concluded that Ser's return would be a typical scene for her to play. The angry, door-slamming initial entry, yelling, extreme hurt and then *all her* as she produced a magical reconciliation. Tatz would have begged forgiveness claimed rape by men she patriotically offered refreshment to. Then she would overwhelm him with his own lust. Tatz had performed this before, usually to a graduate student audience.

Ser was no graduate student. He entered quietly, checked to make sure they were alone and then proceeded to beat the slats out of her. At the beating's conclusion she needed caps for her front teeth and weeks for black eyes and cracked ribs to mend. Tatz then

decided to confine any future relationship of longer than one night in duration to other members of her socio-economic class. At the conclusion of her little story she asked me, "What do you do, murder people for a living?"

"Only symbolically, using money." I mentioned that I was an Insecurity salesman. Oddly, she found nothing wrong with that. We picnicked the afternoon away.

Tatz's tacit approval and Lisa's embrace of the Insecurity business was enough to overcome Winthrop's moral scruples. He set out the very day after our picnic to become accepted into the fold at Mostly Bull.

Plutus spotted him immediately as a misfit unacceptable to the firm. Nonetheless, he quizzed Winthrop a bit to discern whether Winthrop had any rich or influential relations.

"I have been a dedicated scholar," Winthrop said, "And believe that I UNDERSTAND the economic forces at work in our world."

"Oh Lordy, no!" Plutus exclaimed. "We ain't looken' for people who understand anything but what we tell 'em -and that is to SELL! For years these, so-called, economic forces have looked highly unfavorable. What do you think we do, sit on our asses and wait for a better decade? Mostly Bull requires profits, every quarter --that's four times a year, every year -- year in and year out."

"I know. Sell. What if I can do that?" The Professor queried with a humble lack of conviction.

"No, You don't look the part," Plutus appraised icily. "You got to have an image. Aggressiveness. Need-to-Achieve. Got to project that quality. I can tell by the clothes you're wearing and the way you sit and stand that you ain't got it."

Winthrop considered saying, 'Clothes don't make the man,' but decided not to argue as that would only make Plutus angry. What the foolish Professor didn't understand was that argument was what Plutus needed. If Winthrop, tie hanging sloppily, argued like a maniac, shouted things like, '*I can do it! Let me talk I can sell ANYTHING! I'm GOOD. You're wrong. I can make you money. Buy me!*' Plutus would have hired him on the spot, given him a check for a new wardrobe -- knotted his tie for him and even saved some feed for when he finished training. But Winthrop didn't understand these things. He wandered from Plutus office feeling dejected for not being stupid enough to be hired by a man-of-the-sort that Winthrop ordinarily despised.

I tried to cheer Winthrop up with a clever impersonation of Plutus, "Numbers!" I shouted. Winthrop would have none of it. He shuffled along barely affording enough energy to travel the sidewalk. "Maybe I'll join the military and hope we get into a war soon," he said.

"You! In the military?" I laughed.

"Oh yeah, why not? You did it! Are you that much better than me?" He argued.

"Why argue with me?" I asked. He hadn't dared to argue with Plutus.

"You're supposed to be my friend. Answer my question."

"You're too old for the military Winthrop. They like kids. Dumb kids like me when I was 18. They would prefer them younger if they could, 15 maybe." I regretted the serious turn our conversation had taken.

"Why?" He asked.

"Because kids make the best soldiers. They respond to and are always intimidated by brute force, attracted to weapons, easy to mold, have quick reaction times and get killed more unquestionably. Besides being expendable, unemployed, unskilled surplus to society.

Winthrop shuddered.

"But if they survive," I continued, "they make lousy veterans."

"Why is that?" He asked.

"They have the maturity of their thirties to ruminate in gloom about the excesses of their teens."

He didn't understand. "So if the Army doesn't want me what do I do?" He asked,

"Complete your fabulous dissertation."

"What if nobody reads it?"

"I'll read it," I said.

"-- Nobody else."

"Winthrop, there is opportunity out there. There is always some zeitgeist to get a hold of."

"Such as?" He pressed.

"Nuclear bomb sales!" There, I had an idea. "You could become a Nuclear bomb salesman. Demand for your product would be quite brisk. At a billion bucks per bomb and a 10 % pay-out you would only have to sell one every few years. You could take long, luxurious vacations -- longer ones than Mr. Easy takes."

"And have some irresponsible customer use my product to murder a half million people!" He tossed off, getting into the swing of things.

"Relax. You form a sales corporation. If things go wrong -- liquidate. Corporations can't be tried for complicity to commit mass-murder. It's not your responsibility, anyway. As far as you knew, you were selling those bombs for medical research."

"And if I don't do it, somebody else would, right?" He asked, brightly.

"Of course! One jaunt through the Middle East and you're set for life. Just don't settle

down there."

"It's just sell, sell, sell!" He mimed happily,

"That's right!" We smiled as we chugged down the filthy streets.

Later on I accompanied Winthrop on an outing to Tatz's beach house. We blathered about silliness (incoherently) along the way.

"Did you know that the cost of buying and maintaining a house is up 600 % in ten years!" Winthrop exclaimed.

"Did you know that my bonus has been dis-inflated, deflated non-reflated, uninflated and deboned down to 1000 per cent of nothing."

"Did you know...(etc.)"

We both searched through the train's dirty windows for too many dollars chasing too few goods. I thought I caught glimpses of too few dollars chasing not enough dollars but Winthrop claimed he saw nothing and was technically correct.

At last our 50 year old behemoth creaked into the 100 year old station (progress?). Tatz picked us up in her snappy sports car and we zoomed off toward her playground, I longed to be somewhere else already (because I had to sit in the tiny back seat?)

Once at her (Daddy's money) \$ 350,000 beach bungalow Winthrop ran off like a half-wit to ruin his only pair of shoes in the salty surf. I believe he wanted to chase sea gulls.

I affected an air of tolerant disdain, Tatz did like wise. I considered running to the surf ninny-like also. Tatz invited me in. "You might as well come in."

"Gee thanks."

The carport entrance led into a private study. The walls held grotesque black and white photographs of naked men modeling large erections. She immediately sensed my repressed shock. "That's from my photo-period," she said,

I quickly recovered. "Were you doing an anthropomorphic, deity study concerning the Jungian archetype religious modality of the ancient Middle East god Baal?"

"Wha...?"

We traveled to her kitchen. It was a normal kitchen with a dead cactus plant near the sink.

"Forgot to water it," she said. "If I knew you were coming I'd have gotten you a date," she added.

"I'm married," I told her.

"Oh? Where's your wife?" She asked.

"And kids."

"Where are they?"

"In another hemisphere," I answered.

Winthrop rescued me from further conversation. He was panting with excitement.

"There's waves down there!" Winthrop had discovered the ocean.

"Let's go for a swim!" Tatz exclaimed.

"With our clothes on?" Winthrop asked.

"Sure. Sounds kinky." They both ran off.

I tried to amuse myself with television. A news show was on. Something about an Army Super Tank. It was supposed to survive Neutron bombs but had trouble getting out of the driveway.

A reporter quizzed some Pentagon official on the tank's problems -- being four years late in development and expected to cost 500 million dollars a piece.

"Instead of building 20 tanks for ten billion dollars, why can't we build 20,000 much cheaper vehicles?" The General was asked.

"Oh, that's ridiculous. The technological contingencies inherent in modernized armored deployment calls for in-capability requirements of the greatest degree of survivability on a per-vehicle increment."

"Sell, sell, sell." I mocked, knowing, however, that to operate 20,000 vehicles would require them to 'hire' tons of people like Winthrop and then besieged by non-automaton minds THEY would feel plagued by not having THEIR Army.

'We want the kids!' They would say instead. But it was still too soon, Mother's arms snaked around those slender adolescent necks not wanting them broken. In time, however, people would forget - as they always do - and the military would have kids again to do with as they pleased. But I wouldn't forget so easily...

KING'S SERVANTS and CHRONICLES

"Don't Turn Around!"

In the warm night air surrounding Tatz's beach house I sipped a beer and sat immersed in the half-dark, dreaming again of the woman that all men seek.

Winthrop drifted by, fatigued from barbecuing supper. Tatz was inside finding suitable music to play for us. The professor must have noticed the distance in my gaze.

"Where are you?" He asked.

"Danang," I said, chuckling.

Winthrop was always consumed with curiosity concerning America's greatest

misadventure, Southeast Asia 1964 -1975.

"Oh my." He sat down next to me in the grass. I was aware of the unspoken drama. In fact it brought me back to the aging present.

"What was it like?" He asked, hoping for me not to kid him anymore about it. I had avoided the subject for a long while. There was a noise coming from behind a small tree thirty feet from us. My beer can was almost empty.

"Winthrop, hear that noise?"

Winthrop shrugged,

"This beer can is now a hand grenade," I instructed the Professor. Then I pulled an imaginary ring out of the beer can and watched an imaginary armature spring away. Quickly I heaved the grenade-beer-can at the small tree. It fell several feet to the left of it. Winthrop was puzzled.

"BLAM!" I screamed making him jump. Tatz's cream white kitty hurled herself from behind the tree, issued a screeching, "Meow!" and bolted away to hide from me.

"Whoops. Only an innocent bystander, Sorry 'bout that!" I remarked casually.

Tatz shouted out to us, "What did I hear?"

"Larry impersonated an exploding grenade," Winthrop told her.

"Oh. Here kitty-kitty-kitty..." She called to soothe her pet.

I sought out Winthrop's damp eye. "That," I began, "was Vietnam."

He shook his head a bit, eager for more.

It had begun with the silent bombs years and years ago; the discovery of the awesome gadgetry and discipline of war upon our lives. I was barely out of young kiddy-hood when I joined my first play gang. What we played was war. Mock battles against pretend enemies. That would have to hold us till we were old enough to field real weapons against real enemies.

This wonderment propelled me for years. How I once longed to become a Nuclear Physicist and Jet Fighter-Bomber Pilot -- flying my own weapons to their targets. Thus I could obtain a larger share of the creativity of a nuclear event as a actor would, filming himself in his own screenplay. The Air Force life would be for me!

Life would then consist of the pleasant, technical-macho gibberish our boyish-grinning Air Force heroes spoke as they defended everybody else. A one dimensional war movie for ever.

Naturally, it didn't happen that way at all. The military life was a kick in the instep and a shout into the side of the head, "Don't turn around! -- Don't move your eyes -- you stupid, fffucken' asshole!" The military life was 17 hours a day in the bowels of the chow

hall, starting at 4 o'clock in the greasy AM to feed the Green Monster itself. The military life was tons of potatoes, lard, butter, bacon grease, eggs, a little meat (of indistinguishable variety), soggy vegetables, salt and pepper. The military life was a hernia trying to carry the oil-slop can outside.

Who was the enemy, and how were we going to destroy him? The enemy was my Training Sergeant and he was going to destroy me.

Yes, I was part of the massive armada of kids, the children's crusade, who marched into the maze of the Pentagon to help bring the Great Society to South East Asia, principally South Vietnam a country which no longer exists.

I had liked Lyndon B. Johnson and thought of him as Pericles from the Pedernales. His tragedy would be difficult on all of us from Athens, however.

But, in those long-gone days, intervention in Vietnam had seemed like a good idea. It was part of the general progress we were making on all fronts; like exploring the Moon, perhaps landing on Mars, ending poverty, illiteracy, hunger, disease, racism and body odor. After all, if the baby-boom generation was going to be young forever, bathed in a Madison Avenue fountain of youth, we would need a perfect world to be young, happy and sexy in. Vietnam looked like a handy place to start.

The day I was eighteen years old I ran off to join the fun: '*Hooray!*' I thought, '*the military life!*' At the time I had viewed my enlistment in terms of personal glory and national patriotism. Actually I had metamorphosed myself into a human certificate of deposit for 48 months' compensation beginning at 11 1/2 cents-an-hour (non compounding). No guarantee of maturity or survival, penalty for early withdrawal during wartime -- possible execution. Sexual Finance principles applied to the military-industrial-mental-complexity had taught me that the investment of myself into the aforementioned had been the most abysmal insecurity investment anyone could make.

Vietnam (speeded up)

I didn't get to Vietnam till late in the war (1970).

Then President, Richard Nixon was concocting 'Vietnamization' to make the South Vietnamese as capable as the Americans in dropping the correct bombs onto the right targets (or anywhere).

We landed at night and it was very dark there. Very dark. Excuse me, Professor while I ruminate upon the darkness. The air smelled like excitement and fermentation (diarrhea).

I was to be a top secret Air Force radar operator on Monkey Mountain which was not too far from Danang, where we had landed. A little truck poked its way along the road to bring us there. We passed a lone Marine sentry standing under a spot light on the surreal stage. Sandbags, barbed wire, sloppy looking machine gun fortifications that were abandoned or unmanned littered the backdrop. Fear. The young Marine waved us by with great haughtiness. But in his face was the wild-eyed madness of one standing under a spotlight in the black of night. He anticipated being shot at any moment. Artillery boom-

boomed in the distance. Already I could feel the madness of it all. Uncontrollably I giggled. That had been my first night in Viet Kam.

By day things appeared clearer. Everyone WAS crazy or on drugs. Professionals with crew cuts directed the war from decadent bars or air conditioned bunkers and flew hither and yon in helicopters to visit all their buddies throughout the echelons of the chain of command, talking macho-gibberish with no boyish smiles while in public. In private, they belched, farted and beat their boners on tables.

"KILL!" They chanted in unison,

"KILL!"

"Kill the enemy!"

"Body Count! Body Count!"

"NUMBERS!"

"More money to kill!"

"More money to kill! NUMBERS!"

The rest of us were in the 18-22 year age group (median age 19) and we sought all the natural things 19 year olds are want to do with themselves. Such as to drive vehicles as if they were racing cars, take drugs, drink alcohol, think about getting laid by woman (usually), and hunger for the chance to shoot something that wouldn't shoot back.

This was Vietnam: Trucks racing over things in the road, going off the road, crashing into one another, zooming off mountain ridges (How many transmissions were wrecked by lunatics trying to speed-shift two and a half ton trucks as if they were 'G.T.O.s' or 'Roadrunners'?); planes falling out of the sky, everybody shooting weapons off at nothing and anything to make noise and then shooting off flares when their weapons were confiscated. Most of the casualties and fatalities around Danang at this time seemed to be due to reckless driving.

There were constant fist fights between kids from different services units, crews or bar tables: "Hey, you looken' at me?" PUNCH - SOCKO. Sometimes this escalated into murderous mayhem as .45 pistols, M16 rifles and hand grenades were brought into the fray.

One thing I quickly noticed, there was no SECURITY! (The military kind as in, 'Secure that area!') Our perimeter defense bunkers were manned by hordes of unarmed troops facing the compound so they could be alert for their superiors (the enemy) as they smoked kilos of un-seeded marijuana. There were also a lot of racial squabbles, rumors of 'fraggings' or destroying the enemy (our superiors).

Sometimes the dubious Communists would shoot rockets or mortars at us to say, '*Hello GI, we're still here too!*' Attacks usually occurred at weird moments in time such as 2:22 and 4 in the AM, to puncture the booze and be-drugged sleep we would be falling into as

infectious mosquitoes assaulted from the humid, sewer smelling air.

Everyone learned things from the lowest common denominator. In this fashion kids from the working middle class eagerly learned new skills such as heroin addiction. Clean fun was sex with scurvy women, often with blackened teeth or pockmarked skin. Venereal disease was as common as a sinus cold.

Our less fortunate brethren from the Infantry or Marine Recon outfits would troop among us for vacation and teach us new talents -- the 'see-through-you' eyes. Thus burnt-out 19 year-olds traveled no-man's land in a zombie mode hating with alienated disgust anything and everyone not personally associated.

People did get blown up or crushed between colliding trucks. "There it is, man, there it is..." ---the philosophy of living in a waste land with no way out but survival-of-the-lucky on a calendar basis. "There it is!" Big deal, a more appropriate expression should have been more specific, more instructive like: *'Don't step on it, don't fornicate with it, don't trust it, don't go there, don't do nothing, go to sleep for a year... etc.'*

Most other folks my age (including future Mostly Bull Account Inexecutives) were home, in college, making love, and driving real cars in the last age of gasoline below 30 cents a gallon. Only assholes like me went to Viet Nam.

But it could have been much worse. I could have ended up like Ronny S. or Fred T. or Bob M. and not come back at all, or still others in which only parts of them came back. The Vietnam / Military business was not such a wise investment.

The result of eleven years of waste was naturally failure. In the future I suggest drafting 30 - 50 year old men from the highest tax brackets as the Spartans did. Send Plutus, Sumner and Mr. Easy, the Institutional Bond Traders, Arbitrageurs, Corporate Underwriters, Investment Bankers, Wall Street Lawyers and Accountants. Not only will we not miss them, but the war would either be won or defaulted within a week. After all, for those guys, 'time is money!'

When Winthrop asked of me what specific battles or campaigns did I participate in. I answered "Our military leaders couldn't decide whether name tapes should be sewn straight across the jungle fatigue shirt or slanted over the pockets. Though they sometimes left us alone up on the mountain." He shook his head with incomprehension. *'SELL! SELL! SELL! NUMBERS!'* It has all become part of the same war and while I have difficulty discerning on whose side I've been left, I have the feeling that I'm losing.

When I arrived home on January 16,1971, I found America strangely quiet. Convoys of ill-maintained trucks did not race down the street of my home town. Cruisers, offshore, did not shell my parent's housing development. B-52 s and other aircraft were not dropping bombs nearby.

No one fired their weapons into the air. No enemies were attacking. No ammunition dumps exploded. But it was a deceptive quiet for on the next day someone I knew was killed in Vietnam. The noise level would pick up however, just enough to cover the rain of the silent bombs.

"But enough maudlin reminiscences! Professor, a drum roll please as I stumble onward for one more beer." Winthrop helped with my balance. Into Tatz's beach house I went. I slid my hand into the cold crush off melting ice water to find that trusty grenade. Tits was all smiles, even her bosom was heaving happy sighs.

"Good to see you macho-salesmen types loosen up," she said.

I laughed and poured golden guzzle down my throat. My laughter had been too wanton, I believe, to match her eager intentions.

"You into drugs?" She asked, her hands on my arm.

"No," I said adamantly, hoping for Winthrop's rescue.

"Now that I know you better I can like you a little."

Smiles.

I pretended to be more wobbly than I was, hoping to escape her clutches. Why couldn't she take Winthrop and go someplace to consummate something? I felt as if I were invading into taboo territory by being tolerant of her. "Hey, Winny get your ass in here!" I called.

"Hey-hey. He's okay," she said.

My wobbling act had been a mistake, now she was steadying me. She was close. My mind raced. A few minutes of biology to betray relationships that took years of misery to form. My breaking point was near,

"You're not gay are ya?" She asked.

"No," (Pause) "Leggo," I said simply. I was never a master of tact.

"What?"

"Leggo."

"Oh." She did.

I went back outside. Winthrop was still sitting in the dark. Thinking! I got mad at him.

"Get in there!" I ordered.

"Huh?" He had some great dilemma on his brain, war and peace, the progression of time, sex and death, money and no money.

"Get in there," I seemed very drunk in my anger.

"Why?" His sensitive pall looked even paler in the night.

"Get in there and fuck her," I hissed.

"How do you know..."

"Get in there and fuck her NOW!" I demanded.

For a moment he was afraid of me and he got up to do a manly thing with Tatz. "I sat in his spot. I felt awful and unsure at whom I should be mad and for what reason. Maybe Winthrop needed a Training Sergeant, maybe he didn't. I sought not to assault the great issues, but to think drunkenly of serenity-for-ever.

Tatz drove us back to the city. I slept in the tiny back seat and remember little of the ride. Just as well.

THE BATTLE BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

The train commute between employment and home had become unbearable. Too many six hour breakdowns to suffer as we made do with the pride of the 1930's and 40's to transport with in the 80's. (Also the bouts of mortal depression brought on by the inevitable fatalities; some commuter running with a coffee cup to catch the 7:15 or 4:38 only to slip and fall between the wheels as dread and doom ended him.)

One night a week, sometimes two, I bunked at Winthrop's hovel finding that a minor improvement to a second career in local train-travel.

It was during one of these brief sojourns with the Professor that I encountered trauma. TATZ!

Arriving at Winthrop's after conclusion of a day's insecurity, I found not the uncanny Professor at home but his female friend-of-sorts, Henrietta Tattles. She had MY briefcase open before her while she read with vivid interest the scribble in my latest notebook-journal. "How dare you!" I yanked it from her hands.

"How dare I? How dare you!" She shrieked.

"What?" I hadn't been prepared to take the offender's role.

"You filthy misogynist! Writing down all those lies that Winthrop told you!"

"What?"

"CUNT this, cunt that! All full of that little boy cruelty and double-standard bullshit," she sneered. "What I would have expected from you."

"Christ!" I was exasperated. "I spend most of my waking hours dealing with '*erections-with-suits on*' (Plutus and his ilk), I don't need this to fill up the rest!"

"Well, you're gonna get it," she warned.

"If it's misery I want I can go home for it."

"How come you hate women so much, what did we do to you? We had to bear you in blood and pain!" She shouted.

"Maybe I hate everybody including me. And you didn't bear me or anybody else."

"How do you know?" She was coy.

"Not me anyway. And as far as anybody else - where are they?"

"Oh, you BASTARD!" She vibrated her fists in the air and squeezed tears of rage from under her eye lids. "If I want them, I HAVE to have them that way! You don't! Is that fair?"

"No," I supposed not, "But fairer than me -- You have the equipment."

"You talking -bout my tits?" She demanded. "Tits! Tits! Tits! Is that all I am?"

"I wasn't." I hadn't, but did not elucidate fearing she would start shouting '*cunt, cunt, cunt!*'

"Is that all we are is tits or CUNTS?" She asked anyway.

I said nothing, feeling defeated.

"All you men are is just a bunch of JERKOFFS!"

"I guess." I sat down.

"What do you have against us women?" She asked.

"I suppose... "

"And what is this, *Death Trip Explosion Music?*" She cut me off with.

I shrugged.

"I'm gonna cream that Winthrop," she fumed. "'You are anti the women's movement. I can tell," she added.

"I'm tired of these movements. Bowel movements..." I confessed.

"But ours in particular," she pressed.

"Which one is yours; the mid to upper-middle class, well-schooled, female elite movement?"

"See!"

"Christ, what happened to just people?" I asked. "Look at me. I volunteer myself to my NATION in order to enable my beloved AMERICA to remain powerful and profitable so one day It too, could partake of its fruit..."

"FASCIST!"

"So what do I get out of it? -- I ought to start my own movement. ME! To compete with all YOU!"

"You don't have it so bad," she tossed off.

"Nor so great, No beach houses. Where is all that grab-with-two-hands affluence that hard work and clear thinking produce? Dried up like spit on a hot sidewalk."

"Your metaphors are nauseating."

"Maybe I lost out on a real job, as did Winthrop, when the few left had to be rationed to females. It left me less than sensitive ... And I'm bored with all the preoccupation and drivel about the libertine orgasm."

"You are a REACTIONARY!"

I began to chuckle, "No, just a trifle nuts and *jealous!* Though I wish you could convince Mr. Easy or even Sumner of that. Could you write it down and certify it and by the way get me your father's institutional account so that they begin to think that I'm *'their boy'*. Send it all the way to the Chairman of Mostly Bull himself," I said.

"Cute ... You want to be *their boy?*"

"RICH!" I hung my head. "I don't even know. I want to pay my bills... I want to be rid of all of them. But I'm supposed to want to be rich, aren't we all?"

She had no answer.

"I really don't think that Them-that-HAS should be getting more," I admitted.

For a change, she was quiet. Finally she spoke, "You're a moralist. A strange one though."

Maybe she wasn't so dumb and awful.

"How come you don't like me?" She asked.

"I do," I proclaimed feeling open and reborn.

"You do?"

"You just have to respect -- let me borrow from *Eric Blair -- the few cubic centimeters of property I really own.*"

"But you could accept me as a friend?"

Perhaps I needed more trauma in my life. I felt cleansed and filled with magnanimous grandeur. I rose, took her hand and chastely kissed her forehead. We both blushed with humility.

She smiled girlishly for me, "Do me a big favor?"

"What is it?"

"Please don't refer to me as *'Tits'* They used to call me that behind my back since I was a

teenager. I hate it!"

"Sure."

We parted company on generous and warm terms. I waited a good long time till the full-blown, rational maturity in me soured as it clashed with my cynical juices. Unable to control it anymore and bursting with devilish turmoil I screamed out with every fiber of my being, "TITS!!!" -- After all, if a tree falls in the forest where there is no one to hear it does it make a sound? I, then, felt much relieved.

Winthrop arrived home late, looking quite bad even for Winthrop.

"Winnie, what the hell is the matter?" I knew what was the matter. The matter was misery. He had probably spent four hours getting hell from Tatz for what she had read in my journals,

Being affected with IP. Winthrop had, no doubt, absorbed all 240 minutes of it, made some ineffectual excuse and had sex with her. "We made love," he gloated, foolishly.

"You cowardly cur," I accused him, suspecting Winthrop of trying to render Tatz a more favorable rendition in my next journal jotting.

Winthrop denied his crime and continued to define and redefine his relationship with Tatz in his changing, re-evaluating mind's eye. As is often the case, one's friends' relationships become one's own as a matter of proxy.

This, however, showed signs (to Winthrop) of bypassing proxy.

"She said," he began reluctantly, "that she had considered seducing you."

I felt weak. Guilty. "I am your buddy and WAS your buddy," I proclaimed.

"I know. That pissed her off. You defeated her by denying her, --BUT!"

"But what?" I quizzed.

"If she's not good enough for my buddy -- she's not good enough for me."

"That means?"

"I think it's over between her and I," he concluded.

"Don't be so quick to throw her over. You'll only end up lonely and miserable," I advised.

"I'm miserable anyway. It is nice to have sex every so often. In my case not too often. However, tonight, after we...made...love..."

"Screwed."

"Screwed," he admitted. "I felt used and victimized. She jumped up, took a shower and ran off somewhere. I'm beginning to conclude that women make men miserable. You're

miserable with 'em and with out 'em."

"That's part of it," I marveled, feeling Gillhensky's Law coming to the fore. He was getting it. The look came to his eyes. They glistened with the force of his discovery, "MAN..." We shouted together, "WAS MEANT TO BE MISERABLE!" Exhausted we both collapsed in a cloud of dust to his couch.

"So you understand?" I asked, weakly.

"Yes, I do. But understanding doesn't make it better. It makes it worse, -- because you can't kid yourself into believing that one day perfection will come and reign for ever."

"Enough talk!" I rose to continue my thought concentrations on the latest piece of diatribe I considered writing. It would be a modern reworking of Nietzsche.

Nietzsche had it all wrong. There were three classes or stages in the development of Man. they were MAN, SALESMAN, and UBERSALESMAN. And Nietzsche had been wrong about the religion of Western Civilization as well. Reformist, prophetic, Hebraism and the sermonized intent of its offshoot, esoteric Christology had never become accepted by any mass of people, certainly not within any formalized religion. No, Modern Western Religion was formed after the break of Mithraism from ethical Zoroastrianism, combined with Baalistic erection-power-worship. The former and the latter, joined syncretistically with other pro-Bull (Greek pagan) mythologies, doused with just enough Roman - Stoicism to be officially ignored in public until it emerged into the Boner-Bullism that remains so popular today with virtually everybody who has money or wants to have it. Oh yes, they've thrown in an aryanized, Jesus Christ as an iconical god to condone it all, but Rabbi Yeshua, the anti-materialist, seems gone with the ages.

Nietzsche, suffering from venereal disease in his brains got it all ass-backwards. He saw the world view consisting of Stupid Man and Glorious, Super PagMAN (ism). The PagMANists had all along been in control of things, emerging during the Inquisition and Commercial Revolution as SALESMAN. Even later, during the Industrial Revolution and World Wars we came to know UBER SALESMAN.

If Salesman had been the end of moral law (before it ever got started) then Uber Salesman must have been the beginning of IMMORAL LAW. Thus, *thems that don't needs, gets...*

My brain burned feverishly with the intensity of my discovery. Yes, Uber Salesman had been everywhere from Stalin to the nameless committees of uber-salesmen doing a reorganization of genocide in Cambodia, from Adolph Hitler to the much milder forms found in Sexual Finance at Mostly Bull. "The need to conquer," I mumbled aloud while pacing back and forth amid Winthrop's clutter. "Is it all part of some global cycle of socio-technical collapse?" I asked.

"Misery?" Winthrop asked, trying to follow me in my abrupt turnings about.

"Not More than that," I hushed him as if he were part of my own mind speaking aloud. Somewhere, I presumed there had to be a connection between moral constraints upon the

use of power and power-Bull worship. What weak connection was there that linked humble Man across the bridge to the rise of Salesman? Hurling around in the troubled memory banks of my gray matter must have been the answer, almost ready to be synthesized and spit out into some new and wonderful tenet of Gillhensky's Law...

"You know, one thing that puzzles me about our relationship..." Winthrop prattled, "Is that Tatz says I'm insecure. So insecure that I make her feel insecure. Can you believe that?" He asked.

I sat and hung my head between my knees trying to shut out his verbal interference. But his words pierced my thinking, tearing giant holes through it. Something was coming through. Some barely perceivable connection that caused the evolution of Man into Salesman and later into Uber Salesman.

"Can you believe that?" Winthrop asked again. "What?" What had he said? I emptied my short term recall for the echoes of his words. He had been babbling about... about... insecurity. INSECURITY!

"INSECURITY!" I shouted. "Insecurity!" I jumped for joy and ecstasy, shouting again the magic word, "Insecurity!"

The answer, the splendid answer why man sought power, worshipped power, needed power was Insecurity. Dull, humble, frightened man needed to stretch his barren limits to triumph before he was triumphed upon. Higher and higher. The final high close to one's elected god the virile, potent Bull was Uber Salesman.

It all fit. It explained the Insecurity business which functioned off the twin, counter drives of Greed and Panic. It explained Light and Darkness. Ormazd and Ahriman. Bull and Bear. Up and Down and In and Out. They were all elements in attempting to bring to the world the elusive mystery of Security! That's what Gilgamesh was actually searching for from his ancestor Ut-napishtim, something Man could never have. But Gil didn't realize this. He even spurned bliss with the great Mother goddess of sexual delight (Tits?) to wander with his buddy Enkidu, a Partner in the ancient *Sexual Fertility Firm* of 'Partially Bull,' to pursue the Mr. Big of Security which in its totality must guarantee against death itself. Sorry folks, no sale.

I stood transfixed as I trembled with the magnitude of what I understood. It explained the concept of 'numbers' to me, explained Richard Nixon and General Waste-More-Land. It explained the fragility of mankind, irony, tragedy and stupidity. Failure... All from Insecurity and the need to transcend it to mythical security. Winthrop was frantic with concern. He slapped at my face trying to bring me out of it. Finally I blinked and released my breath.

"You've been brooding too hard. I'm worried about you. You were screaming 'Insecurity!' You're under too much pressure... Are they after you for more Numbers at Mostly Bull?"

"They're always after you for more Numbers at Mostly Bull. They are never satisfied. Never say, "that's enough, slow down, spend more time with the wife and kids. Be happy

etc.

Winthrop led me to my cot, bid me lie down upon the ruffled sheet, I did so and he covered me with a linty blanket.

"I was gonna write an article -- called '*Fuck Nietzsche*,' I mumbled, stupidly.

"Tomorrow," Winthrop counseled and blew out the light. Even in the pitch dark my eyes must have shown like beacons for some several minutes before sleep arrested me. What was it, I had been thinking about, I wondered. Something about the Insecurity business I surmised; selling and doing more Numbers to make Plutus and Mr. Easy happy. I smiled wearily and drifted off.

Through the swirls of unearthly night vapors I could see the woman that men want. There were only irregular flashes of light to reveal her standing in the corner of my dream imagination. The illumination was from rockets red glare and silent bombs bursting. I could tell she was naked; no longer chaste nor virgin, and hunger raged from her eyes. I approached. Her once golden tresses were dark as was the flash of her eyes, angry and foreign. "America, is that you?" I called.

Then Plutus appeared at my desk at Mostly Bull. "More Numbers! More, more, more," the chant went.

"Where is America?" I asked.

I tried to dream her back. Plutus' face came closer to mine. His leering grin spoke to me.

"It was you!" I shouted. She had been violated. That's what had happened to her, --by him. "You bastard," I said.

Plutus smiled. Had it been her?

*

At Mostly Bull as well as other entities of Sexual Finance there was a form of human creature known as Under Uber Salesman. These fellows worked for marketing concerns who worked for Insurance companies, or limited partnerships, which had concocted-for-sale some devise designed to part fools from their money. Such schemes had been worked out in geometric precision with projections and clauses constructed to produce profit for someone else. All mental cognition was '*sales-track*' oriented with these Under Uber types to whom we, as mere salesmen, had to pay sober attention but, thankfully, did not actually work for. To the side of the chain of command they were Uber us but under our direct bosses.

They were Salesmen to us. Selling us on ways to line our pockets with lucrative commission dollars by highlighting their dubious products to our happy and stupid customers.

"Remember, tell your customers that Mostly Bull likes our companies' product," they said unto us.

And Mostly Bull did like it because Mostly Bull made a lot of money and did no work when we sold these other companies 'products.' All of the pesky details and final liability rested with the Under Uber Salesmens' firms' firm. Almost no one could be held *responsible* should something go wrong in the future (tomorrow for instance).

These Under-Uber salesmen dressed well in three piece suits with tailored shirts, expensive shoes, gold watches, rings and cuff links. They ate steak an expense accounts and drank imported beers and wines while they clinked of the surplus wealth that had befallen unto them. Their function was to help firms like Mostly Bull cover the world in a blitz of paper having questionable value.

Plutus made sure that I attended every sales meeting in which an Under Uber salesman lectured to us. It was his way of being interested in my progress.

"You might learn something," he would taunt before locking the door behind me. Then, trapped in a room with a handful of dullard Insecurity salesmen I would listen to the blatant nonsense our Under-Uber salesman would proclaim:

"It's a good idea to have your pen OUT of your pocket before you review the contract -- Psychologically it makes it easier for the 'mark' to sign it. If you remove your pen abruptly it might 'scare the mark' and blow the close on the sale," This highly trained, monkey-person taught us. "Any questions?" He asked, his piercing, sales-oriented gaze searched to refute any objections to his product. { in this case it was a tax-deferred annuity sponsored by a company that had formerly made musical pencils, until it saw the light. }

'*What shell game did you run?*' I was tempted to ask. The answer was obvious once Usury had been institutionalized why not con-tactics? Besides, I was no better. It was my job to actually score the mark by closing the sale. What right did I have to criticize my own livelihood? Still, I asked myself, what had happened to make a mind like his destined to reign on Earth? What did he do for recreation kill people? Ha-ha...

I daydreamed my way out of the room suppressing and moderating my acute rage. I composed a mental essay on our societies' leadership. They seemed predisposed to a Donald Duck complex, suspicious, self-centered, self-defeating and unlucky. What was wrong with Mickey Mouse? Where did the derogatory expression, '*That's too Mickey Mouse...*' come from? Was there a relationship between Mickey Mouse and Jesus-the-meek? Were both complete fictions? Was Mickey Mouse capable of sex (theoretically)? Would Mickey make a good leader?

But my rage, while temporarily suppressed, was still with me. If only there were someone who could share my vision of coming doomsday. Winthrop! I had to get Winthrop into the Insecurity business so he too could understand.

I knew, however, that Winthrop could never handle it. Once he realized that none of the promises worked, that none of the premises worked, he would be finished. When the vision struck and he discovered that equity and debt were money made insecure on printed pieces of paper. That even paper was expensive but not as expensive as money he would run shrieking to the surf again. Winthrop would not be able to take the world once

he found out that 5 % of everything got lost or misplaced before computer entry or after computer retrieval. That life was a multi-trillion dollar stream of meandering debits and credits floating endlessly upon stacks of microfisch, floppy disks, magnetic tape and billions of tons of paper all filed away where no one would find it.

The poor, few Winthrops of this world could never fathom how to close one's mind to every ethical implication as they existed, octopus-like, for the purpose of SELL, Sell, Selling the worked-over -garbage of a bad idea. These wretched Winthrop's would abandon wife, offspring and all else as they sub-existed in the underground of their pained minds straining relentlessly to figure it all out, speak with God and invent the old/NEW idea. I knew.

Still, it was worth a shot. I would work on Winthrop. If he could understand then others could. It might even spread. Making Winthrop understand would become my project of the coming evening.

THE SEA OF NUMBERS

When no one listens to me I can become angry and then unsure of what I was angry about.

"Winthrop come with me," I had whispered almost pleaded. "Come let me show you."

He had his usual armada of pithy excuses. He cowered before the feat of discovery. I nearly lost my temper and almost pinched his weak flesh trying to twist a will into him. I merely took his arm.

"Come on then and see for yourself what I'm talking about," I said.

At last his inertia was overcome and he began to roll.

It was Friday evening and Mostly Bull was deserted -desolate save the cleaning woman amassing the great yield of paper waste from all the trash cans -- bins and bins of pulped trees. Tonsss of useless paper upon which masses of useless words were printed only to be glanced at and thrown away, It provided jobs, I guessed...

Silently we slid upstairs. I turned up the lights, a bit, "Here it is, the nerve center -- the command post." An ancient excitement fled through me. It reminded me of radar-controlled Aircraft Operations Centers. The equipment-junky in me marveled at all the gadgets and the demands placed upon them. We stood amid the near-silent array of teletypes, video screens, information retrieval systems, a word processor or two, rows of cabinets crammed with microfisch.

"So?" Winthrop asked.

A speaker crackled from down stairs. The static hum floated up to my brain. I almost imagined radio call signs for airplanes to filter into my imagination. It was nothing save random electrons on the move.

"Can you get the feel of it?" I asked.

Winthrop stood glumly still, almost frowning.

"I could show you the boss's office downstairs; spacious, elegant, ample corporate luxury. But this is what I want you to see," I said.

He forced himself to look around. "Cables, machines -- electronic machines." He was bored and bewildered. Afraid either I'd gone mad on him, or him stupid on me.

"This is how it gets disseminated." I walked a few feet. "It gets wired in here, printed on that," I pointed about, "photocopied over there, cut there and then passed out downstairs."

"What?" He cried, "What?"

"Information, Winthrop, we're in the new age of information processing, transmittal and distribution."

His face was screwed up unpleasantly, "You sell information?" His perplexity was astounding.

"Bad information. Here's we're we get the stuff we sell -- sell it -- and transmit that fact back up to higggher headquarters to become profit."

"What do you sell?" He shouted.

"Winthrop, this is the era of FINANCE. The firm makes 300 million dollars a year on the float of customer's credit balances, un-cashed checks from banks on the other side of the world, on interest charges... the management of money. -- A Billion dollars a year from commissions and sales charges gotten by buying and selling things for people -- things that also cost money..."

"What product do you make?"

"Money! The final product. There are no factories, no research centers, no assembly lines where people make *anything*. Downstairs, did you see all the desks in rows?"

"Yes."

"That is the assembly line for our '*production*,' where we make money selling our concepts of money. This is the final stage of economic evolution -- making money from money. What we produce here is '*Numbers*' for the firm."

"Numbers," Winthrop repeated. He collapsed into a swivel chair. Absently he fingered its cheap and already cracked vinyl, "How can this go on?" He asked.

"Getting *more* for *less*?" I asked, smiling.

"Isn't that *inflation*?" He asked with a want hollow grin spread darkly across his face.

I nodded. The eerie florescence of the lighting cast shadows over his forehead, his nose darkened his face. The lights always seemed to flicker.

"How many people work in this place?" He asked.

I thought, counted, added and guessed. "Forty five sales people -- Maybe twenty five up here, About 72 people."

"How much money does just this office make a year?" He asked,

"Oh God, I'm not sure, Around ten million, not counting interest income."

He closed his eyes, "Ten million dollars produced by 72 people. How much compensation do they get?"

"Maybe two million; most of it to Mr. Easy. The rest to Sumner and the big hitters. The clerks that *work* up here make even less than I do. {1979 dollars -editor}

Winthrop's eyes widened. "Eight million dollars to Mostly Bull from producing 'Numbers' in this little hole in the world? -- It produces Nothing!" He raged.

"Now do you, sort of, understand?" I asked.

He was still. He thought.

We stared at each other. Slowly we both nodded our heads.

Hallelujah! Winthrop understood. Possibly not for very long. He often liked to forget what was unpleasant. Don't we all.

COMMANDO OPERATIVE

It was Winthrop who first suggested it, "You'd better make plans to leave Mostly Bull," he said.

"But if I quit and become destitute like you I'll blame myself for quitting. I could probably overcome this inclination of eating several times a day. I could learn once again to tolerate sleeping in the rain; but there are other people who depend on me."

"Me for one," Winthrop admitted. He thought hard about it. "You'll have to stretch out your employment for awhile longer till your termination becomes inevitable," he concluded

Winthrop still did not understand all of the nuances of Mostly Bull. "Winnie," I pleaded. "Once I've decided to quit, my charade of doing 'Numbers' will falter. They will discover me and fire me immediately, -- Remember, in the Insecurity business you're fired before you're hired."

He thought some more. "Is there anyway to mask the situation? Continue to get those meager, but needed, salary checks against future 'production'? -- The Government's been doing it for yeeears."

Mostly Bull was not the government. It ruled its subject's lives with much more vigor. I thought. An idea dawned on me. It had its seeds in my military training.

"Winnie, -- if you're a soldier thinking of deserting?"

He liked the idea already, "Yes?"

"What do you do in order to allay suspicion, go on sick-call, or volunteer for hazardous duty?"

"The latter of course!"

Of course, It was time for me to volunteer for the Death's Head Corps of Mostly Bull, This group was the most impervious to traces of reality. These were the forward men far behind enemy lines in the constant battle for profit -- the Commodity Section. And it was closest to the door!

It was in the commodity markets where speculators bought future grain contracts and prayed for drought, blight and pestilence. Then, rewarded with such calamity they cackled fiendishly with pleasure as crops were ruined and the prices of what remained salable skyrocketed. Never mind that many farmers were left broke or that inflation soared, or another million souls starved to death in East Africa. The successful commodity speculator could turn off the television when news film of emaciated, skeletal humanoids hit the screen. If needed there was always Malthus to read in order that a beguiled stomach be calmed.

It was also in the Commodity Section where the money of the unsuccessful speculator (most customers) was turned into nothing the quickest. The average life for a commodity-trading account was usually 3 months; for a Commodity Account Inexecutive, 6 months. But that was all I was asking for, 12 more paychecks. It was in this battle zone peopled by the mad elite that I embraced the very essence of INSECURITY.

The Commodity Section denizens WERE mad-men. Cackling, fiendish bezerkoes who had the concentration of men on death's row. They looked at charts and claimed to see omens of the future, as if they were warrior Etruscans looking at the entrails of a sacrificed birds

"There! A trend!" They shouted madly and wrapped themselves in phone cords while chortling with insane glee. "Buy the bellies and the beans, short the dollar, buy the bonds! Whoee!"

Then, in seconds, as they listened to squawk boxes carrying news of the battle going badly, they re-wrapped themselves in phone cords to stop the bleeding and screamed with the urgency of death, "Cover shorts! Liquidate longs! Short the bellies, hogs, beans! Short the mark! Short the bonds! Short the bills! AAAAAHH!" Only to lose anyway.

"Markets are too fast, got whipsawed, cut-in-half -murdered, ruined, killed!" They explained and then ran off to the nearest bar to drink a half-pint of whiskey and provoke a fist fight so that hard punches of reality could help send them back for more.

"Fight hard, live hard," they would proclaim proudly before screaming "Short everything! Cover your shorts! Put stops in! Oh Fuck, we got EXECUTED! Oh NO! We fucked up!"

Eight of these maniacs had come and gone, from the Commodity Section of the Mostly Bull office which employed me, during the last year alone. Plutus had been surprised when I volunteered for the Section but needed a new replacement desperately, he was down to his last man.

His words to me before sending me out at dawn when the enemy was still sleeping were meant as encouragement, "Get the money up-front. No unsecured debits. Make us some commission-dollars!" With that he handed me my Commodity Commando knife which I put between my teeth. Soon I slipped down to the floor and crawled along the cable-trough to my new phone near the Commodity radar screen. Never mind that Spartan nonsense, 'Come back with your shield or on it.' Plutus' intent was to get the shield back, forget about me.

Choosing the path of irrevocable failure at Mostly Bull made me feel light and bouncy. I was happy. I confessed as much to Winthrop. But Winthrop had learned. "Our old friend Misery lies just around the corner. Namely what happens after 6 months?"

"Maybe a Mr. Big will happen along," I offered hopefully, "to make me big commission-dollars."

Winthrop was disappointed in me.

"Billy Dirko may trade commodities. Perhaps even *Premium Bill*," I said. (Premium Bill was a fellow who had traded options with me. Bill's uniqueness was his complete misunderstanding of 'premium-' as a function of time. This misunderstanding coupled with ignorance of speculating-maxims in general allowed him to create hallucinogenic trading strategies in which regardless of any subsequent action he would be guaranteed of losing his money whilst producing lucrative commissions for Mostly Bull. A perfect client! Commodities-trading was invented for folks like him. And if I didn't help provide the excitement he would only go elsewhere.)

"What happens after they lose their money?"

"Maybe Plutus will take me back for awhile," I smiled. "Let me start over in Insecurities. I could work the next General Disservice offering."

Winthrop lost patience. "Gillhensky!" He screamed "You're avoiding reality."

He was right, I became fearful, "Well, I have six months, three at least," I shuddered.

"What then?" Winthrop coaxed,

I surveyed all my potential possibilities. I was trained to do nothing except military radar operations and the selling of Insecurities. Neither appealed to me, What does a neer-do-well, lazy guy do when he's fed up with mundane survival and unable to progress in the work-a-day world?

The answer was obvious -- become Rich and Famous. Then my piddly concerns would be over. (If one is Rich one can always afford fame. But to get Rich with out wealthy relatives and friends required that first one become famous.) I told this to Winthrop.

"You have gone mad," was his succinct reaction.

"Winthrop, there is plenty of money still around. I can attest to that. My God I've seen zillions of it WASTED! All we have to do is redirect it into our paltry little pockets."

Winthrop frowned. "I thought we were destined for semi-brilliant obscurity. How can we become Rich and Famous without BEING Rich and Famous? Doesn't that violate Gillhensky's Law of '*thems that has - getting*' and so forth?"

He had a point there. "Luck." I replied, off handedly.

"We are both unlucky," Winthrop said,

Another point, I had taught him well. I considered his two points. The answer came from the teaching of none other than MOSTLY BULL!

"Winthrop!" I exclaimed in jovial good humor, "We shall achieve fame and fortune by SELLING to America what America wants."

"What?"

"Us!" How wonderfully neat an idea. I chuckled gleefully.

"Why do they want us?" He asked, making a face.

"We have to convince them that they do."

"Show business?" Winthrop quipped unkindly.

"With the world for a stage." I went to work on this mental construct. Instinct told me that since I couldn't sing I would have to rely on some undeveloped outrageous talent, "America likes the outrageous and we'll need stage names - short, memorable outrageous stage names, like nicknames..."

"That are descriptive," Winthrop added getting my message. Now he thought, "Something that describes *me*... --I've got it! I'll be known as *Doctor Winthrop*," he announced with some brilliance.

Gaining respect for the thirtyish lad I asked respectfully "Any ideas for me?"

He went to work on that: "Sales oriented -- Let's see... Young, ambitious go-getter, bright, eager, self-starter, selling-dynamo, successful GILLHENSKY."

"Too long," I said.

"Young Gillhensky," He said, abridging it.

I considered the name, "I like it - but... a bit awkward."

"Young *Sky*."

"I like it. But spelled out folks will think of an evening in Wyoming."

"Young Ski -- no mistaking it."

By God it was good, and I said so, "You're a fucking genius, Winthrop. '*Young Ski*,' boy, do I like it!"

However, in moments sober thoughts crossed my mind. "When will I become *Old Ski*?" I asked with sadness.

"After you're rich and famous."

"Yahoo! Then, who gives a damn!" I liked it. I saw that it was good. Winthrop and I jumped up and down with joy. "Doctor Winthrop and Young Ski! Look out world, here we come!"

Yes indeed, -- Young Ski Enterprises Inc. Not a bad idea. -Abba (Hebrew word for Father) was the biggest foreign currency earner in Sweden during 1980. Singing songs!

The SON (you know whose) was the biggest business in the world, to date.

I lamented my musical inabilities. My larynx couldn't match Dylan's and I couldn't tell music notes from hieroglyphics. My instrumentation was limited to playing the radio. Oh well, if I couldn't be an artist at least I could become an opportunist. Possibly I could mesmerize the folks with my ludicrous intentions. From little dollars would come bigger ones. Billions, trillions and zillions. Perhaps, I could buy a small country or even Mostly Bull.

Then the fantasy got sweeter. I saw myself bellowing through the boardrooms of Mostly Bull. "ON THE PHONE!" I would shout. Only all the real telephones had been replaced with toy, Mickey Mouse sets.

I could imagine myself storming into Plutus' office (the broom closet or men's room). "ON THE PHONE!"

He quivered with fright and put plastic Mickey to his ear. The pip-squeak recording played, "Hi, I'm Mickey. What's your name?" Plutus hesitated.

"WELL?" I bellowed.

"My name is Plutus."

"Was Plutus. Now it's Bullshit -- in my book!"

Vibrating with wonderment dissolved the fantasy leaving me only a short period of time before the next day at Mostly Bull.

"My name is Young Skit" I mimed, pip-squeak like, "What's yours?"

FAREWELL LAZY MEN

Reality again, I was on the phone at Commodity Commando Operations, '*Hello my name is Young Ski; what's yours? Want to trade commodities? Okay, Bye.*'

An old client phoned in. He was a small retailer who supervised a few people in his own shop and grew bored during the day.

"Hello Mr. Gillhensky, What's this with commodities? What's commodities?"

"Sugar, coffee, meat -- things that you sell."

"Yeah? Tell me, is this good? Can I make money with this?" He asked.

A Mostly Bull lie crossed my mind but I couldn't manage it. "No."

"Then why do you do it?"

"Some people like it -- gives them excitement." It was a wishy-washy answer, but as true as any other reply.

He was bored and wanted to chat for awhile, Soon, like Winthrop, he was inveighing against social politics. However, unlike Winthrop, he was among them who had -- a little, "Nobody knows the value of a dollar... Nobody wants to work. The Blacks don't want to work. They want cars, they want expensive things, but nobody wants to work. This is a sad thing."

"Mr. Samuel," I tried to interject growing depressed by his conversation.

"They don't want to work!"

I surmised that he was not discussing some newly discovered social phenomenon as much as was complaining to me that no one wanted to toil for HIM for the likes of 3 dollars-an-hour in a 10 dollar-an-hour world.

"Who wants to work anymore?" He shouted into his end of the phone.

"Nobody." I admitted.

"Nobody is right."

I was losing control, "That includes guys like you and me who cheat Insurance companies for phony accident claims, the lawyers who handle it for 30 % contingency fees. Doctors who write nonsense medical reports to collect the no-fault money from physical injury payments. Guys like us, attorneys, doctors, real estate speculators and everybody else wants to make mega-bucks doing nothing. So do Insurance companies! Corporations and Cartels do the same thing: TAKE! Make the market, fix the price and charge the max."

"They earned the right," He protested thinking of himself and his 'betters.'

"Bullshit. Do muggers have the right to steal with guns? You can't have two sets of rules. If the Knights and Dukes don't do honest work why should the serfs? Because they're serfs? How long will this country last like that? One set of rules for the Generals in the Pentagon and another for the privates in the infantry; one for them that has and another for..."

"I worked hard once. That's how I built my business," he said.

"I worked hard once too until I realized that them that worked the hardest made the least money."

He laughed. "So what's gonna be in this world full of people - like you say, everybody trying to make a fast buck doing as little as possible?"

I thought about it and shuddered. "You tell me?"

"I don't know, Things don't look so good. I can tell from my own business," he said.

"I'm afraid we may see a time when everyone knows the value of a dollar because there aren't any."

We were silent. I felt myself on the way to that knowledge already, seeing how I had crossed the line that separates those who continue and those who discontinue in the Insecurities business.

The conversation was concluded on friendly terms. He rather appreciated my candor. What a shame it was that in facetious times a responsible person has to earn his insecurity the hard way, by admitting to it.

Later, I confessed to Winthrop that I felt guilty for being lazy. "I should be moving heaven and Earth to produce commission-dollars," I wailed, "instead of talking about ethics or economics, or bullshit and waiting to be fired..."

"Nonsense. How can you continue to work at Mostly Bull when you know it to be immoral and will accomplish nothing useful? That's not being lazy. It's being masochistic to one's self."

"You-'re right! I feel better already." I exclaimed,

"But!" He pointed out, "You have to work at something. I'm working on my stupendous dissertation."

I sulked.

I went home intending to work on my Nietzsche article. After re-writing the first sentence eight times I gave up and brooded about my future. I considered joining the Air National Guard or shaving my head and studying boiler room operations.

Instead, I began a new article tracing the end of the American Century and the decline of the West to the TET Offensive of 1968. I fantasized that the latter article would surely catapult me out of obscurity and the Insecurity business. Then I imagined myself peddling the finished manuscript door-to-door after 5 magazine publishers spent 12 months rejecting it. What was the use of doing anything if nothing would come of it?

There seemed to be only a half dozen corporate publishing houses left. Most of them were owned by huge multi-national conglomerates. Apparently they only published works by already-known celebrities and the wives, mistresses and daughters of rich

famous men, who wrote volumes on cuntism. Of those in our population who could read (indeed, liked to read) who could afford 17 dollars for a book or 5 dollars for a paperback? {1979 prices -editor} Thus, the wives, mistresses and daughters of rich-men, interested in cuntism, were the majority of the book-buying population. Everyone else besides the semi-literates in the Insecurity business was on drugs, or crazy, or both.

I thought of self-publication but without money for a prime-time television commercial in which some celebrity touted one's printed product, credibility for said product was unavailable. Once again at the threshold of fame and fortune only to be deceived (by oneself?) and laid low. However, one could boil down one's cherished intellectual notions into entertaining vaudeville and act them out in street theater. America was desperate for the new laugh.

The idea seized me I rushed to call Winthrop. Eventually he answered.

"Winthrop, I have the answer. Set aside the dissertation -- no one will read it!" I laughed. "Remember what we spoke about the other day? We must become famous and thereby rich STRICTLY by being OUTRAGEOUS! No use even thinking about it. Just DO it!" I laughed again feeling great comfort in my wisdom.

"Nothing of ours will ever get published," I declared. Of course not. "There are slush piles of unsolicited manuscripts 20 tons deep delivered every day to the same six publishing companies." (I could envision the assembly line of hired, hourly, minimum-wage 'readers' ripping open packages, tossing manuscripts into their accompanying Self-Addressed-Stamped-Envelopes with a printed rejection slip and throwing them into huge out baskets -- 'Lookout!' BOOM! A letter bomb exploded wounding one of the 'readers,' a middle aged, Hispanic woman who began screaming in Spanish. Some Diarrheaite had struck a profound blow against Constipation. In the future the Publishing Industry will simply melt all unsolicited material in enormous steel caldrons. The book, 'Writer-s NoMarket' will carry a blurb under the descriptive paragraph for each Publisher: '*We melt all unsolicited manuscripts.*')

"What-do-you-say, Winny?" I asked.

"Well, Tatz is throwing a party. It seems her first book -- ironic you should have mentioned publishing -- is being published. She's going to have five rock bands playing simultaneously."

I was losing consciousness.

"You can come if you want," Winthrop continued, "but some of the material in her book seems to be based on you."

"Oh not I'll call Billy Dirko. I'm gonna sue."

"You need money to sue. This isn't a rear-end, auto, personal injury case," Winthrop reminded me.

I was weak. I sat upon the floor. A tension-headache neurasthenic-funk descended upon

me. Winthrop continued talking.

"Got to go," I said, despondently and hung up. Then I sat and sat. Poor Young Ski, I lamented, born too late to take advantage of the affluent 1950's and 60's. Born early enough for the miserable 70's and 80's. There seemed to be cause for misery. Soon there was cause for more misery. A messenger arrived at the door bearing a small, brown package for delivery.

"For me?"

"Special Delivery from a Ms. Henrietta Tattles."

"Thanks."

The messenger, a man in his young twenties left, driving off in what sounded like Tatz's sports car. Again, I turned my dwindling attention to Tatz's package.

"You won't blow me up so quickly you cunt! Tits! Tits!" I shouted meanly. I was deeply offended that Tatz and her diarrheate companions would send me a package bomb as if I were some Mostly Bull Big Hitter. "Huh!"

I filled the bathtub with water. This took 25 minutes as my dwelling had inadequate water pressure. During my wait I contemplated failure.

Bathtub filled -- I hurled the package into it and dived for cover in the next room. Naturally nothing happened aside from a loud splash.

Prostrate upon the floor I ruminated my existence. I could concentrate on nothing other than the awful present. Screaming my death charge I plunged into the bathtub splashing half the water out, and ripped the cardboard package open.

In my fingers, besides the wet muck of packing material was a sappy but readable copy of Tatz's book. It was titled, 'Young Ski and Other Stories.' I flipped the cover open. On the first page was a line that read simply, '*To the end of Cuntism.*' I didn't know whether to like the book and hate her, or visa versa (or versa visa).

The book was dedicated, '*To Dr. Winthrop who has taught me much about patience, and his true friend Young Ski whose journals gave me inspiration.*'

Sitting in the cold water of the bathtub with shredded cardboard things on my head I began to read.

The first story was called, 'Awful Story.' I read it and rather enjoyed it. (By the story's conclusion I noticed that the water in the tub had grown warmer -- Hot bath water always got colder. Did this, like our society, have anything to do with the laws of Thermodynamics?) The story was an anti-Cuntist story; analytical satiric, soft and bitter at the same time.

The next story was, '*The World According to Ser.*' Knowing that I wouldn't like it I thumbed through it looking for the dirty parts. Half way through I found them:

'Ser's animal-style fucking made Honey (Honey Tulz alias Henrietta Tattles, alias Tatz) tingle with the thrill of being there. With each mindless and technique-less plunge of Ser's death-writhing, pounding charge into her vagina possessing all the unconscious determination of a pneumatic chiseler trying to rip her in two. Honey giggled in glee of all the envy her friends would have of her. The uncomfortable grain of thought, though, that lay disturbingly under the brain like a pea under the mattress was that, ho-hum, she could not have orgasm with Ser... (Oh?)

'It was his blinding uncontrollable force that repelled her just as much as it attracted her. She could never have what she wanted most, escape from herself.

'When Ser was finished slewing out his centimeters of semen she sought an urgent excuse to escape his perspiring pores and spent, heated force. Uncaring of her and ready for beer, sleep or television he allowed her absence.

'Honey fled to the bathroom, locked the door and turned on the shower. Insulated, she sat upon the commode and dripped remnants of Ser into the toilet water. She shuddered violently with the thought of a Ser-baby taking root in her womb, belching, farting and grunting inside of her. Soon, it would be punching, kicking and erecting its own angry penis up into her stomach as if it were a demonic entity.

'The thought of any child inside filled her with dread. If any baby would ever grow in her it would be a neurotic, whimsical girl-child fathered by high IQ Stephen Wise.

'But of Stephen himself? With his pale, soft skin covering only body organs and not bulging muscle; could she tolerate him? For his nothingness and comprehensive, money-oriented brain she despised him.

'She remembered during the anti-war marches of 1969 how he cringed in panic over the brief loss of his draft deferment. She had suffered the entire night absorbing his compulsive, phobic obsessions over military service, death, dismemberment, exile in Canada, jail etc.

'She remembered turning her back on him and mimicking his trembling vulnerability. Tearfully, he had appealed for advice and comfort as he considered his most courageous alternatives, taking something to raise his blood pressure, or faking homosexuality in order to get a 4F classification. Both were too demanding for him to do.

'Words kept spilling out of him that night from all angles and in paragraph-full batches dumped by trucks. He went on and on highlighting his woes with all the verbosity of one who had been vacillated by a phonograph needle containing a verbal-diarrhea compound.

'Finally she had ordered, "Shut Up!" Despising his cowardice she had wished him speedy delivery to Khe San.

'Obediently, he shut up, apologized profusely and quietly returned to his mattress where he smoked dope alone and fearfully considered divinity school.

'Honey went on to more profound anti-war victories. She attempted to seduce the hardened sons of America's Armed Forces to desert. She had sex with more than a few. One deserted for apolitical reasons then returned voluntarily and after an episode in the stockade requested a tour in Vietnam. Walla.

'In the toilet, with Ser prowling the kitchen refrigerator, she cried. The great gush of guilt against herself poured out in torrents of self-pity. Poor-poor Honey. The Stephen Wises were all acceptable. Stephen Wise on his knees before her orifice begging, pleading, worshipping to please her, longing for her control brought orgasm. But all along she longed for the physically powerful, monosyllabic Sers of the world.'

I didn't feel like finishing the story but did search for Ser's World comments. They were to be found on both the first and last page of the story. *'Beer is for drinking (belch!). Pussy's for fucken-' (belch!)...*

It was the next story I was interested in.

GENESIS and GENIUSES

'YOUNG SKI ACCORDING TO THE WORLD (or Portrait Of An Artist As A Lunatic)'

'In the case of Young Skit at least, Nietzsche was dead wrong, for the inspiration for genius came from the EXPULSION of semen. Not to mention the blanket of inhibitions, guilts, and manias that surrounded him all his life and demanded their expulsion too.

'It would be unfair to categorize Young Ski as simply another jerk-off or, at best, a fornicator with what ever compromising female that was at hand. But, standing at attention hammering away into some female sprung upon the bed's end arched in lordosis, or even his trusty right hand was all it took for the formation of great and often dangerously ludicrous ideas.

'At completion of the sexual act his sour, militaristic ego, absurdly intolerant of such indolent activities such as love-making, would re-emerge in vicious conquest of his happily overwhelmed Id and threaten to open the flood gates of providential guilt. In quick defense he would obtain pencil and paper and pacify (sublimate) his internal demands by offering to create. One could almost plot his journals, the most lucid and inspiring of his ideas arriving just after sexual release, and the mundane, didactic, childish diatribe growing increasingly more cranky the longer he with-held himself, stopping up the flow of creative juices.

'Young Ski was not always Young Ski, though, off and on, through out his life he often became Young Ski. 'Young Ski,' was, after all, an alias under which the person who was not always Young Ski could hide away in. At one time he even admitted, "I'm one of the world's 'goodest' hidars." And in truth he was.

'It was quite difficult for even Young Ski to-know Young Ski and in this light one is almost forced to examine the physical records he left behind.

'His parents did not try to 'beat God into him,' though they were perplexed and angered

by his disposition to the world. Young Ski did not like the world.

'His earliest need was to have an audience with whom to speak. His earliest memories involved paralyzing fear, stubbornness, desire to possess, dependency and the act of rising above his fears to entertain, enthrall, and be titillated by the commanding attention of all around him. He could possess the stage. But, he didn't necessarily enjoy the stage, it was just something he MUST do. Young Ski had need of delivering his message long before he knew what his message was.

'Unfortunately, he wasn't spoiled. Had he been spoiled and taught to love himself more he would have been a perpetual act that no stage manager, by neither hook nor crook, could drag from public display. No, Young Ski's parents, dutiful, patriotic citizens who had dedicated themselves to every inch of the American ideal, before it managed to betray them, instructed Young Ski into a regime of regimental constriction (from toilet training?). Young Ski at eleven years old was already falling out for morning reveille and marching about as if off to war.

'Young Ski has denied having attended school beyond the third grade. This we know to be a lie, though his academic record is so inconsistent it renders the profiles of ten different phases.

'Elementary school found in the likes of Young Ski a disruptive troublesome student interesting in foisting sexual aggressiveness upon girl students. He cared little for the admonitions of his teachers.

'Then trauma set in. His parents moved from the crowded city to another COUNTRY twenty miles away. The new people Young Ski met were of a vastly different culture centered around organized sports played in the many open spaces. Football, baseball, basketball, hup, two, three, four.

'Young Ski did not excel at these new activities. After all, rules like so many archaic theories were meant to be broken. None of the new people appreciated Young Ski's running of the bases in the opposite direction. They were all eager to WIN the game and Young Ski could care less about their silly games -- larger things were at stake.

'Young Ski's lack of self-discipline, motivation and deference-to-order, forced him into an alienated mediocrity against which he eventually compensated (after puberty) by turning to delinquency and experimentation with dangerous activities such as drinking, reckless driving, street fighting (once) and acting crazy (many times). In order to draw further upon these violent, anti-social talents Young Ski sought military service during the Vietnam War. At the same time as he developed this contrarian personality to society he still secretly yearned for an audience. This can be attested to by boxes and boxes of written and typed drivel sorted into short-stories, poems, essays and attempted novels that Young Ski produced during his Sturm and Drang adolescence.

'Thinking that the Military (tour of duty 1967 - 1971) was looking for his type he was surprised to find them ready to re-develop his personality. Young Ski found to his sad surprise that the Military BEAT discipline, self-discipline, motivation and deference-to-order, into him good and hard. The Military wanted him to be reckless, violent and crazy

only at their command and not his whim. Young Ski did not like the Military, it was much less fun than he had anticipated.

'After military service Young Ski came to the profound conclusion that everything he had done since puberty and some things from before puberty were WRONG. No longer wishing for a reckless, careless, violent and crazy existence he sought order, stability, maturity and comfort-ability. (One can not overlook the influence of his parent's early training overlaid by military regimentation in assessing the causality of this significant change.) As a result of his new thinking Young Ski sought home, family, progress and affluence in the way of the American ideal.

'Young Ski worked at odd jobs such as laborer, construction worker and frying-pan salesman to supplement his scanty GI Bill benefits and in less than two years received his bachelors degree with honors from an accredited state college. He typed up his resume and made application for acceptance into the life of good and plenty, 'NO ADMISSION.'

'Undeterred, Young Ski went back to school and banged out a Master's Degree, 'SORRY, ALL FILLED UP.'

'There was just no getting started for Young Ski. He turned back to his writing hoping to find financial success in that endeavor, 'DON'T BOTHER.'

'Matured, ordered, responsible, patriotic, married, educated, parental, educated-some-more, and still the World did not want Young Ski. The World said, 'Young Ski, for all we care you could have died in Vietnam. All we want, said the World, 'is money. GIVE us your money, or GET us somebody else's money. He need money. Bullshit and baloney on progress, justice, liberty the American ideal, patriotism and family. It's all crappola which we probably invented as a marketing idea and don't need anymore. It was designed as a loss-leader during our Cold War Sale which was a smashing sell out. Now we need gasoline (1974) and money, money and more money. Maturity, order, responsibility, patriotism family and 'educatedness' don't get us no money. Reckless violence and sexual exploitation makes us more money than that other shit. 'If you can sing, get up a good band and jerk-off on stage while some sexy sluts gyrate to violent, decadent music we might pay top dollar, but, for what you got we ain't paying a single, fucken' cent. BYE GUY.'

'Young Ski was dismayed. At thirty (1979) he realized that everything he had done since his military service was WRONG. He had been on the correct path as a run-amok, wild teenager. Now he was saddled with responsibility and confusion. Poor-poor Young Ski.

'Looking for a stay of execution while he planned his next move, Young Ski allowed himself to sign on with the Insecurity business. After all, the winds of change were once again in the air. Perhaps the Cold-War sale would be brought back and Insecurity would be In again. The Insecurity business promised Young Ski a smattering of living expense money as long as he tried making mega-bucks for them by turning other people's money into and out of Insecurities. This employment proved to be less a career than a daily ordeal. For once he failed to PRODUCE the NUMBERS he would be finished.

'The Insecurity business was completely uninterested in what ever message that was

forming in Young Ski's mind. All they were interested in was numbers, in this they were good behaviorists content to believe that mankind had no such thing as a mind (soul?) at all.

'The unfairness of life began to make itself known to Young Ski. Even in the Insecurity business where money is the root of all accomplishment, the people who LOOKED at the NUMBERS (top management) made more money than those who actually DID the NUMBERS (the troops).

'At this time in his life his original desires returned with an intensity previously unknown. Young Ski decided that he must get onto the World-stage. It did not matter that his message, or its manner-of-telling, had not been fully evolved. No, the fact that the World, spinning through the universe, was screaming out so many insane and stupid slogans that the madness component threatened to engulf all. Someone would have to put a stop to it. The World would be better off listening to Young Ski even if he had nothing to say, than to the idiocy it dieted upon.

'As Young Ski drudged along, forcing himself to sell Insecurities so that he might provide some temporary security to those dependent upon him he began to dread the coming of IRONY as a force in his life. Young Ski would have preferred God to reveal Himself and make his ways known unto Young Ski. Instead Young Ski got Irony. He saw this happening in the bitter-sweet relationship he was developing vis-à-vis his offspring, Young-young Ski, whom he believed would grow up to despise him for being an unenlightened drone his entire occupational life.

'As it was, Young-young Ski was already displaying virtuoso skills in hostility and frustration. To combat this anarchy in his home Young Ski embarked upon a military training program designed to beat discipline into his young son. Thus, he would avoid the possibility of his son growing up to despise him, he would ensure it.

'Each battling session with the obstinate Young-young Ski would end with junior screaming 'No!' and senior screaming, "No!" louder. Father would frequently win the contest but wind up hating and belittling himself for his own display of hostility. In the tempest of parental instruction Young Ski was unconsciously determined to pass onto his son the very same obsolete definition of masculinity outlined in obedience-to-responsibility and stubborn, independent will that had served him so poorly over the years. But, military training sergeants had to made somewhere.

'What was Young Ski to do? losing the wars at home and in the Insecurity business produced in him a desperation. Looking about himself at the decadent sufferings of AMERICA gone mad, Young Ski saw his clue to success. Two key words were obvious: Sell and Outrageous. America was not a land of substance, of ideas right or wrong, of sound products and stable institutions. America was a land of professionally suave huckster sales people. All of them selling things that may or may not work according to advertised innuendo.

'To accomplish anything one MUST sell. Education and Maturity were bullshit. There were only Connections or Feed (such as fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts or friends-of-

means who could introduce one to a nice watering spot near the flow of the river of affluence). Young Ski was usually down-wind of the river in which sewage was effluent.

'Packaging was also important. One must have the right degree from the right school (regardless of being educated), the correct sex, demeanor, attitude, a lack of scruples, acceptable politics, correct surname to sell themselves onto the elusive fast-track to success. The mood of America was one of whimsy, and what it wanted most after all the jobs were filled by the correct looking faces, was entertainment, 'Keep us laughing, we want fun,' America said.

'Thus the equation began to come together. Who, in America, made the most money? Politicians? No, Lawyers? No, Doctors? No. Not even the Chief Executive Officers of Major Corporations. In America, Entertainers made the most money. The court-jester had become king.

'If formula entertainment was being pumped into America's bloodstream 168 hours a week, week after year after decade, wouldn't America become bored with entertainment? Certainly. From this conclusion there were two choices to offer a bored America searching for yuks, Art and Outrageousness. Art had too much uncertainty of popular acceptance (that's why it was art).

'Outrageousness in an outrageous World was the entrepreneurial choice.

'What was outrageousness? It was beyond camp, beyond satire, beyond the mere risqué. Outrageousness was LUNACY!

'Young Skit struggling against the unconscious deterrents that tried to box him into a conventional life-style, must have cracked those regimes of restrictions with one illuminating orgasm. Then, weak with dissipation, he beheld a far-off vision that arrived in a mystical conjure, possibly God sent. -- What ever his message was, he must package it in an outrageous format. This would be the essence of Young Ski, the grinning mask of outrageous idiocy disguising the superior marketing concept of Young Ski himself. And, thus he would gain the World stage.'

I let the book drift upon the waters. Had Tatz aided me or beat me to it? I held my nose, closed my eyes and slid into the quiet submersion of the water. All I could hear was the pounding of blood in my ears. Above me floated cardboard. All I owned in the world was time. About one minute... I waited. Time was thumping away. Slower and slower.

With a shower of exhilaration and burst of new breath I leapt from the tub bursting water and euphoria over everything. Yes, once again I had been saved. From what I didn't know. But saved!

At our next meeting I asked Winthrop of his reaction to Tatz's book.

"It's all true I suppose," he said, appearing more glum than usual.

"What's wrong with you?" I inquired.

"I'm gonna' give up on women," he replied acidly,

"How come?"

"She didn't write about me," the uncanny Professor said.

"Then you should be happy. After all the whole world has been dragged through her conception of my psyche."

"Not the whole world, Tatz had the book printed herself. Only 500 copies for her goofy friends. -- If she cared about me she would have at least tried to humiliate me a little in her book. Something like, 'Winthrop reads while I fornicate.'

"Winthrop you've only had two unfortunate love experiences in recent times," I said.

"Three. Lisa, Wendy and Tatz." He sulked. "Will I ever find the perfect woman who is willing to just make ME miserable and not the entire world?"

I didn't answer, I had rendezvous with destiny at Mostly Bull coming up.

THE GREEDY BROTHERS and the Unfree Market,

While every day one can find maniacs slaughtering themselves in the commodity markets few slaughters reached the proportions of the slaughter on '*Cotton Thursday*' when the Greedy brothers almost single-handedly ended the Western Economy.

The Greedy Brothers, Jake and Elroy Greedy, were two of the cleverest fellows on the planet. Their greatest feat was to be born the acknowledged sons of L.B. (Lima Bean) Greedy.

Lima Bean Greedy had made a half-billion dollars by keeping to the right side of the Standard Lima Bean Trust and Texas Lima Bean & Trolley Commission when the two entities ended the free market in Lima Beans during the 1920's and 30's. With the rise of the American Lima Bean Institute, interlocking directorates among the handful of International Lima Bean Corporations, and Organization of Lima Instigation and General Obstinate Production & Opportunism Limited or OLIGOPOLY in the 1960's and 70's, Lima Beans became a trillion dollar industry. And, naturally them associated with the Lima Bean Industry became multi-billionaires. Them not associated paid top dollar for lima beans.

Jake and Elroy were left billions by their daddy, L.B. Having all that money and nothing to do led them to seek greater achievements,

"Let us become trillionaires," they said, "Let's get so much stinking money and power that we can buy our own country and order the Western World around."

"Then we can outlaw minority groups and get some good ol' boy to write us up a gooder national anthem."

"Good idea (I-deah)."

They decided to corner the market in cotton by buying all the cotton futures they could from Commodity Commandos in the Insecurities business.

"We like cotton. Yes sir, we like lots of cotton. Buy cotton for future delivery..."

They took delivery of huge stockpiles of cotton, then ran to the banks to put their cotton up as collateral so they could borrow money to buy more cotton.

The price of cotton octoguppled.

Greed and Panic hit the markets. The price of cotton was made so high that people would only be able to wear clothes of wool or polyester. Shrewd speculators sold short the shares of cotton textile manufacturers and bought sheep farms in New Zealand.

With the frenzy in the cotton markets shaking the world the '*little guys*' who frequently complained, "A little guy always gets screwed in the markets," ran in to buy all the cotton they could. "This time us little guys will get rich too!" They shouted.

Wrong. Little guys always DO get screwed in the market. That's why they're little guys.

All the little guys were clamoring to buy cotton at outrageously high prices and the Greedys said, "Yes, buy cotton, it's good for you." And secretly they began selling their cotton to all the foolish little guys.

The Greedys were not able to transfer a trillion dollars of wealth from the little guys to themselves. The Government, through pressure on the Commodity exchanges, forced speculative margins on cotton to be raised astronomically and dried the liquidity out of the market. As a result no more little guys could afford to buy cotton --but they could try to sell what they had.

Within two days everyone was trying to sell cotton to no buyers. Panic ensued. Billions were lost. The little guys all got screwed. The Greedys were called by their brokers to put up an additional BILLION in collateral. "Oh, a Billion?" Jake and Elroy asked, They checked their wallets, "Nope. We got lots of cotton. We own some companies, but we're a little tight for cash today..."

I was in the bunker at Mostly Bull as all the markets were crashing. If the Greedys didn't have an extra billion in cash then their brokers would fold, and their brokers' banks would fold and in days the entire house of cards would tumble down as everybody tried to sell what ever could be sold and withdraw what ever money they could. It was as if the TET Offensive was rolling over us again. Even the Commodity Commandos looked ashen as they contemplated capture and execution. Some humorous fellow sent his voice over the squawk box in imitation of submarine noises and shouted, "Dive! Dive! Dive!" It seemed to fit.

But the Government stepped in again and engineered all sorts of bank loans here and there to relieve the pressure on the Greedys for immediate cash. Naturally, the Greedys were down a billion instead of up a trillion but those were the breaks. Keeping in good spirits they blamed the unfortunate episode on the 'socialist' government for interfering in the market they had been fixing to become trillionaires in.

The object lesson the Greedy-fiasco taught me was that there really is no place to hide

once calamity strikes. From the pastures of New Zealand to the Manhattan canyons of the Insecurity business after the push and after the shove everybody will be lucky if all they have to eat is lima beans. I confessed this to Winthrop.

"Why don't you try and figure it all out so we, with everybody else, can be spared the ordeal of World Depression II." Winthrop advised me.

"I thought we would go into show business and make a ton of money," I replied.

"And end up penniless vagabonds after the whims of chance blow ill against us? Figure it all out. -- I'm working on my own conclusions," Winthrop boasted.

I suspected him of using an intellectual defense simply to avoid stage fright.

"All right." I would try to figure out more of the world-scheme.

In the environs of Sexual Finance as everywhere else, I inevitably become the captive audience of lunatics. They must sense something in me, in my bored and passive stare, my idle expression, as I lounge patiently and await calamity, that encourages their psychotic shenanigans.

Often they share similar agendas: Rascism, or at least anti-communism, seems to be a common symptom. (If Communism can't work, why fear it?) Perhaps sexual financial instincts have gone awry or they had been crushed in an unfriendly market. They share simplistic half-truths with me, or paranoid lies. I wish they would go away.

I was watching the financial markets going into a slow crash when this latest fellow disrupted my brooding fantasies. He asked a perfectly normal question about something trivial. I answered him and immediately he extended an invitation to himself to teach me what he knew. He was a happy guy too, Full of peppy smiles and funny accents.

"I know why things succeed," he told me.

I didn't have to ask. My eyelids drifted up sleepily. I looked at him.

"-- The REAL success story of capitalism. Why it works and why it doesn't work..." And he was off, like Ed Wynn, on drugs, explaining it to me, doodling it out for me on bare white spaces of his dog-eared newspaper. At first I listened with incredulity as he tossed out names of corporate chairman of the boards from dozens of major companies who had been guided by his lessons. He had influenced this and that, that and this. All from a guy in a flannel shirt with the callused fingers of a workingman. He apparently was the man behind the men who ruled the industrial Western World.

"Three syllables... Ellipses! NAMES within an ellipse! ...Identification." How a company's or product's symbol appeared or sounded was as vital to its success as the product itself (?).

Even though Plutus was away I still felt a twinge of guilt for wasting my time. Any other Insecurity salesmen, several of whom had noticed this odd fellow at my desk, would have given him the bum's rush once they discovered he had no commission dollars to send

their way. Yes, I shouldn't have allowed the strange conversation to continue. I should have stopped it and began making cold calls from a country-club directory (which I didn't have). But I was intrigued by the promise of human truth.

Eventually, he revealed his flaw, "I did it," he announced solemnly of his great discoveries "To help Capitalism become successful. In order to... (punch line) to defeat COMMUNISM." His jowl quivered. Something clicked inside my brain. (One of THOSE guys!)

Soon, he was expounding upon his exploits at predicting riots in the 1960s using theories of gravitational forces. He quoted one of his teachers Dr. Einstein (!) and hinted at other plans to unveil the unknown mechanics of communistic subversion, using data from the tropic of Capricorn and something about sunshine.

I was afraid to get further involved fearing he would dog me the rest of life drawing pictures on my walls as he demonstrated the domination of the insidious and arcane over everything else in this world.

I excused myself insisting that an important call must be made. I shook his rough hand and used my phone to order a cheeseburger.

After he left I tried to shake off his effect. Yet, something lingered. Hesitantly I took my pen to my memo pad (avoiding the rows of lines punctured by phallic arrows that I had doodled earlier) and drew (SKI) inside an ellipse. I paused to reconsider and then scribbled (YOUNG SKI) inside an ellipse. I even experimented with the forbidden writing: 'Young (SKI)' with only the 'ski' part inside the ellipse. Searching for three syllables I attempted, (YOUNG-ER SKI); younger than what?

Could success or failure be even MORE superficial than I had thought? Were we really fighting to the death over symbols inside ellipses? 'C-API--I-TAL-ISM' the word sounded too herky-jerky as if one could tell it would be replete with booms and busts in an every-man-for-himself atmosphere. Next, I tried COM-MU-NISM. The word sounded smother. Foolish persons would, no doubt, be hypnotically lulled by its promise of utopia. Where was our world-wide edge? He had a symbol vulnerability! My hands trembled, diarrhea formed in my bowels. I thought of contacting the President. The word, 'Cap-i-tal-ism' had to go, our fortunes must be improved. Our new word, I would suggest, could be 'Symbol-ism'.

As it turned out the new crowd in Washington (1981) had different ideas, CAPITALISM, the old, was out. The new was -(LAIS-SEZ FAIRE) Though not an American term it did have a ring to it. *{Soon Communism would fade as a monolithic menace, often replaced by a decentralized gangster-ism. -editor,1999}*

Self-deprecating thoughts assaulted me. Even if my philosophy was non-ideological wasn't I also a Lunatic? I saw myself pointing to the quotation tape blaring noisily from the wall and exclaiming, "Hi there! -- Do you know what that is? It's Sexual Finance!" Then I would smile grandly as I mounted a desk to conduct my lecture:

'There are only two political parties on Earth, Constipation and Diarrhea! --Gillhensky's

law says that 'dems dat hhhave...' About then I suppose I would be ushered into the street.

I discussed 'Symbolism' with Winthrop as we lunched on stale potato chips and water, but Winthrop was in no mood for hyperbolic gab. He was seething.

"Tatz?" I asked.

He shrugged. "Not really, She sent me a post card from Brazil, -- It's the UNFAIRNESS of it all!"

"Tatz going to Brazil?"

"No! The unfairness of Sexual Finance... Life itself! Everything!"

"Hey, we ARE eating," I reminded, building yummy mountains of debris on my teeth that a toothpick or fingernail would have to dislodge.

"Potato chips!" He exclaimed.

"Then find employment. I suggested.

"And lie, cheat and steal from others for others?"

"Become a laborer."

He considered it, "Do you think I'm physically fit for it?" He asked, seriously.

"Winthrop, you're not mentally fit for it. You would be unable to keep your mouth shut while loading things onto trucks for 4 dollars-an-hour in an 11 dollar-an-hour world. You would protest continually about the unfairness of it and would get beaten up by dumb people who would resent *you!*

I thought of riddles to plague him with. "Winthrop, both you and Mr. Big are forbidden by vagrancy laws and inhabitation-codes from seeking shelter overnight under public bridges. What's unfair about that?" I queried.

"Unfair!" Winthrop shouted, "Mr. Big has five houses including a 90 room mansion on his 2,000 acre estate. He doesn't HAVE to sleep under a bridge."

I considered his point.

"Fair," Winthrop began, "is when '*he who does not work does not eat*' pertains to Mr. Big." His eyes were vehement with this spoken blaspheme.

"But, Mr. Big does work." I protested.

"Doing what?" He implored.

"Winnny, Mr. Bigs around the globe spend all hours of the day toiling exhaustively to erect strategies to keep guys like you from getting at their money."

"--And guys like you." He added quickly.

In this latter respect Winthrop was wrong. I had finally concluded that the elusive search for Mr. Big was proving to be too disheartening and useless a job to continue. The simple facts dictated that Mr. Bigs would not waste their time or money with the likes of me or my foolish abstractions of a product. No, in fact, I was also a product of a Mr. Big. -- I worked for him selling to nobodies what made Mr. Big, Mr. Big. In short, I had met Mr. Big and found that he owned me. I confessed this to Winthrop. "They have my NUMBER, old boy, and unfortunately it is zero."

"It's not fair!" He lambasted crashing his weak fists to the table, rage and torment in his tearful eyes. If ever there was a 'meek' it must have been Winthrop inheritor of the sense of injustice.

We concluded lunch with the sharing of a dry cupcake and I departed for Mostly Bull knowing that my path there would not be forever traveled.

I reflected upon Winthrop's shrill and frustrated sense of justice. It brought to mind the two senses of justice we have in the world. The sense of justice emitted from '*thems-that-has*' has always been of a global, stoic mold manufactured in the aristocratic Roman mind. It carries with it an impartiality for everything save the pragmatic realities of organized society. It is THE system of jurisprudence is often blind (especially to *thems-that-need*') and provides the established precedent of ORDER.

Winthrop's sense of justice, however, was much keener, more particular and completely impatient. Born Biblically under the intensity of desert sun, fierce and religiously Hebraic, it had the rhythm of hysteria and the innocence of a child confronted with the arbitrary capriciousness of authority. It pursued right and attacked wrong intuitively and possessed an enormous historical memory of past transgressions. It was and remains the justice of *-thems that HAS NOT*' and while subject to the strongest ridicule by established order has propelled individuals such as Isaiah, Amos and Jesus and their solitary missions.

DEATH AT MOSTLY BULL

There had been times of doing numbers. Days of yore when Billy Dirko or 'Premium Bill' had sexually financial orgasm in the Insecurity markets and beaucoup commission production fell on me. There had been times when I sold folks the *-good* products of Mostly Bull and made Plutus stop wincing when he saw me. Usually the above took place when markets were frothing at the top as hordes of '*little guys*' jerked each around trying to get the last of the good stuff before it was gone. If only they had waited a few weeks or months longer. Then they could have purchased the same so much cheaper but without the excitement that drove them. That was always the problem; glimpses of the end. Oh, how I shut my eyes hoping and pretending the good times would continue to roll on. '*Let Billy Dirko get rich so I can get rich,*' I would say. Perhaps, miracles of miracles, even Premium Bill could figure a way out of the mess he had traded himself into. I would in these grand times of high expectations trot to the train station full of mischievous glee, neurotic spots almost breaking out all over me. So pleased with the NUMBERS I had done I felt like passing the world a masturbation hand-sign as the 4:56 diesel in. Yes, I

could almost slap boner across my briefcase and bark happily about all the *-production-*I had done like a good little potty-trainer making lots of doody for Mommy.

But, as markets sank to oblivion, I always realized the folly of my ways. I had squandered money (Mea Culpa, Avinu Malkanu, Our Father Our King etc.) and invested my life into providing weird thrills to folks who belonged in Gamblers Anonymous.

True, I wasn't supposed to be held responsible. But who was? Trying to compensate and make amends I stopped fibbing on the telephone, ceased soliciting strangers. Then I saw my Numbers drop to zero, saw Plutus watch me again for he knew what I knew. The bottom line says all.

I began leaving the office on fictitious appointments. Others in my predicament were job-hunting or drinking at a bar. I wandered the dirty streets and thought. I feared for the future. Often, I grew despondent wondering what would become of me. Would I end up destitute and disoriented? Would I find myself being dragged out of an abandoned automobile by several policemen as I sat transfixed in my deteriorating suit composing my inaugural address on several random scraps of toilet tissue?

I knew what I was facing. I was facing Death at Mostly Bull.

I had met death before. Death lingered on 2:00 AM highways when teenagers, drunks and fools raced their cars. Death said hello when the expendable kids fell into the meat-grinder of sunny, sewer-smelling Vietnam. Death was trucks running amok and planes falling from the sky, kids tangled in chute harnesses found bobbling ass-up in the Danang Bay.

Death followed me home from Vietnam. The very next day. Death was in the memories of the *see-through-you* eyes.

"KILL!" The chant went.

"KILL!"

"NUMBERS!" I found myself shouting at empty buildings standing abandoned on the filthy streets.

"NUMBERS!"

But Death at Mostly Bull was different. Expandability was more polite. Death didn't explode all over one. One's body wasn't immediately violated into spewing plumes and mashed carrion as if the old 7:15 had mashed some poor soul under its aged wheels. Death was more a visiting malady similar to a slow, painless cancer.

Everyone-else knew when one had Death stretched out before one. Vultures gathered at the victim's desk. Ravens cawed. Hyenas such as Mike Good suddenly would befriend the soul slated for Death. He would offer to *hide one's few, better accounts from the management* till the victim could make the switch to some other firm. Good had no intention of hiding anything save his motives. If he should be the first to catch the death's scent in the jungle air then he would be the first into Plutus's office bearing the news:

'Yeah, he knows he's on the block and is gonna split, I know the names of his four best accounts; let me work 'em. I'll stay late tonight and call them.' Of course, it was only a matter of time before the other sharks tasted blood in the water and went on a feeding frenzy around Plutus's desk. *'Feed me! We're big hitters and we're hungry! We're your friends, feed us! Give me so-and-so's accounts so I can feast off them!.'*

The victim would always lose *'the act.'* The salesmanship confidence would vanish. The leads and referrals would end. Why feed a dying person?

Thus, grieving with humility for all the money-murdered clients the victim had gored as a young bull the *'deathee'* awaited the call of termination. And Friday at 3:30 PM it usually came. Then, the deathee would face the summoning to execution.

"Deathee!" Plutus would call from the doorway of his office.

The old, dying bull would rise on weak legs, toss its withered horns once or twice at the row of buzzards laughing from the Quotron machines. Then, drooling saliva, worn hoofs clattering feebly upon the dull carpet, the deathee-sacrifice would clamor in a sad trot toward Plutus. Perhaps, the deathee's mind would fog and memories of distant prairies would cloud his vision. Spring air and sparkling sun. But now, only the dust of the rest of the herd way out in front. Too far to run.

A mirage of water would come to mind. But, Plutus had already cut the draw, the trough would be empty -- the best grazing eaten and trampled by the stronger, fitter animals. Nothing to nuzzle save a parched blade of grass covered by the defecation of the others.

Plutus. His words: *"You weren't worken' hard enough!"*

The deathee would lift his graying muzzle fighting for breath. He would try to bray fiercely one more time but all that he can manage is a sickly, high-pitched *"mooo"* and a choking crack in tone.

The ax is then raised.

"No! I want to live -- live like everybody else!"

SLACK! BASH!

The severed head then falls and rolls. The body twitches and drops.

"We'll mail your last check -- take the early train home."

"Aye, aye sir!" (Salute)

"Fuck you!" I said to Death at Mostly Bull. I decided to die with dignity at the Firm. A death with an afterlife! "If I can't be an artist, let me at least, be an opportunist."

Death at Mostly Bull became an obsession and a challenge. I would leave behind only the accounts that had destroyed themselves, the depleted and the useless. Give them the 'burned-earth' strategy as I retreated to the mountains. All the while prospecting for new business and braying fiercely into the Commodity-Commando screen, *'There's a*

trend! I see a trend! Go short! Go long! Numbers!'

"Fuck all those scavenger-dogs whimpering for a meal on the bones of my account-book (what little there was left). Fuck 'em all!" I told Winthrop.

"That's the spirit," he encouraged me over the telephone.

Shrewdly, I went into Plutus' office to discuss in private the, soon-to-happen, though fictitious, opening of an enormous commodity account. His eyes glistened with the promise of all those lovely commissions. He probably lied to himself about how much he had helped me along. He would wait a little longer before firing me. I would leave when I decided the time was right.

It was my night to bunk at Winthrop's, but the gray winds of ugly weather united with my solitary mood. I needed a bit of companionship with myself. Having no place to go I visited a bar and spent my money on an alcoholic remedy which I believed would slosh away my concerns and make me fit to be with other people again. It was a dose of Dr. Young Ski's brandy and beer treatment. Thusly, I sought to re-examine my strange life.

Tatz had been right about me. At every turn in my life I realized that the previous turn had been a mistake. I was still trying to obediently follow the tail-end of the American dream -- something I already thought to be foolish when I was fifteen! Naturally, success continually eluded me. I began to worry that if I ever caught up with it I might find only the American nightmare.

So black was my mood even Winthrop would not have tolerated me. With enough sauce in met however, my cynical humor overtook my sober concerns and lifted them off.

On to Winthrop's! I walked, glad to be covered by night. The neighborhood low-lives avoided me, taking me for the sort there was no profit in pestering. I hummed my way along imagining castles where empty buildings prepared for their obliteration.

By the time Winthrop laid eyes on me I had a large, sneaky smile to boast of. It was Winthrop, as usual, who was brooding.

FREEDOM TO FAIL

"What's wrong, guy?" I calmly asked with my semi-drunk's grin.

Despite living in the land of liberty, *as I reminded him*, he was frustrated.

"Liberty to do what?" He asked.

"Of speech. To say what you please," I said.

"To whom?" He replied. "To you? I got fired from my only teaching job for saying, in class, what I thought. What if you told management at Mostly Bull, or even spies like that Sumner or Good, what you thought of their business?"

He sobered me up. "I'd be fired immediately. Faster than immediately. In the Insecurities business one is in fact fired before being hired. Everyone is always Insecure, though

there is some safety in NUMBERS." (Yes, in the Insecurity business one could not be caught with negative thoughts in their head. Only boundless optimism in the future of holy-money would do. Negative thoughts about the business-of-business was worse than Communism. Mostly Bull would do business with Communists but not with negative-thinkers. One had to always howl for Bullism, production selling, commissions and Numbers. If one was perceived to have the wrong attitude doom followed. Even if the numbers were sustainable one's situation could be turned over to the 'Compliance' People who were Mostly Bull's internal security and counter-espionage forces. Their purpose was to make underlings Insecure and reduce liability-to-the-firm for breaking the intent of all the rules one had to break to do Numbers.

These Gestapo-types would review in detail every facet of one's corporate life, to uncover any discrepancies that could be used during interrogation to make the suspected negative-one confess. Some small, common infraction could be turned into the proportions of a major crime against Mostly Bull and the Insecurities industry. One had to admit error publicly and hope for forgiveness from the Commissar conducting the tribunal. The alternative was termination. Everyone was guilty till proven less guilty. There was no room for semi-truthfulness in the corporate world. To admit truth was to be dead. Schopenhauer had told me that, "*If compliance asks you anything, lie, they expect it.* Everyone bends the rules but nobody can admit it! An outright bald-faced lie is okay as long as it agrees with company policy. In any case, do NOT confess negative thoughts about the firm!"

How I feared being prematurely uncovered by the '*thought police.*' All considerations of the propriety of prospecting for suckers willing to jeopardize their money for Mostly Bull commissions must be left unsaid. My freedom of speech was to Winthrop. On this I sulked.

"You have the freedom to watch all the television you want." I told him, knowing he had no television.

"You have the freedom to get rich and THEN afford all the other freedoms. Of course to get that rich you will need some seed money to get started."

"I don't HAVE any seed money," he said, smartly.

"I know. And no credit, either. You could borrow from me but since I know all about your lack of financial acumen even I wouldn't lend you money -- if I had any!" I fought defeat on this issue. "You have the freedom not to afford good medical or dental care," I laughed.

Finally, I had it. I borrowed from the Constipation Party: "You have," I said, "the freedom to fail!"

"Actually that's the only freedom I do have, though at this point it's beginning to look more like an obligation than a freedom," he said.

Such a unique freedom didn't have the stuff of winning hearts and minds, though.

"That's why Oligarchy won't survive Tyranny at the ballot box," he added.

"Thanks, Socrates. The real freedom in this country," I said, "has always been money, a little for almost everybody..."

"What's so good about money being the social glue of a nation?" He asked, idealistically."

"Because, other than torture, murder or war it's probably the only thing that works," I mentioned.

I departed for a brief walk by myself. Somewhere, the *'free-market'* had to speak to me, tell me there was a flaw in the Professor's truths. I wandered about the dying neighborhood. Soon, I found the highway, yellowed and chipped in its aged, concrete finery. At a cross-road I found the remnants of four abandoned gasoline stations.

I thought of all the changes in all the years I had known. I had been driven down this highway on the way to my military induction ordeal. Tell me America, who will fight and die to defend the *'freedom to fail'*? Would I have chortled off so happily to Vietnam in defense of the freedom-to-fail? (Which we ignobly succeeded at anyway). I myself had been an apostle of positive Americanism in the Great Society mold. Why we even took the time to teach Asian prostitutes how to pronounce and write English language obscenities. How much more virtuous could military fellows get? But, who in half-his-right-mind would take the oath of service to throw his body upon the bayonet of injustice to defend his 'freedom' (obligation) to FAIL? Otto Van Bismark certainly understood this and re-wrote Conservatism accordingly. Why were American politicians always so dumb?

And this getting-wealthy business was certainly not the province of correct thinking. It almost depended on what year one was born in. How many dumbasses graduating high school in 1960 later grew rich as hierarchies developed under them in a growing economy, while so many bright folks tried, unsuccessfully, to get started in 1974 and 1981 only to fail? Even Winthrop had war-stories to tell concerning this latter phenomenon.' Academic retards with scrawny credentials had wandered aboard the Community College space-ship in 1967. Subsequently they blasted off into tenure and heady rank with salaries gaining them \$ 30 to \$ 37 thousand a year. After the great population-age shift it was THEY who sat in command of committees who rejected hordes of smarter people begging for entry-level positions paying \$ 10 thousand per year. It was about then that Winthrop was bounded from this nether-world.

I drifted back to Winthrop's. He was forgiving of my mood and poured me a cup of tea. He tried to cheer me up. "One day, Young Ski, the biggest of the big will find themselves in dire straits..."

I grunted that I heard him.

He continued. "And they will scream to the Lord-All-mighty that their government give them credit, relieve them from debt, inflate, yes inflate prices through money creation.* And some guy like me -- or you, will stand there at the gates and knot up his tie,

(Winthrop feigned this) shake his bony fist and declare, scoldingly: ‘-*Economic discipline! Suffer the consequences you created!*’ They will cry and wail. And if that period is survived there will be FREEDOM again." Winthrop's rosy-eyed, neo-boyism made me wonder, I ate a cookie and brooded about being born to late for easy prosperity. (**.5 trillion dollar bail out of the Financial Industry in the late-1980s? editor's comment 1999*) --merely foreshadowing 2007-2009, editor's comment 2011

Poor Winthrop. He found himself in company with the prophet Amos and philosopher Socrates finding lament in a world where there were ‘*men who love money.*’ Perhaps there was nothing new under the sun, save nuclear bombs and they were like the sun. Our enlightening talk led me to thinking. Besides, a sobered drunk does not easily sleep. In my mind I built upon my puny problems in micro Sexual Finance and Insecurity up to the verities of Grand (Macro) Sexually Financial Economical Insecurity.

ECONOMIC DILEMMAS AND ENEMAS

(A Contrived Dream Sequence)

Being close to money but having little of it had given me an opinion...

I wandered into a large building called the Conservative American Free Enterprise Economic Analysis and Auto Mechanics Institute. It was staffed by a group of conservative Austrian economists who fled their native land when it appeared that a leftist Austrian Government bent on deficit spending was having success with its own economy. It seemed that their call to duty was elsewhere and they came to America, the land of opportunity to become rich and famous. I lingered in the hallways for awhile admiring the artistic prints of money adorning the walls. I stopped an individual who crossed my path.

"How can this institution be so financially successful when it produces no tangible product? Isn't that decadent?" I asked.

He sucked on his pipe and thought a moment, "Not at all. Check in the garage, There you will see us hard at *vork fixink* the American economy."

I thanked him and ran to the garage. There I found five or so elderly economists dressed in white lab coats clustered competitively about a coughing, wheezing engine that ran fitfully while fixed to a motor mount on the floor. They elbowed each other out of their way as they each sought to apply a screwdriver to a screw under the carburetor.

"Use my screwdriver it has a Philips-curve on it!" One shouted.

"No, the Laffer-curve!"

"Supply!"

"Demand!"

"Let me turn the screw!"

I coughed on the fumes filling the garage. "Shouldn't you run these exhaust gases

outside?" I inquired.

They were all too busy trying to turn the screw to hear me. There was a meter board connected to the engine by dozens of wires. Fascinated, I inspected the gauges more closely. There were gauges for the Consumer Price Index, Gross National Product, Trade Balance/Imbalance, Federal Expenditures and Revenues, Employment, Productivity and three for the 'Money Supply.' Naturally none of them were working.

Suddenly, an intense young man with pre-maturely graying hair rushed to the engine from behind me. Lacking patience he pushed the older men aside with abruptness.

"Out of my way!" He shouted.

"But, it's my turn, I'm entitled to turn the screw," one of the older fellows proclaimed.

"No one's entitled to anything their daddy didn't give them. And my Daddy said I could play with this economy, now!" With that spoken he pushed up his owlish spectacles from where they had slipped on his nose and peered at the screw under the carburetor.

"Besides, all you got is the monetarist screw driver, I got the FISCAL screw driver!"

As the new mechanic went to work with his screw driver I edged over to the displaced older fellows. "What are you all doing here?" I asked.

"It's the carburetion; too lean a mixture and wrong idle speed," one of them said.

Attention was riveted to the younger mechanic, "Watch it Dave," one of the others advised him.

"I know what I'm doing. -- I got it!" The new mechanic shouted as he found the screw he wanted. With vengeance he forcefully began screwing the screw to the right. The engine roared to life leaping several thousand rpms. The increased noise and vibration frightened all and we stepped back. The motor mounts trembled but Dave tightened and tightened. "Cut taxes, cut taxes, cut taxes, cut taxes," he intoned mantra-like as he worked.

"Dave, it's revving too high," they advised.

"Shut up! Now..." He began to work on the other screw, "Cut social spending, cut social spending, cut social spending ... "

"You guys are trying to fix this engine with only screw drivers?" I asked, incredulous, "No wrenches?"

"You think we're Communists?" One of them replied, haughtily.

"Maybe this engine needs more than a carburetion adjustment," I remarked keenly.

Dave continued to tighten his screw till abruptly the engine choked, backfired and died. A plume of soot dirtied Dave's face.

"Now, you've done it!" One of the gents castigated Dave.

"Too many turns to the right, too quickly."

"It wasn't me, It was you!" Dave shouted, throwing his screwdriver against the far wall. "I quit! I'm going home. --You guys screwed it all up..." Dave stalked out. The others shook their heads in befuddlement. "The engine IS dead," One fellow said, astutely. "Why?" Another asked.

I examined the engine, "Hey guys," I called out, "this engine is fifty years old." No wonder it didn't work.

"It worked last year, Six miles to the gallon, stalled on rainy days, but it worked," I was told.

"You need to rebuild this engine," I said. "We don't believe in that. Besides, parts are too expensive."

"Then, buy a new one," I advised.

"No way. We have NO funds for that purpose."

"Borrow the money," I suggested.

"NEVER!"

"Then do without," I said, feeling perplexed by their attitude.

"We won't."

"Then, screw you!" I declared.

"And you too. -- It's your engine."

I could have chatted with Calvin Coolidge upon the 50th anniversary of his death...

Talked about the reparations the allies sucked out of the Weimar Republic which 'we' might have ended by forgiving the allies war debt they never repaid anyway, perhaps (perhaps!) avoiding Hitler and World War II in Europe. But I'm sure he would have said, '*They hired the money, didn't they?*' I could have also brought up protectionism and its role in bringing on the depression of the 30s...

But the past can not be undone and is rarely even learned from. Yet, sometimes, the invisible hand provides at least irony. For instance:

Since Monetarists are employed to slow the creation of money in order to produce recession and slow inflation, once deflation contracts the amount money available it then reduces the supply of monetarists.

It was time to stop laying in bed, day-dreaming and arise to sleepwalk.

THE CONCLUSION OF NUMBERS

From my eclectic reading file: A quote from a publication called '*Commodity Magazine*'

containing a review of Sidney Homer's book, 'A History of Interest Rates.' In which Mr. Homer is said to quote an 'ancient Assyrian source:' "*Our Earth is degenerate in these latter days, bribery and corruption are common, children no longer obey their parents, everyman wants to write a book and the end of the world is evidently approaching.*" The world of the Assyrians had ended long ago.

I sensed the approaching end for the time of NUMBERS.

BOOK TWO

THE END *and*

Other Revelations

"All the King's horses and all the King's Men couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again."

-well known nursery rhyme

THE WINTER OF OUR END OF CONTENT

Moving in with Winthrop occurred at the stage when adults have become so complex and temperamental they act like children again. I had looned and lazied my way through physical childhood and the misfortune of a crazed adolescence. I had wasted time in the military, plunged into matrimony, child rearing and the life-time prison sentence of gainful (though meaningless) employment with weekends off for good behavior. Up till the last, my existence had been linear. I had progressed along some appropriate path, survived all the general miseries, horrors and institutional insanities that humans are fond of ordering themselves through. Then what?

Then the line stopped. Either that or it ran straight to death. There was no answer to the question 'What's it all about?' Either one blew up in the discombobulated mind explosions that occurred in one's head or (if married) between equally enraged heads, went in convoluted mad-person circles trying to drug, drink and fornicate oneself out of consciousness or one lifted the globular weight of mass responsibility single-handedly, to one's shoulder. Thus, with spine shrunk three inches one could stumble up the incline of the steep, rocky mountain of existence feeling the anchors of useless possessions dragging behind with the weight of two tons. Reach the summit (hopefully), draw one deep breath and in a blast of scream leap over into endless and total doom. Cheery, huh?

I found myself pulling my hair out. The children *¹ broke everything and drove me mad with screaming. (*¹ Note: One generation environmental genetic adaptation, proven by the Monarch (?) Butterfly in England, showed up in my offspring. Drawing on my spouses' Anglo-Scandinavian chromosome pool, unpopular traits due to malingering genes of Eastern European or Mediterranean identification in my background became recessive or extinct. My children were cloned for mainstream acceptance. It was up to me, of course, to fill their heads with the horrible perceptions of the *truth*; to mix them up and turn them inside out so their noses and eyebrows would grow toward dimensions of Armenia. After all, it had been done to me: My once blue American eyes had turned

hazel-green before I ever saw Vietnam).

The wife drove me mad with screaming. I drove me mad with screaming. All of us spent out time together marching around with self-serving agendas of who-was-right, who was wrong, why, why, why. Bumping into one another in the small, cramped confines of the tiny bungalow where we huddled in fraying sweaters for warmth against the freezing winter's chill. Cuts in our entertainment budget went over to supplement deficits in our energy expenditures so we could afford some heat and electricity. This left us penniless and destitute upon cheap, stained furniture with no place to go and nothing to do. Home sweet home with the happy American family.

I began to develop a warped sense of family frivolity. My bizarre sense of conjugal merriment included the covert tape recording of bitter arguments and photographing of kiddy spanking sessions. For awhile this sustained me but later proved unaffordable and obsessive.

The intense bitterness eventually gave way to a melancholic paralysis in which all, save the children, became walking-wounded somnambulists lingering in dusty hallways awaiting blessed bedtime.

The children always raged on. They didn't know any better. They thought that life was meant for play and their parent's meager proportions a sustenance to absorb. Sometimes on a Sunday morning we lay on our beds like helpless cripples. The little one set the door in motion. Slowly it swung shut bringing the darkness... Drowsily, we coaxed the little one to open our door for us so we could have more time to lay about and do nothing.

The growing hopelessness of our deepening emotional impoverishment sent our spirits in opposite directions. I grew morose and spent my spare hours in stupor. Soon I began to entertain odd fantasies. I imagined myself opening the window allowing 10,000 BTUs of expensive heat from rare and imported oils to escape for nothing. - There, my head poked into the crisp void. I, at last, found a refuge from the dank, cooped-up smell of mess and misery. I fired my rifle (in this fantasy) at the tires of slow moving cars. Soon my mental entertainments provoked sleep and either I would nap, or day-dream of sleep for months to come. Others in my homestead became brittle to the point of fragility.

My one hobby became the rational moment alone in which I would compose a succinct thought. An explanation and review for the distorted backward-flowing menu of American history I seemed to have stumbled into. But, my time was limited. Sonny-boy wanted to borrow my thought and turn it into a game or puzzle to be cut up into a hundred thousand pieces. Wifey wanted me to devote my spare time to relieving her from her sordid and repetitious misery.

We hollered and screamed to no avail. I took a lamp possessing a 40 watt bulb and with the tools of my avocation surreptitiously sought freedom in my closet. Then, elated with the tranquillity of aloneness, I sat upon dusty shoes extracting ideas from my brain to be written painfully into my journal. I stuffed tissues into my ears to deaden the sounds of conflict from the other rooms. Hiding, the once favored past-time of my long-ago youth! What delightful guilt I had, re-engaging in this diminished facet of my previous

personality.

But it didn't last. The cord and lamp-glow betrayed my presence. Decline bespoke of decline. I was rudely found out and berated for such in-adult conduct. I responded to this cruelty with spitting and thrashing behaviors, tearing my belt off to beat them back. I fought for the state of my art such as it was. Soon it would grow worse.

The house became plagued with dried spaghetti. Urine scum coated the toilet. Neighborhood vandals and our own children bashed our windows in with rocks. Stones littered our streets. Bills mounted. Cars died, refused to be fixed. Doctor's bills and dentist's bills went unpaid. Our mouths grew crummy with tartar; we tried scraping it off ourselves and chipped our teeth. Insurance premiums doubled. Gifts to people who expected them went ungifted.

We nailed boards, tar-paper and old paneling over our broken windows. Continually, our world (car-less and empty of activities) grew smaller and darker.

I was an Insecurity Inexecutive at the poverty line (which was by now a rising tide sinking many boats). Bubbling down below misery. Appliances worked with the diminishing returns of crazy probability. Our clothes washed dirty. Tolerance became a luxury of the past. We shrieked continuously at one another.

When Winthrop found me at his doorstep I was howling in confusion. *'Who the fuck was I? Why was I me? What happened? Who did what to whom? And, where do I go from here?'*

I was half-drunk and screaming. Somebody nearby complained. A drug addict, obviously because Winthrop's neighbors were of that type. I screamed "FUCK YOU!" till I trembled and lost my voice. Knowing greater insanity than their own they wisely deferred additional comment.

Winthrop made me some coffee. I threw it out the window and tramped about his cluttered shelter hating it. When one begins to hate everything the realization dawns that there is no refuge left. A dog in the same position would try to chew its own throat. I stomped about wishing Winthrop wasn't my friend so I could beat him up. Or maybe anger him enough to beat me up.

He tried to calm me but found that only goaded me into using more expletives with the word *'fuck'* in greater contexts. Then he ignored me. Shrewdly he pretended to read some dull, think-book and jot down a few notes on an old envelope.

I had a bottle of booze with me and began to drink with determination and gusto. I kicked my way outside in time to throw up in the snow. I even tried to cry thinking that a nice wallow in self-pity would do me good. But who would I blame my wretched existence upon beside myself? Certainly not Mommy and Daddy.

While laying on the frozen snow, the dying bull retching his last, thoughts and memories were joggled loose in my brain. What would SHE think of me now? What would anyone? My Air Force buddies would understand. We had long practiced this art form in the past.

I missed those guys -- felt unfortunate to have a head-dweller like Winthrop for my lone buddy. Yes, unlike Winthrop, they would understand. Probably, unlike Winthrop, each one of them was probably doing the exact same thing somewhere else on the planet (providing they were still on the planet).

Alone in the cold, barren night of America's moonscape it struck me... The lunacy of it all! The groaning melodrama, the vomiting upon dirty snow. Between gurgles of puke I began to laugh. This made my regurgitation sound even wilder making me laugh harder. Soon, I was laughing hysterically at myself and all the world. I was saved! (Again)

I slept peacefully on Winthrop's couch as he barricaded himself into the bedroom. I dreamt annoyingly of hands. Cool, gentle hands, obviously a woman's, messaging my head and neck. I was in a movie theater. The hands were soothing, tantalizing. Whose hands were they? I turned a bit to catch a peek.

'No turning around!'

Peeking wasn't allowed. She didn't want me to see her. To see how the years had changed her from my infatuated memories. Perhaps she was no longer so perfect. Even dreaming I felt guilty.

The next vision took me to a cool street shading out the sun with its pine needles. I was hiking through the woods which was pleasant enough. From the side of the trail came echoing whispers and the murmur of people-talk.

The sounds drifted in and out with the elusive breezes. I hunted through the brush keeping the best quiet I could as I eked out their source. Aha, my nose detected a non-forest odor.

A clearing. I peeked into it. A woman, eyes closed in naked ecstasy lay back in the middle of the cleared ground. Her face was smoothed in pleasure, her legs elevated slightly and parted. Her nipples were swollen and the hair of her pubis combed back from her center in thick black ringlets of curls. Her vagina was damp with passion. Underneath the folds of her eyelids her pupils danced. Lips parted over white teeth as she hissed in sparkling ease, "Oh yes, yes."

Suddenly, she was joined by a man, pale, bedroom white. Moving quickly he penetrated her with his erection and they attacked each other ferociously. She sought to swallow him to the buttocks in her space and coiled her legs around him so hard it produced a wet slapping noise in the air. They fucked mindlessly for several seconds before gasping to a conclusion.

Damn it, I thought, she's not with me! But what I said was, "Excuse me, just dreaming my way by." I was glad I could not see her full face for I didn't wish to recognize her. Did she still remember my voice?

I walked on. Further ahead, pieces of yellowed magazines such as, *'Exclusive Wealth'* blew past till caught by rusty piles of rotting junk. There in the woods lay abandoned refrigerators, their doors hanging open, huge sores of body rot eaten through them.

Smashed television sets, radio chassis... In the distance I spied obsolete computer terminals and anti-aircraft missiles wrapped in toilet tissue. (Yes, man was the creature that created garbage.)

Where is this place? I asked, Then I saw the old swings I had played on in the park during my childhood. The wooden seats themselves were gone, only the feeble and decaying brace remained. Even the old city was gone. I knew I had come home again by the paralysis of nostalgia and remorse that overcame me.

I leaned against the rust and whimpered, "America, what have you done?" And I heard my answer in the sound of the silent bombs falling and falling. Urban removal from the skies. Skies full of dark, ugly bombs. All falling silently like steel cartoons coming to crush the world in a torrent of idiocy. Perhaps, even, the world had been demolished sometime in the future past, for the evidence seemed to lurk in the wreckage... Or again, they could have been the wrong swings. How will we ever know?

THE NEW SCATOLOGICAL AUTHORITIES

Winthrop was overjoyed at my moving in. He expressed wonderment at my possessions especially my old car and my rifle. He was enthralled with my rifle.

"Where do the bullets fit in? How do you shoot it. Is it a machine gun? Did they carry this in airplanes? Boy, it's heavy! Did you bring this back from Vietnam? Do the Russians have these? Wow!"

He hefted the rifle this way and that aiming it incorrectly at hundreds of invading enemies. He made me nervous. Carefully, I borrowed this new toy from him and while pointing the little hole at the end of the barrel toward Hades, cleared the lever for the hundredth time to verify that there were no cartridges in the chamber or magazine. Then I returned the thing to Winthrop.

"What did you just do? Can I shoot it? Do I pull this trigger? How do you hit something? Did you shoot any communists with this?" He asked in rapid-fire succession.

"Enough!" I cried, "It's a lever action .30 caliber hunting rifle that has never been hunting never left my closet. It was purchased during a fit of insecurity as I awaited breakdown in world order, riot, anarchy and chaos. And you're making me nervous toting it about like that..."

"What do the bullets look like? Show me one, please. Please!" He begged.

"No. I don't have any. The thing has never been fired!"

"What good is a gun with no bullets?" Winthrop demanded. "Let's go buy some and shoot it!" He was filled with glee. Ready, almost, to enlist for Airborne or the Marines and parachute onto a land-mine with an idiotic smirk on his face, a small moment of joy before never being able to go to the bathroom again or do other things.

"Please..." He begged.

"All right." I took the rifle from his childish hands. I resurrected my Training Sergeant's voice: "This is not a 'GUN.' This is a weapon, A 30-30 lever operated, magazine-fed rifle. Holds 6 rounds in a tubular, internal magazine and one in the chamber..."

Winthrop loved it, He hungered for the discipline of martial glory, even if it meant a stray bullet through his cerebral cortex ending his fantasies for ever.

"First," I advised, "I have to have my old car worked on. Then we can get a beer and pick up a case of cartridges."

"Uh huh, Uh huh," Winthrop coaxed, rubbing his eager hands together.

Quickly, we decided not to fix my old car and chortled insanely over this decision. Then, with enough beers loaded into us we began rolling around in happy hysteria celebrating our enormity as failures upon the planet. Eventually we did make it to an out-of-town swamp where upon we expended 6 or 7 deadly projectiles into the wounded body of a poor tree.

The rifle had a serious kick to it and the shots were ungodly loud, as if metal bongers were cracked upon our heads. Ears ringing from the ordeal and afraid of arrest by the dutiful authorities we scurried toward the road.

Unfortunately we got lost in a dense thorn thicket, Winthrop panicked, "Help! Save us!" He screamed.

I could envision his court martial for cowardice in peace-time and his re-assignment from the Rangers to the Motor Pool where he would ruin the transmissions of countless vehicles. Perhaps Richard Nixon did know what he was doing when, long ago, he avoided drafting Winthrop.

"Winthrop, we are no farther than fifty feet from the road," I counseled.

"And we'll die here! Why did I ever let you talk me into coming to this place?" He moaned.

Within minutes we were saved and in my falling-apart car chugging along the back roads toward the thin veneer of civilization. My absurd rifle was locked securely in the trunk.

Winthrop asked me questions on Vietnam. Realizing the potential awfulness of the experience made him regret that he missed it. I fed him out one slim story of a zany 18 year old kid who tried to show off before me and a buddy of mine by throwing a hand grenade at some Vietnamese civilians in a crude boat on the Danang Bay. He was unsuccessful in blowing them up but did produce a nice spout of water near their dug-out. Then, the fellow carefully inspected the surface of the water near HIS boat (Yes, we were visiting a boat, an ARMY boat!), He claimed to be looking for the bodies of enemy frogmen. Nothing surfaced and this seemed to satisfy him. I wonder if he ever blew himself up, or sank his own boat?

"Wow." Winthrop said in fascination with the story, "No limitations or inhibitions concerning the use of force. The total celebration of power and ruthlessness."

"And the most powerful and ruthless did win." I commented in a historical perspective.

"Wow," Winthrop considered the prospect.

"And soon we'll probably be seeing more of it," I said, wondering what ever became of Camelot.

"When? Where?" He asked.

"You'll see. You just wait," I warned. This was to be the last lucid and sensible comment I would make the entire evening and long into the next day.

When we reached civilization we knew its sign posts because it read, 'Bar'. Bar was a good place to put our perspectives in order, to discuss for the umpteenth time the progression of time and wild swing in values during the last ten years.

Instead, we became verbosely intoxicated... --It was at that point we discovered the greatest essence of life on our planet: --An obscene sounding word I had never before used in ordinary conversation smegma, a legendary, vile substance that could accumulate under the uncircumcised foreskin of the penis.

"Smegma to you too!"

We laughed like assholes.

"Is it a Polish name?"

"You could use it in your writing," Winthrop suggested.

"Certainly. Invent a character named Dick Smegma."

"Richard Smegma."

"Nickname 'Cocky' --Cocky Smegma."

We reeled with mirth having once again established our affinity for uncompromised lunacy. I purchased and smoked a cigar and gave Winthrop the plastic container tube so he could wave it from his nose.

Soon, we sang songs in which every 5th word was smegma. Struggling for sobriety I philosophized that words such as '*fuck*' and '*shit*' are about as over used and passionless as '*doody*' (duty) and '*sissy*.' We need new obscenities! Smegma to you!"

"You look like smegma!"

We drank more, and then still more. Then we visited a go-go bar in search of our old friend decadence; smegma-decadence.

"You hear of megaton? Wait, till the smegmaton bomb hits -- give every body cancer of the penis or cervix in ten seconds!"

"Think I can find an opening in the paper for a smegmalogist? Smegmalogist wanted: 2-3

years experience with all types of smegma. Must have own car."

"--Willing to relocate to Smegma, Arizona."

We laughed ourselves sick. Then we ordered shots of whiskey to drink with our beer.

"Drink like men!"

"Here's smegma in your eye," we toasted with glasses upraised.

I began a new joke in a serious, studious tone: "Mr. Jones - instead of putting all your investment dollars into one or two bonds -diversify. Buy a Smegma Unit Investment Trust made of smegma from all - over - the - world! High YIELD Smegma!"

We were mad at this point; dogs who had rabies. "Hee, hee, hee..." What uninhibited fun.

Around my head swirled the denizens of decadence. Music, a mish-mash of indistinguishable words accompanied by a concoction of throbbing loudness, blasted through the night. The songs that punctuated our time-space were suggestive of masturbation and fornication. The dancers responded with limb-shaking and ass-twitching. They slapped the cheeks of their buttocks and made facial parodies that I found embarrassing. They were all stars, those dancers, for the twenty minutes of their exposure. Then they would frequent the big tippers of the bar or their gangster boyfriends. Sometimes they retreated into laconic shells and sipped drinks in quiet with a great superiority swelling their heads. On the stage before us a fat-assed dancer alternated with a 'space-cadet' on this awesome night.

Space-cadet looked at me from between her legs to see if I were looking at her. Yes, we were there to peruse the vagina-commodity. Fortunately, I had smegma-humor to fall back on.

Hookers, whores and other strange women came and went with no mention of Michelangelo. They sought refuge from the cold streets and unlike me had plenty of money to spend an elaborate and expensive beverages. The most outlandish looking one I claimed to Winthrop as my virgin, kid-sister. We picked out wives for each other from among the stars and starlets who sold their bodies for power.

"That's the one for you, Winthrop," I pointed out some big dude of a female with an Afro-Insane hairdo, ersatz fur coat and high-heeled boots. Weimar Berlin was painted on her face in crimson colors. She smiled the smile of sweet Jesus and self-love. She was probably zipping with drugs.

"Yee gods, I bet you she'd make someone real miserable," Winthrop said.

"It could be you. Marry her Winthrop."

"She could kick my ass."

"All the more reason... --Come-on, I'll get her name and phone number. And her price."

"Sit down." He held me back knowing that I would do it too. Winthrop shamed easily when I set out to make fools of us. He didn't relish it as much as I.

"You could pay her every time you wanted to have sex with her. It'll be a perfect marriage," I said.

Winthrop had matured too much to consider the prospect. Either that or he detested big women. I didn't. I considered the prospect for myself. How unique a proposition to be married to the other end of the spectrum! I wouldn't have ordinary misery to torment me. The kind that bitters the typical marriage between people of a similar cultural background. I would have pure madness to contend with and no guide-lines for appropriate behavior. Anything at all could be expected! Universal laws could be stood on their heads! Something inside me clamored for such a fantasy. Winthrop rescued me with some smegma humor. Soon we were planning to circulate the container tube from my former cigar to all the men along the bar. Pass it covertly from man to man with a cryptic instruction to our fellow bar-travelers: *'Deposit a drop of smegma and hand it to the next guy.'*

"It's for research!" Winthrop shouted in an outburst of our crazy glee. The whores escaped our preposterous proposals. Lucky them.

Bull Horn Voice: "Attention! Attention! Your house is surrounded. This is the Smegma Police. Turn in your smegma, --For Military research! Turn in your smegma before we open fire." And then there was the Federal Bureau of Smegma Standards. Lucky, lucky them.

The next day I discovered that a cyclical state of vomiting engaged in approximately every thirty minutes during acute hangover had near hallucinogenic qualities.

INCENTIVE

During the next few days Winthrop retreated into the shell of himself. He spoke little, if at all. Work on his dissertation halted.

"I need incentive to work," he said.

"Give a man a dime-a-day," I said, "and he'll toil 12 hours in the sun like a fierce machine. Give a man a hundred dollars (tax-free) an hour and he'll sip iced-tea and complain," I lectured Winthrop, as his eyes glazed over.

"The man working for a dime was working for survival. The man *working* for \$ 7,000 a week was angling for a second home or dues to a fourth country club." Mostly Bull understood that people worked harder for less and when under-the-gun. That's why they rarely selected a new hire who wasn't over-extended by mortgage payments and burdened by a non-working wife expecting the birth of a second child at any moment. Mostly Bull understood incentive.

Why else would they constantly revise upwards the minimal production level for all the old hands; to fall below those goal levels was to face termination. All the dead slaves of

Rome understood incentive.

DREAMS AGAIN

Out of the unexplainable void I found myself ascending the escalator to the board-room (sales office) at Mostly Bull. The ascent was conducted in near darkness. Spare lighting cast off by emergency battery lamps assured me that the experience must have been dreamt up. Mostly Bull did not have emergency lighting. It was electric power for the teletypes that they cared about most, so orders could be forwarded to higher headquarters. The telephones bringing the orders into the office operated on their own circuits. Mostly Bull felt that if orders could not be transmitted then the entire crew at the branch office, hitters, go-fors and clients alike could all stumble off the precipice into Hell itself, dammed if they'd pay for the superfluous lighting to do it by. Once the point of no return was reached on the proportion of Numbers produced to Numbers disbursed the phase of Expendability was reached (called 'INGO').

No, the emergency lighting had not been at Mostly Bull but HAD been in the Radar Operations room on top of Monkey Mountain in Vietnam. (In case of enemy attack in which a bomb would blow up our generator we could then see our way clearly to the exits so we could be shot as we left the building.) The Military never had a ratio of return on investment. They were always glad to spend any amount at all to achieve what ever inflated estimates of Numbers they deemed worthy (called 'OUTGO,'). But the confusion of time with place was a perfect example of how different genres of dreams get mixed up forming entirely new subconscious classifications. For more on the particulars of this genre consult Winthrop's genus on the 'Militarization of Corporate Life' ie, attitude, discipline, authority structures, expendability and Numbers-projection (ingo and outgo).

The escalator ride seemed to go on and on. Up and up I went to the tippy top of the Tower of Babel. (How I myself longed for a visit to Ur of the Chaldees -- what decadence they must have had in their idolatrous blossom. Did they know that ultimately they would have OPEC?

At the upper landing there was no sales office only utter darkness. Yet, I sensed that someone lurked in that stygian fog. A slight, bluish light sprung down upon a darkened figure seated thirty feet from me.

"I am the True Conservative," the figure told me.

I became excited by the opportunity. Oh boy, exclusive wealth! "What do I have to do?" I asked.

"Change your attitudes, Believe," He coaxed, authoritatively.

"*'Learn to like you'?*" I baited from someone else's book.

Unexpectedly, he became arrogantly incensed. "I couldn't give a damn less if you like me or like anybody other than yourself."

"What if I don't like myself?" I asked.

"Then, you're hopeless."

I became elated. "I knew it was hopeless!" I said joyously.

Could this be God? I hoped not.

During our debate (*this must have been my turn as the wrestler Jacob*) he asked what I saw in Man's universe.

"I see growth and collapse, I see a big question mark," I replied.

"But, no FAIR?"

"Man should make the FAIRNESS!" I shouted.

"How noble," he laughed, "and foolish."

Commenting on the recent malaise, he laughed, "The AVERAGE person thought he could live in the lap of luxury, like a king. Never ending affluence, a home, two cars, vacations abroad. THAT inflated credit and money out of all propitious proportion. If the average man was meant to be better-than-average he wouldn't be average now would he? That's the trouble with a little democracy it sometimes falls into the wrong hands."

"Weak hands!" I taunted.

He chuckled. "No sense in getting carried away. It all gets straightened out. Small speculators take their much needed bath, playing with things too big for them to understand. Government hand-outs and cheap money end as fiscal prudence and monetary stringency re-appear leading to the liquidation of weak industries, foolish inventories and haughty labor. The latter gets rid of the notion that labor should receive exorbitant wages for work that anyone would clamor for at half the wage once there is no work --and no schemes of 'insurance' or incentives-not-to-work. No work, no food!"

"Except for them who don't have to work," I said.

"Precisely. You see, young fellow, some people are simply better than others. Radicals are always braying over how unfair it is that money has accumulated in the hands of certain individuals that derive power from that money. I maintain that this is perfectly natural. Abolish this accumulation and distribute this money evenly to the entire population and, I wager, it will re-accumulate into piles again -- in six months time!"

"But will they be the same piles in the same hands? Or will I be Mr. Big and you - nobody?" I shot back.

He paused. "I certainly wouldn't want to find out," he chuckled.

"But, what you forget," I continued, "is that EVENTUALLY them that don't have, TAKES. And that explains all those schemes to placate the have-nots with expensive *giveaways*. When they takes -- they takes from YOU and other haves. Actions have

reactions.

I harangued about disproven concepts getting repeated in endless expediency hence giving the notion that history repeats itself, as human nature (that breeding ground of greed & panic, light & darkness) continues its pursuit of similar mistakes. Over and over through the course of each millennium.

I approached the desk and peered through the blue light. "Who should I believe I've met here?" I asked the impenetrable shadows. No reply was made.

Grinning loon-like I sat in the chair myself. "Numbers!" I bellowed... "Hey! I have a question: if fiscal prudence and monetary stringency are so great, how come every time they are imposed Main Street gets boarded up and Wall Street become destitute?" I asked. The blue light above flicked out. I had to grope through the darkness on my hands and knees to find the escalator. The blackness was so pervasive it made me dizzy.

I had more sayings to share: *'I am a conservative because I realize that good and evil exist (though both come from man).'* Or -- *'I am a liberal for when I sing of purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain I do not see any of that being the property of Mr. Big.'* But nobody was listening.

From out of the doldrums of my empty-day existence...

FANTASY ATTACK

Perhaps it is some vastly more influential (than I) conservative woman that I need to loose my wiles upon. Some cool, fashionable crimson-tongued thing spawned in money and schooled expensively. The Cuntlery of the Aristocracy! Vagina to governors, bankers and oligopolists. Daughter of scions (not Zion!).

Oh, Daughter of Scion where art thou, with thine pearls, gold and diamonds, with furs of ermine, mink, fox and cheetah?

I would have to be certain that she had the sharpest of manner. Almost a PhD in Social Darwinism, a certificate of eligibility into the DAR and Moral Majority. Of olden Episcopal indoctrination and raised on estates in Maryland (or Virginia) and ranches in California.

Oh boy, It gets better. I would accidentally gain introduction to her as Lawrence Gill, great-great-great grandson of Billionaires (He who hath never labored), with a PhD in Superiority, a Masters in Snide-Eliteness and a Bachelors in Money all from the exclusive McKinley-Coolidge Institute. (Harvard is considered foreign by true constipators.)

I would start my conversation with a clever witticism complaining about that 'liberal' who used to be in the White House and make an anti-Semitic joke of his name, 'Reaganfelt.'

Then she would acknowledge me as one of her own kind and would accept an invitation to visit my residence (Winthrop would be out)...

Enter *Femme Dilettante*:

"My God, you don't live HERE! In this awful neighborhood? What a dump!" She exclaimed in disgust recoiling in my doorway.

"Shhh," I came close to her in the mysterious confines of the hallway. "I've infiltrated the socialist wing of the Democratic Party. This place is only a subterfuge It was decorated by Professor Winthrop (acceptable name only because they don't know him) of the Right America Organization or Rao (pronounced rau) of which I am a sub-unit-cell leader. I'm here to do research on the deterioration of I.Q.s among slum-dwelling ethnics and racials. To prove for all time that Indolence breeds the disease of contempt for right thinking and good American values."

She warmed a bit. "The name on the door said J'illhensky?" (Mispronunciation - *Twit!*)

I clicked my heels to attention and bowed, "I am Lawrenovich Stefanovich Gillhensky grandson of Count Gillhensky, great-great to the 20th great grandnephew of Helen Gillhensky Dutchess of Lithuania and mother to Ivan IV (the terrible) first true King of Russia. We are of the Whites!" My eyes softened, "We tried, my family that to save the Czar (tsar), poor Nicki." A tear watered my cheek. Then my resolve grew. "We killed a lot of Reds after that, and other scum! America has given me an opportunity of great importance! Only in America could I carry out my mission! (to be a lunatic.)"

"Oh you poor man." We fell into each others arms and I kissed her pear-shaped diamond necklace feeling its coldness against my teeth.

I broke our embrace to put some music on (In this fantasy we had electricity and a phonograph). I selected a recording accomplished by Black artists.

"Listen to this vile decadence!" I said. "Come, let us mock this shit!" I began a foolish, mad dance jumping on chairs and stamping my feet idiotically upon the floor as I slobbered my tongue in a caricature of 'Reefer Madness.'

She joined me and we danced together soon getting very funky. Elitists always have the right to do what they disagree with, that has long been a privilege of the Aristocracy.

Soon, she succumbed to my couch, raised her designer dress, denuded her crotch from the sheer piece of silk in place there and spread her legs for me to perform a despicable act upon her sex parts. I imagined her vagina to be ice-cold and tasteless. I prepared to chip a tooth on the diamond stud of her clitoris. Instead, it tasted bitterly like pussy and she wailed like a maniac as I ravished here.

My fury rose, my hostility exploded. I erected and fornicated with her. After a few minutes of violent and torturous intercourse I was finished. She saw in my eyes the distance and displeasure.

"You are a Democrat, and you have no money," she announced. How utterly perceptive. I admitted to being infected with Syphilis and Herpes II both caught from a variety of unclean Black and Hispanic prostitutes from my neighborhood. I also voiced an interest

in becoming either a Chassidic Rabbi or a Marxist revolutionary, or maybe do both using one as a front for the other.

She was unmoved by my covert agenda. My spirit withered. I had known one other woman I had made an enemy of, yet could not defeat. She had been a doctrinaire leftist of some vague, but determined orientation. I had no subterfuge to fight her from. Moderation makes such poor material for sloganeering. It is difficult to kill for the Golden Rule or make dialectic out of Moses or Mill or Hubert Humphrey. All I could do was admit to having once been a militant of the Great Society, of having been beaten in Vietnam and dismayed at the failure of everything since. Against opposite extremes the only base I had from which to fight was my own unacceptability.

She (the Rich one) said nothing. Dressed quietly. Put the diamonds back in place. Got her bag, the brooch on it alone was worth more money than I had ever seen. In parting she touched me with a soft, warm hand.

"It was really good, darling. See you again, okay." She smiled, kissed my cheek and left.

My cheek burned. For a moment I smiled like a foolish clown, then twiddled my thumbs. The anger and fury came. I needed power. Soon, I sat upon the cot working the lever on my unloaded rifle. I sighted upon my enemies popping out of the forests on the wall and blew them to kingdom-come. I had fallen prey to those who would use me -- BLAM!

But then again, we could make interesting music together, she and I. I could be Monty Python to her Ayn Rand.

*

Aware of how my own fantasies turned against me while in a state of economic limbo, I wracked my brain trying to think of some business that required no capital and no outside help that Winthrop and I could profit at. *'Itinerant jokesters'* was all I could think of. Even ditch-digging required expenditures for shovels. Why would anyone hire two buffoon ditch-diggers like Winthrop and I? Especially Winthrop with his scholarly pale and delicate sensitivities. For what purpose would we dig ditches?

"Honest labor for five dollars-an-hour!" I hollered for, in a twelve-dollar-an-hour world.

There seemed to be little hope. If only Winthrop and I had studied tax-law we could then burrow our way into some corporate-audit-litigation contrivance and fill our pockets with loot such as the like we'd never seen before. The cost of which, along with the Prime, or interest rate banks charge their next-to-the-worst customers, gets passed along to dopes like me with every can of lima beans.

ENTERTAINING IN

Winthrop had been falling in love with the breezy blonde models in an old JC Penney catalogue when the mail arrived. It was for him since it was marked *'occupant.'*

Winthrop was so excited to receive mail that one would think he had gotten an offer to film a major motion picture based upon his obscure and wordy dissertation. His mail

turned out to be a bulletin of adult education courses.

His expression turned more dour as he flipped through course descriptions promising entry into the exciting world of data entry, advanced typing, bookkeeping, TV set repair, auto mechanics for women etc.

"Look at all this shit," he mumbled.

I looked. "Maybe we should take a few of these courses so we could learn to do something useful," I joked.

"There aren't any jobs around here anyway, even if you could do this kind-of-stuff."

"I know, That's why they have so many instructors available," I observed.

"Why don't they offer any practical courses for the coming dark days of War, Anarchy and Depression?" He questioned.

"You're right, like -- '*Self actualizing your deep misery*,' I offered.

"Or, '*Rat farming for fun and profit*'?"

"Yeah! How-to training is in; *How to get roaring drunk on \$2.00.*"

"Wine making!" Winthrop conceived brilliantly.

Then we turned to the military survivalist genre. "Basic Commando Operations for Women!"

"Use of Explosives I -- the student will learn the basic techniques to blow up bridges and power installations. A must for both militant leftists and virulent anti-Communists."

I turned toward the practical, having defeatism in mind: "'How to get shot by a machine-gun. Easy one session course that will enable former members of the middle-class to gallantly stand for execution by firing squad."

Winthrop was enthused. "A whole new career for us in education is born!" He exclaimed.

"Hooray! Except that no body has the money to pay us for their lessons. And I know very little about demolitions."

His enthusiasm fled. Reluctantly he drifted back to his JC Penney catalogue.

"I love this one," he mused, pointing to a child like, demi-adult, with a blond pony-tail.

"I don't blame you. This catalogue is a few years old. She probably has developed some wrinkles and sags since this photo session." I said, heartlessly.

Winthrop recoiled from the page in horror. "My God, No!"

"We all age," I philosophized.

Winthrop rose and ran to the bathroom. Silently, I followed. There with flashlight and mirror he inspected his hairline.

"It's receding!" He shouted frightfully. "I'm aging... I'm dying!" He wailed, "There were more hairs per square inch last week! In one week... Oh, no." He collapsed to the floor in tears. "I'm dying."

"Everybody dies," I counseled wisely.

Disturbed and unhappy, Winthrop ran to the bedroom and bolted the door shut.

"I'm gonna shoot myself!" He yelled out to me.

"That won't stop you from dying!"

"I know," came the muffled reply.

"Don't use my rifle without my permission," I warned,

"O.K."

Then I heard the sound of his sobs.

"Winthrop, what's wrong? You were never very good looking anyway, why worry about your appearance?"

"Now I'll look old and uglier. Beautiful women will avoid me," he answered.

"They avoid you now."

"But at least I could pretend they would change their mind. Now I can't even pretend. Besides, I always wanted to be a movie star. All I could play now would be character roles of middle-aged fools."

"You're wrong, Winthrop. The median age of the population has grown older. Soon, almost everyone will be balding or gray -- and they don't make many movies anyway. When they do, maybe they'll have to put guys like you and me in them!"

"I want to be a movie star NOW!" He demanded.

"You will be!" I exclaimed, "We'll sell your useless dissertation for scrap and buy a 2nd hand camera. We'll make movies!"

"Yeah? Really?"

"Yes!"

"But, NOT my dissertation..."

"Listen, what do you want; to be known as a genius for the next twenty centuries by future scholars, or be the star of a cheap cinema?" I asked.

"Can I have women in the cinema with me?"

I gave up. "Winthrop, come out of there!" Suddenly I was inspired by Providence. "Winthrop, cheer up!" I cried, "With things this bad we're bound to get into a war. We could get jobs in a defense plant."

I always fancied a benign interest in metallurgy, "We'll learn to fashion commando knives!" I exclaimed, "And come home with our under-shorts full of metal filings. Soon we could get scrotal cancer - won't that be fun?"

I heard Winthrop retch from inside the bedroom. "Oh stop blubbering. Things will get even worse before they improve!"

"I just hate getting older, I'm miserable enough the way I am -- but I can HOPE things get better," he said.

I sat down outside his door. It made me fitfully glad that he shared my sentiments exactly.

Time passed. I sat. Winthrop sat. Time to work with. He thought. I thought... America was on my mind. I thought of a poem. "Winthrop, listen to this: It's called, '*STATUE OF DISCIPLINE.*'"

"She drops her guarded stanchion
offering foul smelling gardenias--
oysters of the sea.
Fools beggar to eat of this
on their knees, praying...
they eat with their faces;

--Boy, she has a lot of money to spend!" (Remember her?)

Winthrop liked my ditty. He was enticed out of his room by it insisting that he wished to re-read it and study it. He insisted that there was a mysterious key to our wretched situation inside my poem. I believed him to be crazy and offered him wine to drink.

Winthrop and I trooped the dark halls of his bungalow ranting and raving. We were both so lonely our souls were sick. Yet, we were overcome by our obsessions of cynical truth that existentialized us from nearly everyone else. We drank wine from the bottle and slobbered our spittle into simplistic belches of conversations that were actually ideological rhetoric and nonsense we could both agree with.

The Laissez Faire-Constipation Party was still in Washington making things uncomfortable for anyone who was not their friend. Their friends were generally old, white men who were self-made in the 1940's and 50,'s when it was easier to get self-made. They owned horses, cows and oil wells. Everyone else sat around waiting for a

non-inflationary miracle. Even Sexual-Finance was in big trouble. I voiced my concern of these things. I continued to marvel upon the weird path History and I had shared together through affluence, Vietnam, the Youthful-Confusion Movement, decline and expensive scarcity. The call for Numbers still peeped in my brain. Older, but little wiser I seemed to have come to the same spot I began; leaning against a wall while trying to stay drunk without barfing all over myself.

What miracles had I discovered? I considered writing a book about a Jack Kerouac character taking a ride along the sharp curves of the Kondratieff cycle -- all done in fantasy flashbacks beforeeee expiring in his bathroom ala Lenny Bruce. I would call it - *'On The Commode.'*

Yes, as my character performed his final duty (doody) he would experience the bond market crashes of the early 1980's, masturbate to marijuana orgasms, vote for Lyndon Johnson, get stoned in I Corps, rejoice to Watergate drama on TV, watch porno movies on video cassettes and gamble away his money in state lotteries and legal casinos. Winthrop and I would most likely opt to re-explore the Youth Generation of the late 1960's before it sold out (I sold out) and went bankrupt in a decadence-disaster, losing it's way, finally, in want for middle-income self-indulgence.

I tried to communicate all this to Winthrop in 2 1/2 words and a belch. Winthrop knew it already. I had told him of it a thousand times. Either that or he'd never know it, I could never be sure.

Winnie drank wine sloppily, splashing it all over his shirt. There was an idea he wished to communicate to me. Something of unique, yet mysterious, significance. A friend, yet an enemy. An opposite, yet an attraction. "Wimen (women)."

Yes, we both agreed. We would have liked to be kings and fill the room, or rather the hallway, with the magic structures of our sexual yearning.

Women. Women of almost every conceivable complexion and proportion. Not models from 'Vogue' or -'Playboy,' just women. Real women. White women, Black women, Hispanic women, Oriental women... -- the strength and Virtue of America (or so de Tocqueville claimed). Brunettes, blondes, in-betweens, young ones, not-so-young ones. All of them. And with clothes on! (To start with.)

Buttock and thigh, smile and wink, hair and breast, flowed at us from the crevices of our thin minds. We stood amid great cheers and harrumphs. Emboldened we marched in intoxicated step to our wild, aromatic music.

Shouting and laughing we swung our bottles and paraded up and down the dim hallway. Somewhere out in the world, what we wanted was there, wanting us. The trick was to find it.

Trembling with eagerness we cooked our ardor and opened the front door. Crawling on our bellies we exposed ourselves to the early night air. It stung like needles but bathed our weary heads with a fresh scent of oxygenated frost. (Factories nearby had either closed or the wind was blowing the other way.)

What clean coolness. We panted and shivered in it. Above, the stars shone in lonely advertisements for something so large everybody put together couldn't figure it out. Warm lights glimmered from houses here and there. Yes, our souls existed in the universe! Everything became a possibility.

Winthrop lay on his back to see the sky. I raised my head to sit on its chin as I surveyed the world. Glory of glories I felt I could really do it.

"Let's go do it. Let's go," I urged Winthrop.

"What?" He croaked.

"Anything, everything. Find women. Get rich and famous. Discover things. Live! Live like men. Do what ever it is we can think of. Let's go do it."

Thinks clicked together, boozily, in my brain. There were 'Thems' out there and me 'here.' Thems that had, had offered me a poor deal, make money for them and they'd let me survive.

In a larger sense I found myself among 'thems-that-didn't-have -- cruising aimlessly in dark circles, Winthrop at my side -- two medium, small fish looking for smaller, dumber fish... Fuck the fish. People -- people -- Thems-that-had. I surveyed their agents quickly in mental review. Plutus, my asshole boss at Mostly Bull, General Senility of the Air Force-Vietnam debacle. Thems-that-had were NOT blessed with an inordinate amount of brain neuro-resources. Way back to Aristophanes and the Bible they realized that wealth accumulated blindly, as if by chance. Right place, right time, connivance, general prosperity who-you-knew, on-the-feed, serendipity! *'My God!'* (terrible Aha experience). It should be ME making money from THEM! The me-them relationship unlike the I thou should be reversed. I tried to verbalize this, but brain-mouth synchronization faltered.

"Lets go do it," I said, again.

Winthrop hesitated. The bleary drunkenness of him was rolling and swaying under the heavens.

"We can do it!" I shouted, The world awaited us. I prepared for a great leap forward.

Winthrop stiffened with sudden complexity. Racing and stumbling he raged down the hall to the toilet where he seized the commode violently and spat the contents of his guts out in two or three great wrenching gasps.

I lay back to watch the stars. I smiled. Winthrop continued his vomiting, his spewing forth of all his essence, forgetting his facts and figures, his cravings and wants. The sum total of him as it existed at that moment was rushing out to be rid of the rest of him. Something was ending.

Maybe tomorrow night I could try again, I tried to convince myself. But for the longest time I lay there looking up and marveling at all the things that could have been.

EVERYMAN GETS WHAT HE WANTS...

Winthrop, convinced that brilliance had some commercial value, had carefully constructed a resume which delineated his. He was willing to work for \$ 12,000 per year in a 40,000 dollar-per-year world! (I had told him that his stated salary-requirement had been a mistake, If he had demanded an outrageous \$ 150,000 maybe he would have been hired.) He even claimed he was willing to *work*.

"Thems that works the least hardest makes the most. People who DO Numbers are not sweating bullets in a torrid furnace room. And them who LOOK at the Numbers make even more. Why should anyone WANT to work? What's in it for them? And who would really believe you knew *anything*, because on your resume you don't say that you know *anyone*. Obviously you can't be an *expert*."

Winthrop wondered, "What about the REAL experts, economists, academicians?" Winthrop defended, sticking up for colleagues who would not sit in the same room with him.

They all grub for grants and consulting work from huge Mr. Bigs. They say what they think Mr. Big wants said -- SALESMEN that's all!"

"I have been rooked!" He exclaimed.

"There's another part of Gillhensky's Law I never mentioned. We know that '*thems that needs don't gets because them that don't needs are getting what is to be got.*' But, what you didn't realize is all rules have contradictions and exceptions, this is certainly one of them..."

"Is it good -- for me?"

"No, But here it is anyway: *Every-man (person) gets what he wants...*"

"What! Untrue! Nonsense!" Winthrop shouted.

I calmed him down. "Think a minute. What did you always want for yourself?" I asked.

"Oh... fame and riches. Sex with gorgeous women."

"Are you sure?" I questioned. "When you were a college student did you spend all your spare time making friends with kids from rich and influential families? Did you wrangle invitations to every good party? Did you take up guitar playing? Proposition attractive females?"

"No, the Professor and ex-student faltered. "I thought that would all come later."

"When?" I pressed.

"After I was rich and famous," he admitted.

"And how were you going to get rich and famous?" I asked.

He thought. "By being brilliant?" He questioned himself.

"What did you really do in college?"

"Go to the library and read interesting books," he said truthfully.

"What do you do now?" I asked.

"Go to the library, check-out interesting books and make notes for my lengthy dissertation."

"See."

"But... but..." Winthrop began blubbering. "It's not what I really want for ever and ever."

Everyman gets what he wants *after he no longer wants it.*" "Take me, for instance. Remember Tatz's book?"

"No! Yeah..." He sulked (another sore spot).

"Every ten years I seem to find out I've been practicing for the wrong ordeal -- and getting it only to find it was an illusion I got!"

Winthrop sniveled.

"This is a global rule, Winthrop. It happens to everyone. How many people have rooted for war and new-leadership only to later curse horror and tyranny? The day when the captains and titans of industry and commerce finally achieve no more government interference will be the same day they scream for it. And how many romantic infatuations turned into dreadful marriages after them who wanted it, got it?"

"People are supposed to be miserable," I advised. After all, everything that civilization has ever achieved was always to alleviate some misery at the cost of creating some new misery. Isn't that what economics is all about, the management of misery? (And war the management of horror).

THE BULLSHIT DECADE (or Generation)

Everything had grown. Interest rates had sextupled, population quintupled. Too many 'experts' ran around without control. Generals, cloaked in the aurora of anti-Communist respectability began marching our own troops ("Numbers!") up to nuclear detonations just to see what would happen, our espionage entity had carelessly fooled with hallucinogenic drugs. We had begun an era of high technology coupled to low efficiency and poor reliability.

Abraham might have been rich in cattle, silver and gold and commanded the respect of his host. But the new breed of Mr. Bigs (an over abundance of Mr. Bigs) were rich in tons of paper that said they owned things they had never seen and couldn't understand.

Such insanity took the peculiar institution of the brokerage business where those so inclined could buy shares or bonds, and mass-merchandised it into the glut of the Insecurity/Sexual Finance Industry -- invading everybody's' homes to sell the

abstractions of its products, all rooted in overly optimistic presumptions of greed. Equity and debt in 57 different flavors.

This had been America: Too much Vietnam, too much scandal, too much crime, too much OPEC, too much marketing flim-flam (sell, sell, sell) too much drug use, too much decadence, too much lying (obfuscation), too much conniving, too much cost for too little product, too much expense to keep even, too much cancer/toxic-danger hazard, too much debt, too much Bullshit, too much failure. TOO MUCH!

The old myths had failed. We began to perceive our chief executives as one crook or fool after another and our institutions as unresponsive obstacles. Who could one trust or believe in? Where was God or the little fellows from outer space? Would we blunder into a nuclear war? Would women clone themselves and do away with men?

All about, the only thing people came to realize was the '*Law of Premium Bill*' anyway *you look at it -- you lose.*'

Winthrop wanted to know what had to be done, to order a 'better world.'

"They must have something good to believe in," I replied. "Everyone needs a set of illusions to live by."

"Such as?"

"I dunno... --Me. Young Ski. Or Young Ski-ism."

Winthrop would humor me. "What is the essence of the Young Ski movement?"

He had me on the spot, "What is my message, you mean?"

I panicked. Perhaps I had gotten ahead of myself.

"Maybe... --It's my turn... (?)"

MURDER ON THE OCCIDENTAL-ORIENTAL EXPRESS

On an infrequent outing, with my old car in a rare (running) mood Winthrop and I hit traffic. Sun spots or something supernatural must have interfered with people's behaviors. Erratic and aggressive drivers changed slow lanes for slower and back again.

Ahead where the highway widened into four lanes we met traffic grid-lock. Somewhere in the mythical distance an old truck carrying something dangerous had tipped over and closed a bridge-exit ramp. Because of this a million cars were stuck in place. I was very glad of not having diarrhea. (*Help! I've got diarrhea!*)

I quipped that 'there's nothing better that I like doing. Spending time, effort and money to go nowhere. Sounds like my life story.'

But it got worse. *CLUNK!* A rear-ender. A case for Billy Dirko. Only a Beefy fellow with greasy hair decided to administer some physical punishment to the older man who hit them. It was over quickly. Further catastrophe was avoided by Beefy's beer-guzzling car-

mates. I almost intruded, but was saved from myself by the short timeliness of the event.

"Teenager-ism. Too much middle-aged sturm and drang," I diagnosed. But more seriously considered it another sign of the Vietnamization of America. It was my frame of reference, anyway, brought to mind by something I had witnessed on the road to Danang. *Vietnamization* of the Vietnam war had been our exit routine. It was Richard Nixon's way of letting the South Vietnamese drop bombs on the enemy (or anywhere).

I was still sour from *that* era's 'experts.' Monetary Aggregates' and 'Investment Capital' get mixed up with 'Tactical Nuclear Deployments' and 'Total War Concepts.' Soon these interchangeable experts are naked in their new religion and smeared in blue paint. Then the chant begins, "*NUMBERS!*"

"*NUMBERS!* Boners beat the table, "*NUMBERS!*"

"*MORE NUMBERS! -KILL! KILL! KILL!*"

Winthrop surmised my mood. He surmised the mood of the inhabitants of our vast, temporary parking lot.

"Why don't you turn into Young Ski and entertain everybody," Winthrop advised.

I only had the diarrhea joke. Smegma humor was not to be revitalized.

CONJURING MY NIGHT'S DREAMS

Who is in that dark room? A whimper. I hear a woman's cry. I enter cautiously for I feel danger.

She cries and shudders. Torn clothing clutched to her pubis to hide her shame. Her flesh is scratched and raw in a dozen places. She has been brutally raped a hundred times by the most potent and the most ruthless. -- Such a long journey. So much empty sea. *Water, water every where ...* drops of semen on her legs.

"America is that you?" I ask.

Her dark hair shorn above her neck, her face tilts up... The eyes so brown, almond brown flooded with God's curse upon the Earth. The face -- so foreign, yet so known. She sobs for father, mother, sons and daughters brothers and sisters all murdered all destroyed. Her naked breasts quiver in hardened rage. They shake for she has no milk to offer.

"America?" I ask.

"No Bic (don't understand)," she manages, harshly.

She sees me but I mean nothing to her.

"America," I go to hold her, comfort her...

"Mau (move, go away)!" She cowers from me, resents me.

"Who did this to you?" I ask.

The petite Oriental face merely quivers. Then I know. My hate knows no limit.
"PLUTUS!" I scream.

My fists clench, "PLUTUS! I SHALL KILL YOU!" I shout with a blood vengeance. She only sobs.

I see Plutus in his office. He gives me his snide smile. "*Geelenski*," he drawls, "You weren't worken' hard enough." He begins to laugh.

I have the power to seize his throat. I do not. "One day you shall crawl upon your belly and the whole Earth shall know you."

He eats an apple. "Wanna bite?"

My head swims above a sea of water coming closer below. The engines roar in my ears; it is a B-24 bomber having already dropped its cargo of silent bombs upon the Japanese. This is the plane of my father and his crew mates. The cold North Pacific looms closer. The King Crabs are hungry. These once-young men want to return home. My future birth depends upon the favorable winds of war. Where is there a safe island? Terry and Ted, Bill and Mike, Jim, Ed, Harold, Ray, Dad and Smitty; Bob and Ron -- those who made it and those who didn't. The engines falter. The sea seems to rush up at us.

"PLUTUS!" I awake screaming.

My hands were clenched upon the steering wheel. We were driving at 68 miles an hour. I slowed down, Winthrop was immersed in a similar fantasy.

Soon, we would begin our search for a bar so we could drink in dark silence, and the radio-news would be full of theft, murder, rape and mayhem.

Yes America, there is more than just simple misery. There are prisons filled with madness. Chain sawing of people. Bodies of cordwood. Blood from smashed watermelons. Dismemberment and castration for the unlucky. Weird, animal acts among the dregs. Factories seep poison. Carcinogens to be packaged and consumed. Crematoriums full of starved and gassed expendables - untermen. All around the wonderful world there is a horror story to be told. But don't think about it too much or else you'll begin to believe it's the way things are supposed to be.

But, Winthrop and I managed to cheer up. It was necessary, "Don't fret about horror -- pretend you're watching it on TV. If it doesn't happen to you or your buddy (me) then don't let it get you down. That's how to survive it."

"Tell me about politics," I coaxed, seeking to distract his 'numble'-mind.

RECAPITULATING...

In the Fall of our difficulty a political change had come about which stood the entire Nation on its head. A formerly obscure show-business personality with an affable manner

was elected to the Nation's highest office. Yes, Ladies and Gentlemen, on that date the electorate (51 % of the 50 % who bothered voting) elected as President of these United States, none other than, Howdy Doody (1948-1984?). Yes indeed. I was dubious. When Candidate Doody, in one of his campaign speeches, proclaimed, "There are no strings on me!" I winced.

He ran against President Pinocchio whose nose kept growing as his credibility shrank.

President Doody's Inaugural Address contained a portent of things to come. Brimming with patriotism he waxed Biblical and paraphrased his favorite scriptural character: "Government-(he stressed the word dramatically) shall no longer be *my brother's* keeper -- in fact, nobody shall." Millions of the future unemployed cheered emphatically.

"HOORAY!"

"We shall lay this fiction of 'RESPONSIBILITY' (he said the word bitterly) to rest!"

"HOORAY!" Everyone cheered, expecting not to become poor and irresponsible, but rich and self-reliant. All, happily, believed that some-one else would be a victim and not them.

"We don't have to be smart - we're AMERICANS!"

President Doody began his administration on an upbeat note, What follows is a transcript of an early speech carried on television. "Good morning boys and girls."

The Nation (10 % of whom were unemployed and home watching television) thundered back, "Good morning, President Doody!"

"Boys and girls I want to talk to you about something very important - Inflation. We have to get rid of inflation. And do you know what causes Inflation? Boys and girls Inflation is caused by COMPLICATION. Why? Because complication always makes things appear bigger than they really are, So we must simplify.

"Economists tell us there are bad things out there. Too much money (he laughed). I know, you're saying, 'Money, where? I haven't got it.' Well, believe me it's out there. Too much money and not enough profit for our great corporations to make more money. I know it doesn't make any sense -- just trust me.

"So, we're gonna cut government spending for stuff we don't need, like PAYING folks NOT to work -- that's crazy if you ask me! By cutting government spending there will be less money and that will cure inflation by making everything simple -- See!

"Next, we have to cure un...prod -ict... Excuse me, boys and girls, it's a hard word. Let me glance at my notes; 'productivity' -- make more products! So we have to cut taxes and give people back their money. But wait a minute!

"The Russians are coming. In order to fight socialism at home we cut spending, but to fight socialism abroad we have to increase spending. We have to arm ourselves and spend lots of money for guns and bombs and things. Now isn't that simple?

"Let me go over it again, and repeat it real slow..."

"Number one -- come on repeat it with me. Number one (A National chorus shouted from millions of living rooms) "Cut spending! Kill Inflation! That's right boys and girls, get at the root, No money, no inflation, (he smiled) Now I didn't tell you about the Federal Reserve, cause I didn't want to confuse you, --or me! But they're gonna help us. Just think of them as a big bank with no money to lend. That'll help lick inflation!"

"Number two -- raise productivity by cutting taxes, and Number three, raise spending to buy BIG guns and BIG bombs to scare off those pesky socialistic commy, Russians."

"That's right. Now say it real fast -- I was only kidding. When we do all these things together it'll look like a funny dance."

At this point one of his aides must have dropped a string and President Doody's head bobbed a bit too much.

The Nation loved it, President Doody of the Constipation Party was a natural. And of course his plan worked. In six months Inflation dropped to zero, the Gross National Product tripled, our Armed Forces doubled in size and the average American's standard-of-living rose 120 %. In nine months President Doody wiped out poverty, (I was kidding).

No Lullaby

I had a disturbing and obsessive dream about President Doody shortly after his Inauguration. I saw him up a tree. A stout, but old tree. Yet President Doody had climbed out on a very high, not exceptionally secure limb.

"Get off of there!" I shouted.

But a fierce wind was blowing and he did not heed me. The wind set the branch to shaking.

"This branch is shaking 10 - 12 percent," he announced.

"Get off of there!" I shouted again into the wind.

"Soon, this branch will be shaking 15 - 25 percent," he said. "And I want this tree to grow a better branch on the other side, over there..."

"Get down!" I warned.

After a determined shake of his head, President Doody began sawing the limb he was perched on.

"Don't do that!" I shouted.

He evidently heard me because he said, "I know what I'm doing."

The limb, half-sawed through must have been rotten on the inside for it snapped off and

President Doody began to tumble to earth. "I'm coming down now," he said as he fell. Then with a crash he landed on me knocking me to the ground. He was much heavier than I thought he'd be as he lay motionless on top.

THE NEW, NEW, OLD 'MORALITY'

and modern communicative procedures

Winthrop was oppressed. Too much TV news. He took it all to heart. He related bad dreams from the previous night. Wearing an extra-large size pair of pants; so big that he had to hold them up with two hands as a tribunal questioned him in German. He stood accused of being the Anti-Christ and a Jewish Socialist.

Next frame: A jail cell crowded with 40 evil looking desperadoes. This segment was repressed. Then Winthrop was released to the victors of a Red revolution. He was restored to gainful employment excavating trenches with a three-foot, hand-spade for 11 cents a day. But the comrades discovered he had previously been a Jewish Capitalist 'pig' and buried him to the neck in his own dug-out dirt.

Then, they beat his head with shovels -- WANG BANG! -- Fantastic reverberations shook his teeth loose. It turned out to be the alarm clock.

Imagine doing that to poor Winthrop who wasn't even Jewish. What lay in store for the rest of us?

This got us to talking about religion. I advanced some notions about the new Constipation Edition of the Holy Bible. There were only three commandments so it could be distributed on match books or cigarette packs:

'Thou shall not commit abortion.'

'Thou shall not engage in smut.'

'If thou is government thou shall not spend on the deficit.'

'For these are the work of the devil, Satan. The devout shall honor Family and Business commitments so that they may profit.'

"The real bible is full of indecency, anyway," I joked, "It contains references to masturbation, harlotry and other abominations..."

Jesus Christ, upon his return, will have to get a haircut and shave. A three-piece, pin-striped suit with a tight tie-knot and brass-bone through his throat so he could better represent an international bank or oil company.

Then, of course there's politics and cultural mores. The communications revolution... (The telephone once coupled to television will afford any two dogs and a cat the opportunity to claim they rule the world.)... Federal reorganization: "Relax, Winthrop," I advised, "the obligations of the Federal Government are simply being remanded to the States. The Military did this with its many programs in Vietnam, turning them over to the

Vietnamese (who didn't do them and we know what happened there)."

"The Constitution could always be changed," I teased Winthrop, "Re-write the preamble and get rid of the lines about '*We the people-*,' '*domestic tranquillity*,' '*general welfare*' and simply underline the - '*National defense*' in red ink. Remove the Bill of Rights while we're at it and substitute:

"We the States join in union for the good of National Defense and Offense."

"The budget must be balanced except to pay for the perpetual state-of-war... All people suspected of crimes shall be tortured till they confess, then hanged." I laughed. Winthrop sulked. Or so it seemed.

Winthrop's academic brain raced for analysis, "The return of Gnosticism and Manichaeism!" He exclaimed with all the astuteness of Madam Curie finding out she was dying of cancer for fooling around with radium.

Being no sloth for intellectual manipulations of the historical variety I piped in urgently. "But notice, no material asceticism!"

"Calvinism at work," The Professor added.

"Wrong!" I thundered, "A new syncretism; the stampede!"

"What are you talking about?" Winthrop shouted as I charged around his shabby kitchen table snorting and goring.

"The BULL! It's linked to a new dualism. All genital thrusting to be sublimated Bullishly into the making of money! The root of Sexual Finance!"

REGURGITATION

Sexual Finance in its latter stages

-- often leads to Financial Suicide.

Come America, is it time for us to stand in the cold waters of a new age clutching each other fearfully -- our eyes closed, naked skin chilled as if with death?

There, together we shall await the Gigantism of the Long Wave of Economics breaking over us -- hoping not to drown, but to be washed clean of debt in our Jubilee. Then, like the children in the garden, we shall start over, free.

WINTHROP'S CONCLUSIONS

Winthrop's room usually had an orderly messiness to it. Boxes. The room often gave one the impression of being a mini-warehouse of cardboard boxes all stuffed with his lengthy dissertation. He even slept on a mattress laid across a wide, short stack of boxes after his bed frame was sold for ten dollars. His desk was usually heaped with sheaths of folders, and crumpled news clippings over-flowed the doodled blotter.

But on this day his room was different. The boxes were largely gone, though some, slashed and bashed, lay strewn upon the sea of paper that littered the room three feet deep. In the corners there were drifts up to five feet high. It looked as if a herd of Insecurity persons had had a Sexually Financial orgy (Bullism) in the confines of the four walls.

I marveled at the construction of such a grand mess. (My guess was that Winthrop was entering the editing process of his 400,000 page dissertations. If, perhaps, he had sequestered a sandbagged machine-gun fortification under such an inventive concealment I would have lifted my hat to him. Thus we could be ready for the Russians.

Gingerly I waded through the garbage-dump of a room hoping not to sprain an ankle on some coiled esoteric paragraph waiting for me. His desk, by contrast, had very few papers on it and some intuition told me that the slim ream of papers gathered orderly into a coherent pile meant something.

Across the top page of the pile was a scrawled notation written in grease pencil. 'You can't get away from the economics of it.' Not much for titles, I surmised, feeling apprehensive about the prospect that my learned friend could turn out to be a dunce-head nerd. The typed subtitle below his written comment simply read: 'ABSTRACT.' I winced, wondering if the document was a term paper from college lonely in its wanderings from the remainder of the junk on the floor. I hoped it was not full of nonsense yakety-yak about M1, M2, M3 monetary aggregates and all the other Byzantine rigmarole that helped the ignoble Economics profession in its contribution to misery upon the planet Earth. After all wealth was only goods and services and money a concept rich in the mind of Mr. Big.

Yes, I intruded and lifted Winthrop's writing into reading range while I sat upon his denuded desk. Parts seemed to be missing. The text began on page three:

'When men are hungry they think only of food. When fed they seek seduction. What they seduce is power. When they fantasize it is of power with women and superiority over other men. When they dream it concerns terms with death. When they connive it is for money.'

'Before I attempt anything else let me reconstruct the reality that money had become. For it is here in this food-of-survival that the great and murderous evasions await the next generation. I shall try to uncover them and help free the future. (I felt goose bumps, already.)'

'The world has never been perfect. It's handful of Golden Ages, a thin measure of relatively enlightened years, were always punctured abruptly by the usual peril.'

'The Genesis of the Current Problem'

'Yes, there were problems with international exchange rates in the 1970's. Yes, America was spending a larger share of its wealth on the military (Vietnam) than its trading partners. Yes, there was this huge baby-boom generation trying to fit itself into the societies of the world. But the catalyst for disaster was the commodity price shocks of

1973-74 & 1979-80. In the first, the price of petroleum quintupled followed by poor harvests. In 1979 petroleum tripled in price and a terrible summer drought and heat wave inflated food prices. The Organization of Petroleum Exploiters (a cartel) expropriated yearly reparations amounting to 1 1/2 to 5 % of America's (and the world's) Gross National Product. Shades of the Weimar Republic! Torrid inflation was set loose throughout the world. What had cost 4 cents a barrel to pump from the Earth in 1972 was being sold for as much as 40 (and more) dollars by 1980. How could inflation not be set loose? Does not an industrial society function on energy? Immediate dislocations in the prices of all things came about. Some segments profited by the inflation other lost what affluence they had.

'The Western Economies sought a control. Some found one in beggar-thy-neighbor-ism. The modernized, industrial bases of Germany and Japan both with keen, mercantilist-managed economies were able, through the smaller float of their currencies to pay for oil at a lower cost and sell surplus goods to balance their trade account. Thus they preserved their own prosperity for a time. Their modern mass-transportation utilities and gasoline-usage taxes provided them with a lower per-capita dependency on gasoline than the United States.

'The United States absorbed. And inflated. And turned to its 'money supply.' It fought fire with fire. 'Squeeze credit and end inflationary psychology.' With each slump and recovery, credit costs and velocity (speed of turnover) was ratcheted to higher and higher planes, pushing inflation up higher and higher as well. First energy was made expensive and then money. Once up it couldn't be brought down. The debt pyramid grew. Residential mortgages surpassed the entire National Debt (1.1 Trillion compared to .9 Trillion - 1981). Government outlays (spending) which prevented the 1974-75 recession from becoming an economic disaster were escalated by the turmoil.

'And all this took place upon a confused backdrop. America's industrial base was of mixed origin: 1960-'s high technology co-existed with 1915 steel mills and 1930's heavy industry. America's marketplace was over concentrated with mature industries. Each boom-bust cycle had reduced the number of 'hands' producing in each market. The more than two dozen domestic automobile companies of 1925 were 1 3/4 by 1980. Dry cereal was left to three conglomerates. The petroleum industry was led by seven international distributors and a cartel. Free markets were hard to find. Hugeness, Corporate Imperialism and stagnation were everywhere. Competition, if anywhere, was between producers and consumers. Inefficiency reigned.

'Those who inveighed upon the evils of debt made billions from credit cards and other instant-loan devices. It had become a world beyond its own comprehension and it sought scapegoats.

'The Society; its Numbers

'In past eras people were taught by the law of duty (to God, parents, self, state) that they had to bear the burdens of life: work, procreation, war etc.

'By 1970 the concept of duty evaporated in the affluently modeled consumer society.

Enticements for work, procreation and military service were born on the backs of media-myths created in the inner sanctums of advertising agencies. All was portrayed as being pleasurable. Naturally reality did not reflect this. After a spell of confusion and mass-disappointment those SERVED by duty re-appeared. THEY had new admonishments not for THEM personally, but for everyone else. They were thems who were THEM.

'Yes, and there was failure. Its evidence was everywhere. The liberalism of Johnson's brief golden age was imperiled on its Island-of-Delos in South East Asia and fed upon itself thereafter. Liberalism wandered into the decadent Avant Garde. 'Freedom' came to mean the outer limits of the thinkable universe.

'Alexis de Tocqueville believed that much of the strength of America was derived from the virtue of its women. What was to become of us all if our women wished to become as 'bad' as the most powerful and dubious of our men? The middle-class woman's movement used the mechanism of civil rights in an effort to obtain power and privilege.

'Thus the liberal movements broke up in a free-for-all of competing self-interest groups fighting for comfort-ability.

'Thems who were THEM watched, learned and later applied the same tactics and pressures to undo, and do for themselves.

'Intentions of political man are often poor. But even good intentions, instead of becoming actualized, are relegated to institutions of abrasive uselessness only to be eventually abandoned in favor of unenlightened expediency. This WAS the failure of our institutions. Poverty and disease were not cured they were made into businesses.

'Was this a looming mega-failure of man, over extended and stupid? Was there a germ of reality in long economic cycles in which man can no longer manage but must start over after failure? (Where, once again, nearly all can toil for one dollar-a-day in a two dollar-a-day world?) Did the previous cycles spotted by N D Kondratieff have a current continuance? Would we end in a slow campaign of decay ('not with a bang, but a whimper)? Was war and disaster the outcome? Would future bombardiers release what-they-could-not-hear fall upon those below who-would-never-hear the explosion?

'Possibilities for disaster do not trade well in the world men own. Myths do. Shibboleths, arch-types, demons and anti-Christis are always there for the summoning. World-wide difficulties could be blamed upon a government that curtailed pollution or banned segregation. Reaction loves to react. Hatred needs simplicity. Fantastic formulas of Laissez Faire and volunteerism were resurrected as a placebo to disaster. OPEC, an acknowledged menace, was pragmatically dealt a hand loaded with loot. Deficits and social spending were hooted with fervor. Thus real enemies were befriended and empty buildings made enemies. It was EASY to do. America, they said, would be cured by Daniel Boone and Big Business.

'From what book was this philosophy borrowed? None, The neoclassical economics revival was based on a quick, edited, misreading of parts of Adam Smith's 206-year-old book, 'Wealth of Nations.' What fit was used the rest discarded. The same was done with the Bible.

'Everything became ridiculous. The Savings & Loan industry chosen by Franklin Roosevelt's Administration to finance the building of America's houses was to be pawned off to the Commercial Banking Industry. Houses were, after all, Inflationary Consumption and America so, the 'experts' claimed, needed Production so it could SELL (what to whom?).

'How were 'we' to produce without consuming? Didn't these 'experts' know that the two went together? Apparently not. They didn't seem to know much at all.

'Meanwhile, the Inflation had made an industry out of money. The idea was to produce no product except profit itself, produce less and charge more for it (inflation), buy less product for more money (inflationary consumption). Obviously, such a skewed system could not continue indefinitely.

'In a world like this, Young Ski was very correct in proclaiming, "Save for the sanctity of life-itself, ALL is BULLSHIT." This thinking can be attributed in great part to the two views of the world that Young Ski was exposed to: The MACRO and MICRO view.

'The Macro view, available to Generals, Presidents, Chairmen-of-the-Board perceives things globally as a web of great pieces, us and them, war and peace, buy and sell. War in Vietnam was the outline of five nations on a giant radar-computer screen (Cathode Ray Tube). The Economy became the picture on a Quotron screen (another Cathode Ray Tube) flashing prices of thousands of items in a world market. Thus, the Macro view was just another television show called the BIG PICTURE.

'But unfortunately these Macro views were only the product of the collusions and collisions of many MICRO views. These were the small pictures not available to Generals, Admirals or other leaders. These views contained the failures experienced by the likes of Young Ski. Too much optimism had been shoveled out to those who lent sons to war or money to buy what became insecure. It was optimism that was falsely manufactured. And Young Ski, straining away in front of the Macro view on his radar or Quotron scope was constantly aware of how it was not working. He witnessed the pronouncements of his superiors become lies and false-hope for further distribution.

'Yes, Young Ski was prepared to defend his nation from armed aggression either from external sources or internal subversion. But, poor-poor Young Ski was disarmed by the one element too big too fight. Stupidity. He could not educate his leaders and therein lay the problem.

'(NOTE: The Military-industrial complexity warned of by President Eisenhower, is a great example of the corruption of money upon the body-politic. It is here among the interchangeable parts of upper-echelon Military executives, and the corporate managerial directors that stealing from the National Treasury has taken a for-granted attitude. Weapons-systems, often both too complex for realistic military function and mission-obsolete by time of delivery to trained forces, experience cost over-runs on a too predictable basis. Guaranteeing profit to private suppliers has taken a leading edge in the Nation's business of 'National Defense.' 'Duty, Honor, Leadership' have fallen sway to a politicized, country-club, top-heavy military corps of high ranking bureaucrats.

'(It is also a point worth noting that the first war lost as a Nation was also the first modern military conflict fought by our Professional Military Establishment. Other American wars saw a vast infusion of people from all backgrounds into a small peacetime Army. Those citizen soldiers were not only the enlisted fighting men but their officers as well. Such a mixing of democratic talents often saw the rise of the most capable to positions of the highest authority, thus a handful of obscure Army colonels of 1939 became our most noted military commanders of the European war theatre. Not so during the Vietnam War, the only civilian infusion was that of a vast conscription of kids, most of whom were BELOW the then legal age of majority (21). The Basic Training regimes these kids encountered to 'militarize' them were the most exacting (and sometimes brutal) ever used on a generation of conscripts. Yet, for all its manpower, training and technology a successful strategy for supremacy never emerged. Instead, the military promoted its own vainglorious interests and conducted a public-relations falsehood in an attempt to disguise its bafflement over Vietnam into a promise of victory. What was promised was never delivered. Blame to civilian leaders can not excuse this failure as the limited perimeters of the conflict were clearly understood by all at its onset.

'(It is no wonder that our founding fathers saw a large professional military as both a waste and a threat to Nationhood. As Abraham Lincoln believed the greatest threat to us, was and will always be, ourselves.)

'Alas poor America, a world of contradiction is one without hope. Progress is the drug of hope. Hope is life. And what were our new policies based upon, domestically at least?

Three Lies

'Lie number one is the simple equation that Deficits in the Federal Budget, under all conditions cause Inflation. The empirical evidence against this being the case is overwhelming. Some thirty years of deficits in the United States (while it grew and prospered) co-existed with the most minimal inflation rate (1 - 2 % a year). Other nations such as West Germany, Japan and Austria regularly ran federal deficits through the last decade with the lowest inflation rates in the world. And in many cases those deficits represented government debt of a far higher percentage of their overall economy, as measured by their respective gross national products. One important difference between the aforementioned economies and those of Britain and the United States was the affordability of credit. Japan's central bank lending rate has typically been a fraction of America's.

'By assessing the Directionality of Inflation and rising Federal Deficits one can see that Inflation usually precedes the enlargement of the deficit and not the other way around.

'It seems that the statistics or Numbers of it all confuses everyone. The questions to be asked should be: What is the government borrowing money for? To fight a war? To fuel new growth industries? Provide shelter for the homeless? Pay past bills? Waste on unneeded projects? Is the economy expanding or contracting? Are economic inequities between individuals or sectors growing or shrinking? The answers to the above questions are more valuable than looking at sheer numbers, to determine whether a large deficit will hinder a large economy.

'Lie number two concerns Monetary control. Stated foolishly-simple it says: By controlling the growth of Money Stock using MIB (1981) which is currency in circulation and demand deposits, Inflation can be avoided. Ten years of monetary stringency, the affect of attempting to control the money supply, has resulted in several recessions, the expensive escalations and unavailability of credit, the increase in velocity (turnover) of money and the worsening of Inflation until the point of deflation caused by default and unemployment. In fact, there appears to be an inverse correlation between the DECLINE of MIB as a percentage of Gross National Product (in constant dollars) and the RISE of Inflation. MIB has gone from 25.9 % of GNP at the beginning of 1963 when Inflation was less than 1 % per-year, to a low of 14.8 % of GNP in 1980 when Inflation was between 10.7 and 15 % depending on which index is used.

'Lie three stated that Federal Taxation was strangling industrial production (the supply side!). Corporate taxation has fallen steadily in the United States from a high 55 % nominal rate in 1955! Industrial productivity hit its high in 1966 and regardless of tax-cut after tax-cut has not shown inclination, nor ability to be revitalized. Is there an inverse correlation between the lowering of the nominal, corporate tax-rate (46% in 1981) which affects larger businesses and the increasing rate of business failures (mostly small business), or have two swings through the Kuznet's cycle made it appear that way? (Not that big corporations actually pay the NOMINAL tax rate on their NET INCOME after all expenses!)

'The new tax policy of 1981 was designed to be a New Deal for Mr. Big, to give him incentive through increased reward. Chopping the tax rates for the marginally employed would have accomplished much more by making work affordable instead of offering \$ 2.95 NET an hour for minimum wage in a 15 dollar-an-hour world (expenses non-deductible). The Mr. Big incentive program was supposed to make Doctors, Lawyers, Dentists, Presidents and Chairmen of huge corporations more productive through tax incentive. If a professional person does not work at his/her highest effort he/she is NOT a professional! The only inclination this incentive provided was one to raise not effort but FEES!

'The foundation of the policies designed to save America were based on absurdity and prejudice. How self-defeating it promised to become. Would denying access to the courts by the poor-dependent-upon-Federally-funded legal-services accomplish anything other than confirm that the powerless must resort to violence to be heard? How Marx would approve of this. Can we expect the typical consumer to have his purchased tuna-fish or aspirin tested for contamination. Do corporations have the right to make laws for their employees regarding their health, safety and opinions?

'The future will probably say about our (short) Age. 'They could only deal with a contrived energy shortage by creating a capital shortage' -- and with a contrived capital shortage through political and economic barbarism.'

--'Money, money, everywhere, but no one to pay the bills...''

'Solutions that Wait

'The focus through much of the 1970's remained on expediency. By 1981 the focus had shifted to ideological myth. Re-allocation of resources to Mr. Big had become sanctified religion second only, in importance to militant opposition against godless communism.

'Realities can, however be fixed. Here's how:

'1) The New Technology. Yes, technology could save us! The hate, greed and stupidity that threaten to consume us in our doldrums can be undone by advancing into a future without our old problems.

'America, has always done well by the pragmatic use of public funds in private use for the public good. Thus, the transcontinental rails were built (via land grants as capital to the rail companies). Airports made airlines possible. And highways were built for autos to ruin the rails and the old cities. It may not have been fair, and it may not have been without its great difficulties but it was the purchase of progress. Investment in massive new technologies requires a guaranty against risk that ONLY government can provide. (Even parts of the 'individualistic' Western Sun Belt must tip its hat to old-time Federalism as it drinks the water that taxes brought.)

'The New Technology that will save us is not the vast information processing industry upon us. That is only the mouth and ears, He need the legs arms and heart.

'We need a new transportation system, new energy, new pollutant-free chemical manufacture and new agricultural processes. Suggestions abound, thermal fusion, electromagnetic monorail, biochemical engineering replacing the old industrial methods. Desalinated water for salt-free soil irrigation. The tools either exist or can be created. The will and knowledge-of-the-inevitable is what we lack. (Must the high costs of these things await a great crash before we can proceed? After such a crash, labor will be cheap, established interests weakened and new credit fresh to imagine.)

'2) New method of Credit Allocation; not by price but by purpose. As Japan and Germany stimulate industrial segments, designated as crucial by favorable tax policy, so shall credit be implemented. It has worked before.

'3) New methodology for productivity; if a market requires a certain degree of benevolent liberty to function so does a human. Loyalty from employees must be paid for with loyalty from management. The spirit of justice and democracy must wash through the work place so that free people will be able to contribute to their fullest potentials rather than drone through the day as rented serfs in conditions and under methods, totally subjugative. What is unhealthy must be abolished. There is no 'cost efficiency' to tolerate in ANY injury to humanity to believe in such is to encourage its perpetration upon oneself.

'An economic miracle will ennoble society and allow us to explore the universe, Such a stunning accomplishment will sober any aggressor and attract the sentiments of the world. THIS is the competition to engage in -- there can only be winners.

'The End

'America is currently being mastered by a select group of salesmen who believe in nothing larger than the size of their own paychecks. Yet, it appears quite clear that Americans, for the most part, want neither State Socialism nor Corporate Oligopoly controlling their lives. The difference between either appears in varying shades of misery.

'America has usually sought the pragmatic middle ground but not without lurches toward doom. There are those ready to impose a theocratic and cultural fascism upon all, thus THEMES that have, can have by Divine-Right. Themes that don't have, got to take the lumps the Almighty gave them; nothing-less than Social Darwinism married to pre-destination in church.

'But, America was always an apostle of money, a nation possessing a cultural split-syntality. America the 'Christian City' follows a messiah of a revealed religion that holds the pursuit of wealth to be evil and prophesizes the inheritance of the meek upon the Earth. Yet the parochial pursuit of the American ideal is for individual profit. Every other concept is shunned as counter-productive for the material well-being of the Nation. Anti-materialist sentiment is deemed unpatriotic. Often-times the most fervently religious are also the most dogmatic defenders (and offenders) of the private-enterprise ethic as opposed to charity, good works, love of justice and mercy, love of God, love of one's neighbor etc. The financial elite of the country spend every Christmas celebrating the birth of the figure who chased money-lenders from the Temple in Jerusalem, only to dutifully return to the practice of Usury after the holiday. (The same for war-making.) Such is a very serious lunacy of the American Nation.'

(An endnote to Winthrop's screed: While written during the 'inflationary recessions' of the 70s and 80s how well does this hold up to the affluent 90s? A Kuznet's cycle (ha, ha)? Me remembers the gas shortages of 20, 25+ years ago and beholds with wonder the flood of SUVs muscling along the highways. Will we never run out of gas (or money)? -editor 1999... Sounding familiar again -editor 2011)

Below his last line was an addition made in pencil:

'I have just re-read the Abstract and found it to be true. But, who, besides me, will give a damn?' Poor Winthrop, knowing better did not help, it only turned his vague uneasiness into certified fears.

I heard scraping and banging in the hallway. Winthrop appeared, looking disheveled and disillusioned (even for Winthrop). He dragged a garbage can and shovel into the room.

"This is all about money and politics!" I chastised waving his manuscript.

"About the failure of money and politics; about Gillhensky's Law. What should I write about, sex and conversation? I rarely have either." He began shoveling scoops of his dissertation into the garbage can.

"Because you don't want either. Use lunacy to laugh," I advised.

"Nothing's funny." He shoveled.

"You haven't got cancer," I noticed, optimistically. He said nothing. "What are you going

to do with all this?" I asked of the sea of his writings.

"Throw it away."

"All this?"

"Yup. Years of reading, note-taking, thinking, writing, revising... Even today I can't decide if it is the jottings of a foolish student or an astute master. Anyway, it makes no difference, absolutely no difference. Knowing what's wrong, doesn't fix it."

"Be not overly wise..." I began paraphrasing from Ecclesiastes.

"I'm serious!" He proclaimed.

"I'm not," I stated.

The garbage can was filled. I estimated that it must have been weighted down with 90 pounds of solid paper. I knew he would be unable to carry it out himself. His body was too academic. He tried stuffing some sheaves of paper on top. The pages slithered to the floor.

"Let's become rich and famous," I said.

"Why? You could have done that in the Insecurities business if you put your mind to it," he said.

"True."

"Why didn't you?" He asked.

"I was tired of lying. Maybe I'll try to build a career around acting goofy, for awhile at least. I showed some real talent for it as a kid."

"I'll bet." He was quiet for two seconds, "You don't like the world, do you?" He asked.

I shrugged. "I got to live in it. So do you. Let's be happy Capitalists."

"That's a word invented by Karl Marx."

"It is?" I asked.

"YOU told me so!" Winthrop defended.

"Maybe it is. Come-on, riches and fame await those who can entertain and not complain. With no white lies, half lies, evasions, colorations, disclaimers, obfuscations, *emphasis*, *key-words*, *sales-track*, *features and benefits* -- just pour on the fantasy."

"Damn it Gillhensky! There's a hell-of-a lot of people out there who don't want your fantasy. They don't want you! They don't even want to see your face. They make a comfortable existence by doing eagerly what you consider immoral."

I was speechless for a second. "Then, I'll beat it into them!" I thundered.

"And in the long-run where will that get you?" He threw back at me.

When in doubt, quote the famous: "Winthrop, let me speak some profoundness courtesy of J M Keynes, *In the long-run we will all be dead.*" Then I kicked over his trash can to salvage his reams of junk.

LOOKING OPTIMISTICALLY AT PESSIMISM

Winthrop's problem, the one that annoyed him most, was the discovery of massive failure as an ingredient to history. 'Knowing better' did not help. Mankind's faltering seemed unavoidable. Confucius had his dynastic cycle, Kondratieff his down-leg and eventually the phoenix rose from its own ashes. Yes, the culprit was greed for without greed and its rushing-herd instinct for mindless urgency there would be no panic. And, true, greed and panic owe their allegiance to stupidity. But, oddly, these messes are often the bottom step toward future progress. Doesn't every great thought and artistry need a period of repression to form itself, make itself delightful and delicious to those who have been forced to do without? Remember, them who are Them (and everybody else) always learn the hard way. (Why?)

But Winthrop, deep down, was an optimist and an idealist who thought that there had to be some scheme to avoid the pitfalls and down-legs of human misery. This was his mission. While, perhaps, folks like me are simply the oil that doesn't mix with the water. There always must be a repressed minority, tempered with the incongruity of being a stranger in one's own backyard, screaming new ideas. From this corner comes the evolutionary changes every culture must consider. Therefore, the first rebel against the future advent of 'Young Ski-ism' should be none other than ME.

Yes, I can repeat it to myself and intellectually accept it but, move-over Winthrop, another hopeless dreamer needs to come out of the cold of history. And woe is the tale of history. Apart from the sanctity of life itself, much of what people do with the rest of their carnivorous, herbivorous occupations seems akin to Bullshit. (Maybe there are dualities; Hebraism vs, Hedonism, for example. Though it could all be in the eye-of-the-beholder, one man's Bullism is another's Bullshit.)

And that is my quandary. Should I be with Winthrop screaming for the truth and knowledge that will save us? (If it exists.) Or try getting on with things as best as possible? Can I believe that tomorrow will be the first day of a New World and the saga of recommitted mistakes will cease, or do I think it is hopeless? I don't have the answer, but I feel much better knowing that somebody, somewhere is foolishly screaming for the truth.

I moved out of Winthrop's. He clearly did not want to become rich and famous. Of late, he'd become too bitter to talk to. Approaching his bungalow one could hear the clatter of his ancient typewriter. Yet, knock and he will silence himself for as long as it takes him to avoid the outside interrupter. He is busy writing his own library. Tomes of volumes all by Dr. Winthrop. He thinks that by doing this he will, at least, have intelligent reading to surround him. But when he finishes the last page of his last book he will rise to intolerable fury reading the utter nonsense of the first page of his first book. Such is the

way of mankind. One day, however, I know that he will phone me (collect) and we shall meet for a beer. Then he will return to his old, rascally self, unsure of why anything works the way it does. Such is my true friend Winthrop.

I have returned to my quarrelsome family in this beautiful season. Yes, I know that misery awaits, peeking from its dusty corner. But misery waits everywhere, right now he's at Winthrop's.

With some air in the old tires my bicycle still bicycled. Upon it I slid down familiar streets.

Winthrop always believed the future's possibilities lay in hidden, quick glances of a young woman's eye. --I would see.

Breezes cooled my arms as silent streets rolled by. Old bungalows, in bushes' embrace, drank in the clear air through open windows. Girls on the streets sauntered by years past my first noticing of them. (How they slink when nature commands it.) --Laughter seemed to descend from the trees. Eyes follow eyes that follow eyes that wonderment sees. Remembering youth and all those dreams! The streets were so free and full of possibilities, I felt full of life.

Thunder from above: 'WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE, YOUNG SKI?'

Oh Lord. "Do I have to be real specific? (I meant can't I let what I've already said, suffice?)"

'YES - (NO).'

Oh boy. "Can't exactly say. -- Here goes: I don't know who I am yet. But, I think I know who I don't want to be."

-Drum roll, splash of cymbals -- The music that uplifts and excites.

'There...

Through the wilderness of my journey through lunacy I see her --

Possessing a purity of infinite, crystalline intensity unmatched in the finest of persons, she clutches liberty to her gilded breast. The avenger of injustice, the up-lifter of the oppressed, the beacon of hope to which flee-ers of torment come, true daughter of God for this is AMERICA, and like Winthrop, I love her.'

FINI

MAY 1980 -- APRIL 1982

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