

Essays and
Other Diversions
celebrating the
lifestyle of the
IMMORTALS!

The IMMORAL Chronicles

"You gotta love
livin', baby, because
dyin' is a pain in the
ass."

—Frank Sinatra

Summer 1998
Volume 1 / No. 1



First Issue!

This issue:
beautiful,
glorious
BLASPHEMY
(but hands
off Jack
Benny!)

Who We Are and How We Came to Be

Welcome to the first issue of the *Immortal Chronicles*, the official literary journal and club newsletter for the Immortals.

Never heard of us? Then there's obviously been some ghastly mistake. Return this newsletter immediately where you found it, walk away, and do not turn around. You are in mortal danger.

(Are they gone? Good.)

With influential members now serving in key executive positions as statesmen, diplomats, bankers, industrialists, pastrami vendors, and clergymen scattered far and wide across the four corners of our dominion (as geographically defined by Culver City, Pasadena, Hollywood, and Glendale), it's become clear that a newsletter to celebrate the exploits of the Immortals — and to transmit secret instructions for world domination (as well as favorite recipes) to members — was in order. But, of course, you already know that. (If you don't know it, the poison has taken effect by now and you are now dead. Sorry.)

In the issues to come, you will find a wide variety of contributions submitted by Fellow Immortals (no names please, in accordance with Immortals Bylaw No. VI.5.6), consisting of current activities, rants, reminiscences from the heyday of the Immortals, puzzles, games, etc., of interest to other Immortals.

But remember: We Immortals are a secretive lot who like to stay out of the limelight, and prefer to control world events behind the scenes — mainly to avoid embarrassment. So the next time you're walking down the street and see a Fellow Immortal, just nod subtly, proffer the secret sign, spit in a westerly direction (no lugeys, please), and continue on.

Until, of course, the Day of the Leprous Opossum is upon us, when the skies shall turn the color of blood and the water shall be as darkest Yoo-Hoo and, lo, the waiters will become successful screenwriters and those little pools of oil that appear on the tops of pizzas will never be seen no more. But, in the meantime, keep your head down.

This week's winning Lotto numbers: 23 42 37 11 ♦



ABOVE: Not a gathering of the Alonquin Round Table of the Bizarro World, but a portrait of the Immortals, as seen through the rose-colored corneas of Primo Immortal Raymond Marcus. Clockwise from left: Marcus, Scott Brick, Sadina Rothspan, Randy Reynaldo, Terry and Delegeane, David Gordy and Lois Gordy, Homer Tom, Bob Westal, Emily Delegeane, and Susanna Delegeane.

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Send all comments, contributions and hate mail to:

e-mail:

Bob Westal: j9k@aol.com
or Randy Reynaldo: randy.reynaldo@csun.edu

Regular post:

Randy Reynaldo
c/o WCG Comics
3765 Motor Avenue, Suite 1121
Los Angeles, CA 90034

The Immortals:

Editors & Design:

Bob Westal (editor)

Randy Reynaldo (design/editor)

Contributing Editors:

Scott Brick

Terry Delegeane

David Gordy

Raymond Marcus (additional art)

Homer Tom

We welcome letters of comment, contributions, etc., from non-members. All articles and letters subject to the usual ruthless editing, regardless of personal feelings, the relationship of the contributor to members of the Immortals, or what the author may have actually intended to say.

A History of the Immortals



Founded in Great Britain during the 12th Century by Sir Brendan the Malodorous, the Immortals were a secret society of knights bound together by their love for King, country and thin sliced, steaming hot pastrami served on a French roll with just a little bit of brown mustard. Yum.

After missing an opportunity for glory in the last Crusade (Sir Brendan argued, in his dialogue with Sir Hubert the Mildly Entertaining, that the Immortals' task, as prescribed by divine decree, was staying behind to guard the money and women in case the dreaded Saracens attempted a clever feint through Austria), the Immortals were asked to leave Great Britain and, at the command of King Richard the Lion-Hearted, "find something to do." Emboldened by this royal decree, their travels soon took them to the New World, predating the arrival of Christopher Columbus and the Vikings by several hours.

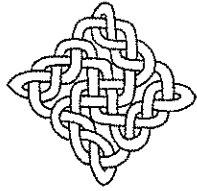
Unfortunately, the "Immortal Colony" (as they called their small settlement) proved anything but — beset by a bad winter, local hostile natives aghast by the sudden drop in local property values (Manhattan for \$24 — in *trinkets*?!), and a complete dearth of tolerable pastrami, the Immortals took to endlessly rehashing the funniest parts of the *Canterbury Tales*. When that grew tired, they turned to the *Decameron* and the works of Rabelais. (Today, this ancient practice continues with ritual accounts of last week's *Dharma and Greg*.)

The Immortals were almost completely forgotten until three UCLA students during the Dark Years of Reagan got together, and dubbed themselves the St. Edwards Literary Society; the fact that one of the them was the direct descendent of Brendan the Malodorous and another of Hubert the Mildly Entertaining was in no way connected with their pretentious behavior, pseudo-intellectual discussions, and general inability to carry a simple two-way conversation. Later, they invited new members into their fold, choosing only those who lived up to their rigorous standards of conduct, and could endure a three-day ordeal of Arby sandwiches and *That Girl* reruns.

Nearly two decades later, confronted by advancing age and the shadow of their own mortality, and with the command of their wives, girlfriends, and parents to "find something to do," these same friends got together and called themselves The IMMORTALS. This is the best they could do. ♦



ABOVE Two Latter Day Immortals engage in the group's traditional secret greeting (from the Immortals' Top Secret Folio of Sacred Handshakes and High Fives). An unfortunate misunderstanding between an Immortal and a member of the Liverpool Society for Hooliganism, Orangemen, and Homophobes resulted in the policy that completely abolished the ritual.



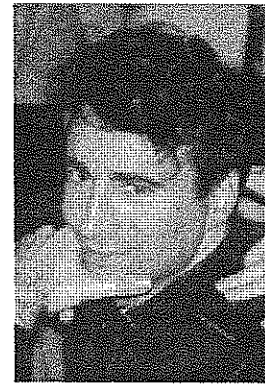
Okay, I'm about as religious as the next man (that is, of course, if the next man is the current premier of Cuba), but when you're trapped within the air-conditioned confines of the Mormon Visitors Center in dusty, polite, formerly polygamous St. George, Utah, home of all that is whitebread (and cancer-cluster capital of the radioactive Southwest), you begin to think evil thoughts.

Our own personal Latter Day Saint (LDS), Virgil to our Dante, Bluto to our Flounder, the young Mormonette chosen to lead us on the path to glorious conversion, ten percent tithing, and a berth at the Republican Convention, is not the recipient of these evil thoughts. She (her name tag says "Karen"), is too earnest, too impossibly sweet, pure, well-scrubbed. She must have an EPF (Evil Protection Factor) of at least 100. You can't hate her, you can't mock her, you can only listen and smile.

They're all like this, all the Mormons; they're kind, considerate, hard-working and intensely proud of their faith, and the less religious among us can't help but envy that sense of certitude, that comfort, that shared bliss of a directed, cohesive community. But that doesn't mean I'm buying any of this.

Granted, Lois and I entered the center on a lark, but I was also curious to see what was behind the Mormon Curtain, to see if there was a little man operating the levers of the great and powerful Jesus. Or at least for the 15-foot tall plasticine Jesus in the lobby. The LDS is nothing if not state-of-the-art.

Perhaps we tripped a laser beam, or Guide Karen pushed an unseen remote, but suddenly the big Jesus began to talk — to *us*! And he wasn't even moving his lips. Only I wasn't paying attention to the received Word, because I, smart-ass, cynical, disrespectful little sinner that I am, was desperately trying to suppress what would have been the most embarrassing whoop of laughter since the Ghost



Men who Blaspheme and the Women Who Love Them (or Jesus is Coming: Everyone Look Busy!)

by David Gordy

of Christmas Future showed us her Danskins in "A Winter's Tale."

Right in the middle of Jesus' stereophonic sermon, in a room filled with finely crafted dioramas of glorious nature, beatific family life, and the spirits of dead ancestors thanking their descendants for converting them posthumously ("Irving, one minute our *mešhugganah* nephew marries a *shiksa*, and suddenly we're all Mormon?"), I am biting my lip, nodding to what Guide Karen says, trying not to imagine the next logical step: Animatronic Jesus! ("Bles-sed...are...the...peace... makers.") Mr. Christ's Wild Ride. Pilates of the Caribbean. Excuse me, Karen, while my face crumbles from the internal stress.

Having just barely held my water, and loopy from lack of oxygen, I am escorted to the theater, and we are shown a beautifully filmed, sweetly narrated documentary on the significance of the temple in Mormon times, which is actually quite fascinating. It seems that Mormon temples are concentric, with spirituality increasing as one moves toward the center. Of course, the inner temple is closed to us non-believers. Rituals taking place there are a rigidly kept secret, though I imagine they don't involve sacrifice, blood, or lions and lambs lying down together. Probably, it is about as innocuous as an Elks Club initiation, and without the funny hats and paddles.

Karen steers the conversation skillfully, slyly noting that, as Jews, we share a strong sense of family and a temple-based iconography with Mormons. I'll believe that when Mormons starting selling tickets for the High Holidays.

(By the way, I have been told that converting a Jew is the grand prize,

Top Ten Signs That You're An Immortal:

10. Carrows has you on speed dial.
9. You didn't have a date until you were 23.
8. Mylar-scented cologne.
7. You know what Bob will order before he does.
6. Likeness of Jack Benny tattooed on your ass.
5. Still wake up at night screaming "Riiiiieebeer!"
4. You can romp through Cupid's grove with great agility.
3. Moviefone calls you for information.
2. You self-publish a 725-page book list, and your friends actually read it.
1. You self-publish a newsletter, and your friends actually contribute to it.

the new Cadillac, for a Mormon missionary. Everyone else is just a set of steak knives. This may be because Jews are seen as a special challenge and there is ostensibly a kinship between the two formerly persecuted religions. My father — who makes me look like Billy Graham — was pursued like Moby Dick by his many Mormon co-workers for years. I suspect that whoever harpooned agnostic Dad would have received first-class passage to heaven aboard the Concorde, and free conversion of all his ancestors back to *Homo erectus*.)

We are handed very glossy brochures, and told ever so politely that if we filled out our names and addresses on this postcard, we would be able to receive further information about the product — er, religion. If we had, you had better believe that before that ink was dry, two specially radio-dispatched young men in white shirts, black ties and bicycle-clipped trouser legs would have been at our door to greet us upon our return to the Golden State. They might even have picked us up at the airport.

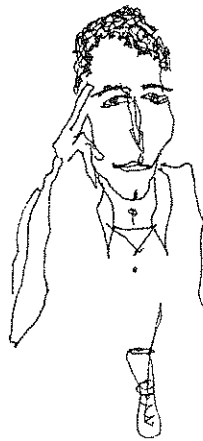
Finally, we are escorted into the light-filled anteroom, where a bank of sleek touch-screen computers are waiting to answer every question we ever had about life, as delineated into ten neat little categories. *Death. Children. Work. Marriage.* I touch the last. *Only one wife allowed.* I guess they've updated the rules since 1890. A more sophisticated debater than I might try to rebut and ultimately short out these holy consoles. ("Dave, your cynicism does not compute. There is no error in the catechism. You must believe, Dave.... No...nooo...Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer dooooooo.")

Then again, would I accept the answers any more readily from Jewish computers? (Maybe they would have a dreydel instead of a mouse). Is Mormonism any more inherently debatable than my own religion?

"Oy, we're losing another one," I hear from the wings. But Judaism was imposed on me by birth. I root for this team out of loyalty and habit. However, I also root for the UCLA Bruins, and I don't even have to fast a day for them.

Truth is, when I was young, I dutifully trudged to synagogue a couple times a year with my parents, and there was nothing spiritually uplifting about it. Our rabbi looked like Hervé Villechaize, only shorter. I got *bar mitzvahed*, became a man (aside from that tricky puberty thing) and chanted a lot of Hebrew words I didn't understand. A year later, my parents had to choose between a new car and temple membership; suffice it to say, there aren't any Gordys inscribed on the bronze plaques on the yeshiva wall.

Now I watch my pregnant wife, Lois, on the couch next to me and worry that my son-to-be might one day convert: to *real* Judaism. Lois (El Regidente; Puff Mommy; Rotundra, Queen of Hormones) fears and distrusts our public



school system, and five years in advance, is planning to enroll our son in a private school, perhaps a Jewish school. My mind reels: will he become a zealot, forcing me to separate meat and milk, turning off our TV on the Sabbath, grow long curly sideburns. Am I to be called to the carpet for my transgressions by a doctrinally rigid seven-year-old? True religion is so outside my frame of reference, dating back three generations of nominal Jews, that the sad fact of it is, an orthodox Jewish child would be as problematic as an orthodox Southern Baptist child. And as for Lois — perhaps the most out of practice Jew in the continental United States — her entire Jewish upbringing consisted of BLTs on rye.

My son *will* be circumcised, but for cosmetic reasons. Conformity does have its place. (Personally, I've never seen an uncircumcised one, and if I live a good life, I hope to be spared the privilege. Forget the other great mysteries like the Bermuda Triangle, Amelia Earhart, or the fact that soccer is the world's most popular sport; the biggest mystery is how circumcision got started.)

Still, I really enjoy being Jewish — the ethnicity, if not the faith. I love going to Jewish weddings, and lifting chairs, dancing in circles, bestowing *mazel tovs*, and partying like it's 5799. It's great being on a team that never started the Crusades or the Inquisition, never sold indulgences, oppressed the heathens, hung witches, peddled prayer time-shares on TV. Okay, so we invented psychoanalysis, and gefilte fish, and junk bonds. So sue us...oh, sorry, we invented that too.

This is not to say that I've been devoid of spirituality, only that Judaism has had nothing to do with it. I'm not an atheist, I do believe there are other worlds than this, and not just those you can see from Griffith Park on a clear night. Some thing must make us behave like we do. I simply haven't found anything in the Deity Directory that explains it to my satisfaction. I figure I'll just find out when I get there. Until then, I enjoy hanging out with my fellow creations, relating to them as I would be related to. It's sort of a Fuzzy Universalism, mixed with a little superstition and maybe a dash of oregano.

Not exactly what you build a cult around. Guess I won't have to buy Koolaid or Nikes. Or hardback copies of the Book of Mormon for \$19.95 at Waldenbooks. Not to say that the LDS is in any way dangerous, or overly controlling, or apt to take direction from someone named L.

school system, and five years in advance, is planning to enroll our son in a private school, perhaps a Jewish school.

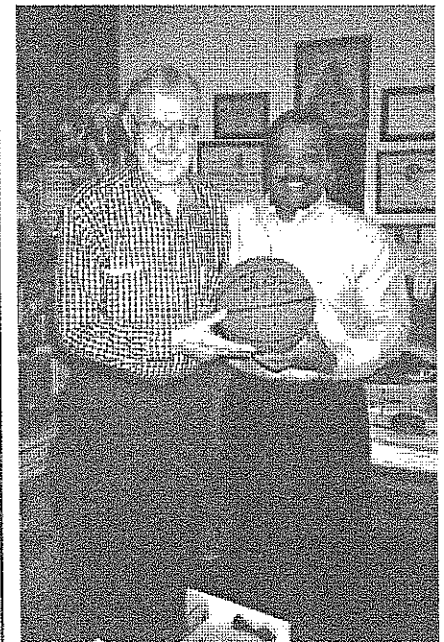
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Ron. All things considered, if you leave those small matters of religion and birthright out of it, I'd definitely consider signing up with my Utah brethren. I admire the way they take care of each other, the way they provide for their sick and old, the strength of their families. Being a Mormon means something distinct and for the good. I fleetingly contemplate summers in Ogden, and sending my seven kids to BYU.

But, as that great spiritual leader Jerry Seinfeld said about sexuality, you can't change teams that easy; we like our own equipment. So I exit into the bright light of day, I silently express thanks for the surroundings, and I stay put.

And Karen still looks longingly through the windows of her local Cadillac dealership. ♦

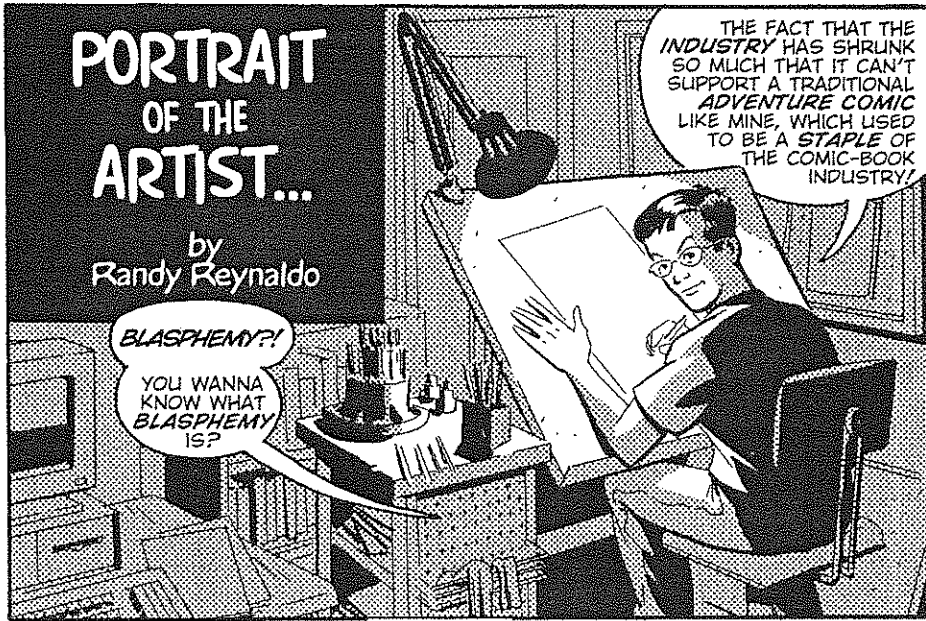
BRUSHES WITH IMMORTALITY



ABOVE Sgt. John Thomas, LAPD Division (right) at an audience with His Holiness Coach John Wooden 1 (left), at the Holy See in Encino. Sgt. Thomas received the Hoop Sacraments, and was presented with a specially blessed basketball. Said Sgt. Thomas, "That's Coach Wooden, really, it's Coach Wooden, oh wow, I'm feeling faint . . ." (Sgt. Thomas was unavailable for further comment).

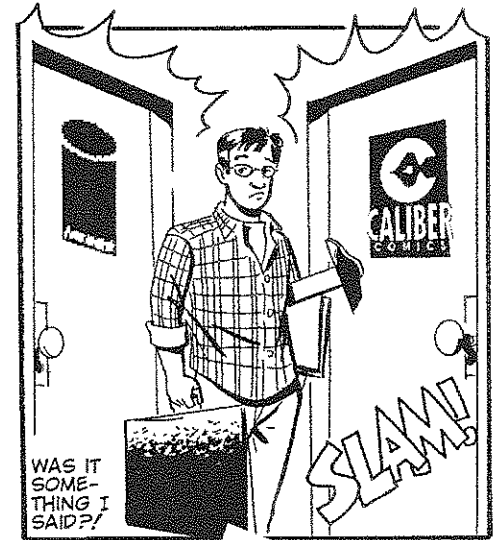
PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST...

by Randy Reynaldo



BLASPHEMY?!
YOU WANNA KNOW WHAT BLASPHEMY IS?

OVER THE PAST YEAR, TWO MAJOR DEALS WITH WELL KNOWN PUBLISHERS FELL THROUGH BEFORE I COULD EVEN GET FIRST ISSUES OUT!



BUT THERE'S BEEN SOME GOOD NEWS TOO...

MY CARTOONING HAS OPENED THE DOOR FOR SOME COMMISSIONED JOBS THAT HAVE PROVED FAR MORE LUCRATIVE THAN MY OWN COMICS WORK, WHICH HAS HELPED SUPPORT MY HABIT...



Rob Hanes appears courtesy of WCG Comics (and is available for children's parties).

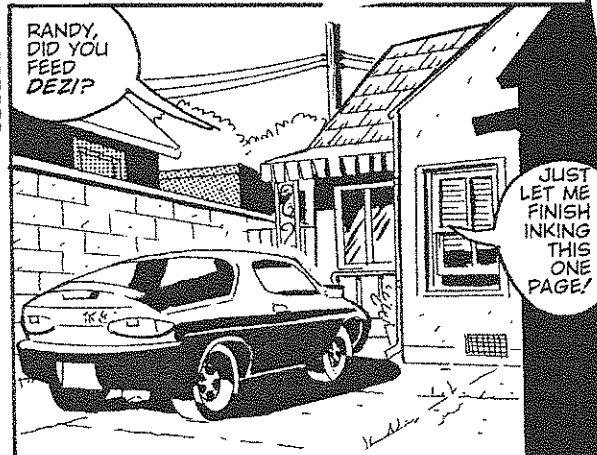
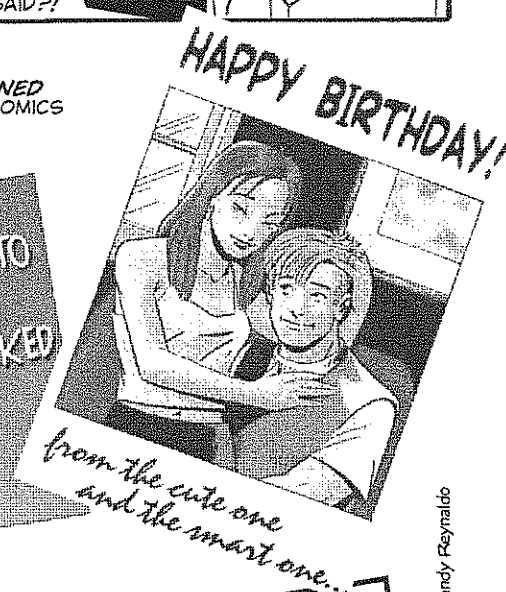
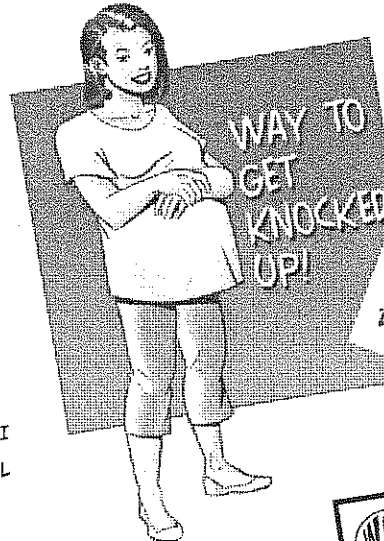


Walt Disney Television

THIS INCLUDES SOME DEVELOPMENT WORK FOR DISNEY TELEVISION AND ORIGINAL ART FOR A PROMINENT GREETING CARD COMPANY (PICTURED AT RIGHT).

AND STUBBORN CARTOONIST THAT I AM, I'VE JUST RELEASED MY BOOK IN "ASHCAN" FORMAT (SEE BELOW RIGHT) AND CONTINUE WORKING ON MORE COMIC-STRIP ADVENTURES FEATURING GOOD OL' ROB HANES (DID YOU REALLY THINK I'D DO A PAGE WITHOUT WORKING HIM SOMEHOW?)

SO FOR NOW, SADINA, DEZI AND I REMAIN HAPPILY ENCONCED IN OUR RENTED HOUSE IN BEAUTIFUL CULVER CITY...



THIS SUMMER, MY GOALS ARE TO CONTINUE WORK ON MY COMICS, TO ATTEND THE COMIC-CON INTERNATIONAL IN SAN DIEGO IN AUGUST, AND FOR SADINA AND I TO TAKE A WELL DESERVED VACATION IN WASHINGTON, DC!

NEXT ISH: WHAT I DID ON MY SUMMER VACATION!

ABOVE: A typical day at WCG's Culver City Headquarters with Randy's Batmobile parked in front.

© 1998 by Randy Reynaldo

IMMORTALS' Forum

by Homer Tom

Ed. Note: Though the propriety of including this column in the *Immortal Chronicles* (which is, after all, a family publication), has long been questioned, our editorial board always *insisted*, at the very least, on the absolute veracity of every word contained herein. Nevertheless, this particular letter we find completely unbelievable, chiefly because the contributor (who wishes to be known as "Homer Tom") talks at great length about his encounters with various bikini models but makes no claims whatsoever to have had any sort of sexual congress with any or all of them (preferably at the same time) as we know he must have. We find this completely unbelievable and, worse, insulting to the great Immortal tradition of at least claiming to have had "relations" with any bikini models one might run across. Ergo, we have to assume to assume that, in this instance, "Homer" is lying.

Dear Immortals' Forum:

I am a long-time reader and fan, but this is the first time I have written to you. I find the Forum stimulating but, frankly, a lot of it is obviously just plain fiction. Some of your stories are just too incredible to be true. However, I want to share a fantastic experience that, even now, I can hardly believe happened...



ABOVE Computer majors sharing a moment.

Thanks to my involvement with the fundraising group, Celebrity Sports Invitational, I have traveled to some pretty amazing locations. My last trip was to Alaska where I got to hang out with celebs — but that's another story.

One of the group's regular sponsors is Hawaiian Tropic, makers of suntan lotions and other skin care products. They promote their product by sending teams of Hawaiian Tropic girls to events all over the world: the Indy 500, the Cannes Film Festival, Planet Hollywood restaurant openings, and various celebrity fundraisers such as their own Celebrity Sports Invitational. These girls attract attention wherever they go.

Anyway, I got chummy with Allan, the Canadian distributor of Hawaiian Tropic, and we naturally got to talking about the girls. Allan told me of the annual Miss Hawaiian Tropic International pageant where they recruit girls for the team. This four-day event was upcoming and you can imagine how quickly I answered when he asked if I would like to attend!

Trips to Las Vegas always begin with a sense of hope and anticipation, and this time was no different as my buddy, Chris, and I arrived, but something other than the gambling tables awaited us. As Chris and I checked in at the Tropicana Hotel, a voice behind me said, "Excuse me, are you one of the judges for the pageant?" I turned around and my jaw dropped to the floor — there were two gorgeous women beside me! Not only that, but I knew them from my previous Alaska trip (we had shared a table at dinner).

When I picked up my jaw and regained composure I yelled, "Monica! Erin! Remember me — we met in Alaska?" Monica looked at me only a second before a flash of recognition crossed her face. She even remembered my name! With that, we hugged and kissed. The girls' job was to greet judges and guests so they could not stay to chat long, but she quickly summarized their activities and promised to see us later. Chris watched in stunned silence the whole time.

After dropping off our bags in the room, I quickly caught up with Allan to let him know we had arrived and had been welcomed in fine fashion. Allan just smiled and said he would take care of us, handing me a wristband and admission tickets to each of the events. The tickets were marked "reserved seating," which meant we got to sit with Allan and other VIP guests of Hawaiian Tropic. "Make sure you have a lot of film," he commented.

First up was the welcome party where the 82 contestants from around the world were introduced. Each girl walked on stage and stated her name and country of origin.

They wore costumes representative of their country. Some costumes were better than others, but who were we to be critical? Taking up position in front of the mike alongside several other photographers, I snapped dozens of pictures. After the introductions, a band got the party really going. For the rest of the night the girls mingled with the crowd — judges and guests alike — talking, dancing and posing for pictures. This competition was not merely for the crown of Miss Hawaiian Tropic International; many of the guests were agents, photographers and producers,

so naturally a feeding frenzy ensued for modeling contracts, photo shoots and movie deals. I caught sight of Monica but decided against speaking to her since she was seated beside Los Angeles Lakers owner Jerry Buss for most of the evening. This girl kept some pretty serious company!

The next afternoon brought the poolside swimsuit competition. With MTV's "Downtown" Julie Brown and soap-opera star Dan McVicar (*The Bold and the Beautiful*) leading the way, the girls marched onto a stage in front of an audience swelled with the ranks of hotel guests lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time. The crowd (about evenly divided between men and women) was vocal in supporting their favorites as each girl stepped forward to introduce herself. This competition finished with the girls again fanning out into the crowd. The Tropicana's pool side gardens buzzed with activity as the girls made themselves available for pictures and interviews in hopes of winning and of a career in modeling. I continued to play photographer, getting several models to pose beside waterfalls and with Chris or me.

As the sun went down, the luau began. This was the most casual event as the girls did not have to appear on stage and wore

comfortable clothes and shoes. Chris and I joined in the spirit with our Hawaiian shirts and leis around our neck. Chris also sported a judge's badge he "found" by the pool, making him quite popular all night. The open buffet and bar kept us on the move as we kept an eye out for our favorites, as we worked the party and stopped frequently for pictures. As we returned from one of our many trips to the bar, Julie Brown was in front of a video crew providing commentary. As Chris and I walked by she pulled us aside and interviewed us!

There we were, a drink in one hand, a cigar in another and on-camera with Ms. Brown. Ever the hardhitting journalist, she threw us fastball questions like "Are you having fun?" and "What do you think of the women?" I guess Chris and I answered correctly and enthusiastically enough because she signed off by grabbing us both around the waist and running off-camera proclaiming something about having some fun of her own.

A great surf band provided the beat as the party ran late into the night. During this time I ran into Monica and Erin, and we talked for a while. Both are past winners of national competitions in the U.S. and Canada, respectively, but no longer compete. Rather, they serve as Hawaiian Tropics owner Ron

Rice's main assistants and "senior" team members who jetset around the world chaperoning the newer girls.

They tried to portray an unglamorous lifestyle for us — all that flying, traveling 300 days a year, the early wake-up calls for photo-shoots — but they got no sympathy from me. Despite their lifestyle and image, I found them both extremely intelligent, articulate and funny. In fact, many of the contestants were equally impressive: pre-med students, computer majors, television reporters, even a dental surgeon! On the other hand, a few were clearly brainless bimbos.

The Finals: One last chance for the girls to impress the judges and grab the crown of Miss Hawaiian Tropic International. As Chris and I took our seats five feet from the stage (five feet!) we took note of the luminaries around us.

Ten feet from us was Donald Trump. He held court as a parade of people came by to shake hands and have a photograph taken with him. Next to him was NFL great Franco Harris, looking fit and ready for another "Immaculate Reception." Further down the front row were Jerry Buss and Joe Pesci.

The show began with a musical medley as the girls came out in groups that danced, sang, or seductively flicked a lighter in

unison. The finals were being taped for a show airing later this year. So, as Julie Brown and Dan McVicar made small talk, the audience was coerced into performing for various reaction shots, exhibiting the necessary suspense and enthusiasm.

At last, the girls returned and reprised their swimsuit presentation.

Wow.

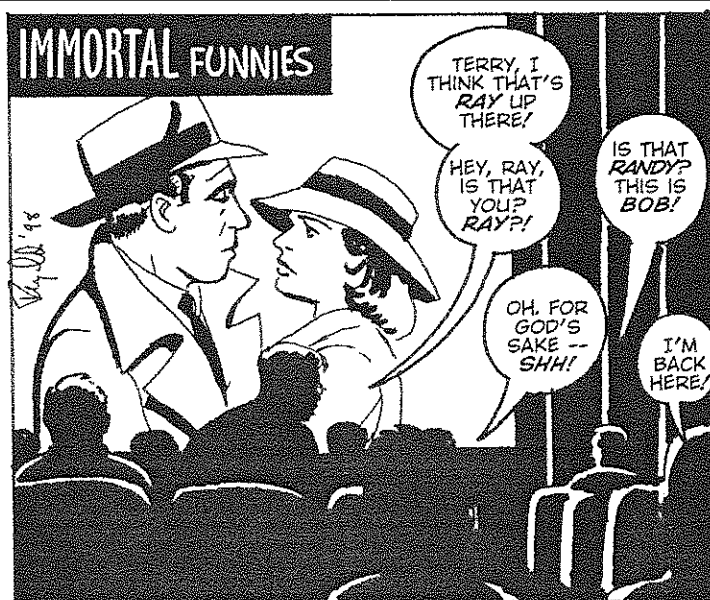
During a short interlude by a magician, the girls changed into cocktail attire. Against the backdrop of the Paris skyline, the girls sashayed down the runway in French-designed gowns.

Double wow.

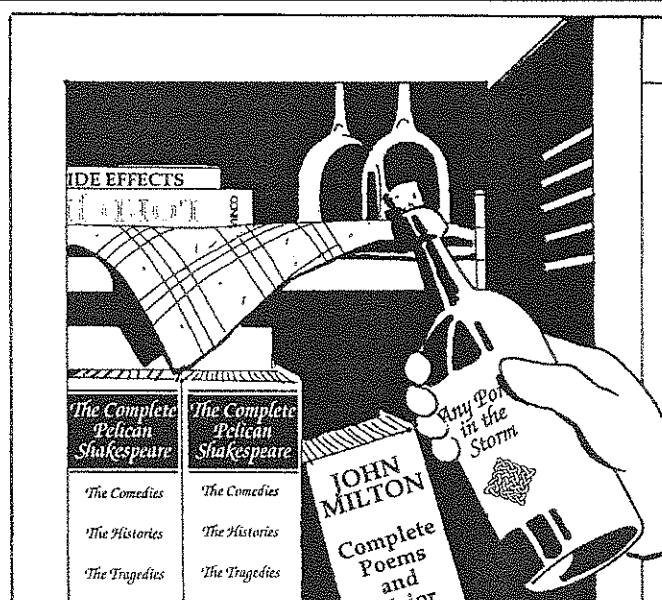
Finally, they all gathered on stage and breathlessly waited as the thirteen finalists were announced (normally there would only be twelve, but there was a tie for one spot).

The suspense grew higher as the field narrowed to five. The audience and judges caught their breath as the five finalists changed back into their swimsuits and returned on stage with Ron Rice. Starting with the fourth runner-up, Rice announced the winners. To my mild surprise, Jennifer England from Lansing, Michigan was crowned Miss Hawaiian Tropic International 1998.

With the winner announced, photographers were allowed on-stage to capture the victory. Again,



HANGOUTS OF THE IMMORTALS (Number 1 in a series): Melnitz Hall (1980-85). The Immortals learn to recognize each other in the dark by silhouette in Melnitz Theatre...



Dodd Hall (c. 1983-85): Contents of the locker shared by Randy, Ray and Terry on a typical day: Two Pelican Shakespeare collections, two Milton books, Joseph Conrad's *LORD JIM*, Woody Allen's *SIDE EFFECTS*, a blanket, two wine glasses, and a bottle of port.

thanks to Allan, I made it onto the stage to take part in one last photo opportunity. An opportunity I did not waste, as I was able to get great pictures of the finalists with their trophies as they stood beside Ron Rice and the celebrity judges. Also, with the help of Chris, I was able to get photos of myself with each finalist.

The evening was not over however. Allan had to catch a red-eye to Florida but he made sure Chris and I had passes to the after-party in Studio 54 at the MGM Grand. It was after midnight when we arrived and there was a huge line led to the entrance, but we sailed right in with our passes. A special area on the top floor had been roped off for us where we had our own bar and dance floor.

Chris and I lit some up some Cuban cigars, sat back and absorbed the scene. Contestants were arriving by now, having changed into comfortable clothes ready to unwind and dance the night away. Right away, in walked Donald Trump who immediately took a booth overlooking the floor. Throughout the rest of the night a parade of women would sit beside him, the object of their dreams within reach. Chris and I took a puff, looked at each other and realized this was but a small taste of a very exclusive lifestyle.

During the party I ran into Monica and Erin and asked them what their plans were, particularly if they were going to the next Celebrity Sports Invitational in Jamaica. Monica replied she would be at the Cannes Film Festival and Erin would be getting married right about then. That was fine, however, as we made plans to see each other in Puerta Vallarta at the Fall Invitational.

By the way, I won big at the tables. ♦



The Lady and the Gorilla

by Bob Westal

The following article contains sexual violence, ethnic slurs, and, yes, blasphemy. If any of these offend you, you'll probably want to read this even more. But now that you've been warned, you'll have a harder time getting angry and will have no one to blame except yourself.

Part I: I am Dissed

It's a beautiful, cold moonlit night, in Nye County, not far from the Nevada Nuclear Test Site. It's 1986 and I am embarrassing myself miserably.

It's a long story what I was doing there, but suffice it to say that a bunch of us were arrested on trespassing charges at the Test Site and had to stay several days in order to complete our "community service."

We were a motley assortment to begin with: a few standard New Agey peaceniks, their veins flowing with the very soy milk of human kindness and bent on purging every last trace of aggression from their being (in most cases such purges seem to take a wrong turn and delete the sense of humor, leaving the aggression, or at least the passive aggression, wholly intact); a few 12-steppers very "young" in their "recovery" who tended to weep hourly; a couple of more or less sincere, more politically minded activists; and I. If I had feared a four day bliss-out, my fears were quickly confirmed.

When we arrived at the camp sight where we were to stay while doing our time, a woman (who, in my vague memory, looks exactly like Shelly Duvall plus two or three pounds and maybe a nose job) stopped everything and said "I think that right now we should all gather under the stars, hold hands, and talk about the significance of what we did today."

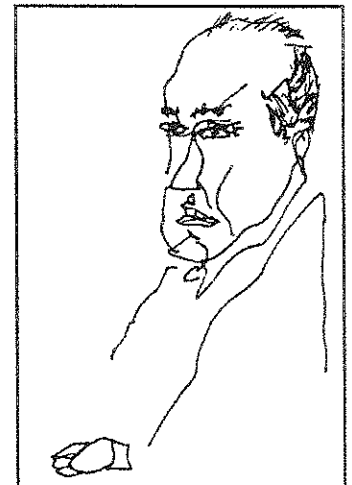
There I was, forced to hold hands with two total clammy pawed strangers, both men. Worse, I was forced to listen to the verbiage of one young activist/horndog in particular, who it appeared had honed his sights on "Shelly," she being the only woman under 50 in our group. Blinded by lust though this young gentleman was, he was fairly skillful at hiding his horniness behind a well-constructed facade of sensitivity and political orthodoxy. "Oh," my carnal cohort, moaned, "it's so important. Just think of the future generations who will grow up free of radiation. And we, humbles servants to mankind that we are..."

To top off that treat, Shelly suggested a group hug. She continued to suggest group hugs again every morning before we began work and every night after we were done.

A profound time was had by all.

And that was the good part. You see, our "service" consisted of going to the local cemetery and cleaning out dirt and tumbleweeds from the cemetery. The thing was, aside from headstones, there was nothing in the cemeteries but dirt and tumbleweeds. So we kind of swept off the stones, cleared the tumbleweeds, and watched the wind blow the tumbleweeds and the dust back; brushed off the stones, cleared out the tumbleweeds, watched the wind blow the tumbleweeds and the dust back....

After a couple of days of this, *all* of us were bored beyond belief. That's when I came, briefly, to the rescue. I did what I always do in situations where conversation wanes. Amongst the New Agers, the 12-steppers and the committed leftists, I unleashed my inner *tumbler* and started to tell every joke I could think of. After a couple of jokes it became clear that I was on a roll, the laughs getting bigger and more sustained with each joke.



ABOVE The author in a pensive moment.

The biggest surprise was that the best laugher of all was Shelly. Underneath the moral certitude, saccharin sensitivity and vague spirituality, she had apparently grown a wonderful sense of humor (here defined as the ability to laugh at my jokes). If she hadn't been such a clear example of tofu-for-brains, I might have started to dream about competing with my friend, the PC Lothario, for her attentions. But it's a good thing I harbored no such ambitions.

As I started to run our of old favorites, I told a story my mother was fond of that, truth be told, had never really been one of my favorites. But I needed *material*.

A woman and her friend go to the zoo. In the primate area, they are especially taken by the gorilla. After a moment, the gorilla goes crazy, jumping up and down and pulling at the bars. Amazingly, he is able to bend the bars open and escapes.

The gorilla grabs the stunned woman and has his way with her.

A couple of days later, the woman's friend calls her.

"How are you doing?" asks the concerned friend.

"Terrible. It's been two days and he hasn't called...."

The next sound I heard was that made by ten billion Nye County crickets.

I waited, but there would no more peels of laughter this night.

Shelly-with-the-wonderful-sense-of-humor was suddenly replaced by her other self: Shelly, the group-hug dominatrix.

"Rape isn't funny," she said, more in sorrow than in anger.

A second before, I was flying — I was in the comedy zone, man.

Now, I was in flop-sweat hell.

I should say at this juncture that the thought that what the gorilla had done to the woman in the joke was rape had never occurred to me.

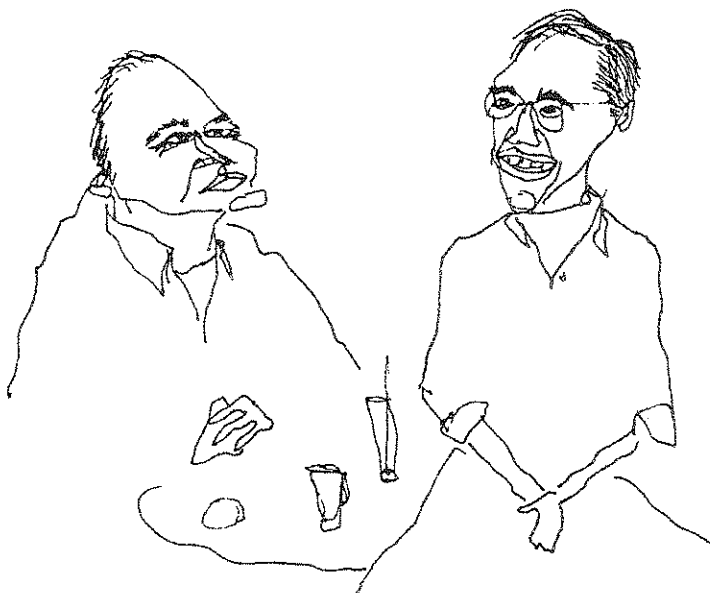
Of course, the thought that the gorilla had *seduced* the woman had never occurred to me either. It was a *joke* for Christ's sake. But I felt terrible and my *immediate* response was the all-too-logical, "No, of course not. Rape is never funny." I tried to argue that the joke wasn't about rape at any rate, but there was no going back.

I had blown it. I was no longer beloved, I was despised. Well, there was always Vegas to look forward to?....

Part II: I Terrify the World

Now, some twelve years later, the real truth occurs to me. Why are jokes about female rape not funny, but jokes about murder are? If it's rape that's so sensitive, why are jokes about the rape of *men* so popular? Why is that jokes about jokes about the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition are considered a scream, while jokes about the Holocaust will cause actual screaming and an ADL picket line? Why are dead baby jokes considered borderline permissible (except maybe at Operation Rescue rallies)? What's the difference between an "ethnic" joke, which is usually considered okay, from a racist joke, which definitely isn't? What's the difference between once of those cute Jerry Seinfeld "Men _____, but women _____" jokes and the works of the hated Andrew Dice Clay?

Here's what I finally concluded, there *is* no difference,



LEFT: The editorial staff at the IMMORTAL CHRONICLES

except for the intent of the person telling the joke. If I am racist and sexist and misogynist and homophobic then every joke I tell will somehow wind up racist, sexist, misogynist, and homophobic. If, on the other, I am the paragon of tolerance and wisdom that I know myself to be, then nothing that is truly "offensive" can pass my lips or my typing finger.

Wasn't the joke about the gorilla not really about forced inter-species sexual congress, but really about the tendency of many women, who suffering from low self-esteem can only look to men for validation in the form of a post-coital phone call? Isn't that joke, then, not offensive at all but an incisive commentary on a contemporary tragedy of modern life?

For, you see, all jokes, if looked at properly through inclusive, multiculturally friendly eyes are as instructive as Aesop's fables, as bereft of malicious intent as Baby Huey, as filled with good intentions as the entire runs of *Thirty-Something and Life Goes On!*

To demonstrate my point, I will tell various jokes that some people

— actually *all* people — would consider offensive. Then I will explain how, viewed correctly, they really are, well, just plain sweet.

Here goes:

Q: What do you call a _____ (insert ethnic group here) who's won a Nobel Prize?

A: _____ (insert worst available epithet of said ethnic group here)

This joke is bad. Vile. Not at all funny. Whichever group you choose to trash, this one-liner is inappropriate anywhere. But, I have to prove my point or end this article here and now, and we wouldn't want that, would we?

Okay. So the joke is blatantly racist. But that's only if the person telling the joke approves of the condition it describes. You could look at as being more a statement of a sad fact than an encouragement to behave in a certain way. In fact, this very same joke has been used by some militant types to describe the futility of oppressed groups trying to find acceptance in an inherently racist society.

1 In fairness to our primate friends, I should state that, far from being cross-species rapists, gorillas are among God's most gentle creatures. Also, I should state for the record that the average male gorilla's penis is approximately two inches long. Therefore, even if a gorilla were inclined to try and force his attentions on a human woman, she would probably only point and laugh. Source: YOU DON'T KNOW JACK, 1st edition.

2 I was destined to lose every penny I came with, save bus fare home and \$2.99 for one last, blessed steak dinner at Binion's Horseshoe. And it tasted GOOD.

Nevertheless, it's important not to excessively confuse words with real thoughts; or, as the Zen saying goes, to confuse the finger pointing at the moon for the moon.

Here's what I mean. I was taught quite assiduously by my parents to *never* use any sort of ethnic epithet.³ At the same time, these same parents who taught me to be polite to people of all races and creeds, panicked about property values when a family from Japan moved in next door. To this day, I don't think they've ever driven through a Latino or African-American neighborhood without at least a mild conniption fit. Of course, my father will tell you he has no ill feeling toward anyone of any race, but, you see, *they all hate him!* On the other hand, neither of my parents has uttered an ethnic slur since VJ day.

Let's move on.

Three store owners of my own tribe, Hymie, Herman, and Herb are talking:

Hymie: Oh vey, what a year. No sales at all. Then a terrible fire. Fortunately, I had some insurance and a very successful sale afterwards.

Herman: For me, as well. Nobody comes in my store all year. I think I'm going to have to close down. Then, immense fire in my warehouse. Well, I was lucky to have such a good policy. And the sale went pretty nice, too.

Herb: I know for what you gents are talking about. I couldn't give nothing away this year. Then, there was a terrible flood. Wiped out half my stock. I, too, thanks to God, also had insurance. I, too, was lucky to have a very successful sale afterwards.

Hymie: Excuse me, Herb, but how do you start a flood?

From this joke, an ignorant person could decide that two-thirds of all Jews are immoral, money grubbing arsonists. In fact, the real figures are that only 50% of Jews have actually burned down a building *on purpose*, so the joke could easily be seen as anti-Semitic.

Nevertheless, this story is actually told most often by Jews themselves, and therefore, through its mockery of an ethnic stereotype, helps give us of the Hebraic construction the ethnic cohesiveness we so want and need. It also serves as useful warning to gentiles of our true plans for world domination through the forces of ZOG.

Speaking of my tribe and its all time #1 most famous member, there's a whole subgenre of jokes that a cousin of mine used to refer to as "sickie Jesus jokes" but which, as I shall demonstrate, are not in any way sickie.

Q: What couldn't Jesus get into medical school?

A: He got nailed on the boards.

This is nothing more than a statement of historical and biblical fact. In fact, it would be heretical to state that Jesus didn't get nailed on the boards...those crosses weren't made of Formica, you know!

Here's another one:

Jesus is on the cross. In order to further humiliate the messiah, Pontius Pilate, eager to please the Pharisees,⁴ orders his soldiers to circle Jesus, banging pots and pans, singing obscene ballads, and throwing garbage.

Horrified and helpless, the apostles look on. Finally Paul notices that the Savior's mouth is open and He appears to be saying something.

Paul runs to get a ladder. What could the Lord be saying? Finally,

he rushes to the top of the ladder, and leans over. He can just barely hear. Even though Paul cannot make out the words, he can tell that Jesus is singing. But what?

Finally, Paul, leaning over close, hears Christ's last song.

"I love a parade...."

This joke might be seen as a tasteless and silly jest at the expense of the most sacred moment in all of Christianity. Actually, however, this story is wholly consistent with the spirit of this great religion. Christ preached humility and compliance. And, if good Christian's are expected to love their enemies, why shouldn't they also sing along with them?

Okay. I've survived so far. You don't hate me, do you? Of course, not. Okay, here's one more.

God is talking to the angel Gabriel about where He'd like to take his next vacation.

"I hear Alpha-Centuri's nice this time of the year?" say the archangel, ignoring the fact that, as a non-earthly being, the concept of time of year is should be utterly meaningless.

"Nah," says the Lord. "I was just there an eon ago."

"Jupiter's always nice."

"Gas giant's smell," saith the Lord.

"Well," says the archangel, "there's always Earth."

God shudders. "No way. Last time I was there I knocked up this Jewish chick and they're still talking about it."

Okay, to understand this joke, you have to look at it through its mythopoetic context. God, embodying the male principle....No, I can't say that....Another way of looking at it is a deeply moralistic satire on the travel industry and intergalactic sex tours.

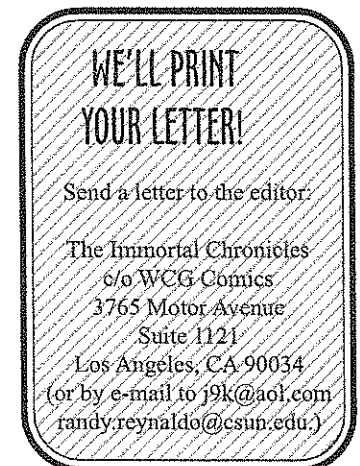
No.

If there's such a thing as a secular humanist hell, I'm surely going to it for this. I cannot coherently defend this joke! Lord, I am done. For.

My deepest apologies, folks. This was a terrible article to write. These were terrible jokes to have told (or remembered). And I especially never shudda told that *&*#++ gorilla joke to that wise and wonderful woman who looked like Shelly Duvall. I'm really sorry to all of you — women, people of all races, Jews, Christians, Apostles, and primates.

I'll do better next issue, I swear to...well, any Being you want....

NEXT: Dead Baby Jokes to Tell at AIDS Support Groups.



³ Except maybe for "Polack"; we'd hate to ruin all those great jokes!

⁴ By the way, these were the Jews who really did help to kill Christ. Sure they had some help from the Romans, but you know what constituency Governor Pilate was trying to please; in its day, the killing of heretical Jews was sort of the Roman equivalent of aid to Israel.



Where Immortals Gather...

Heard and Seen about Your Favorite Immortals, as surreptitiously recorded and observed by Lola Monique Sanchez

Fanboy Frenzy: Anticipation is running high for this year's annual Immortal trek to Comicon International in San Diego (formerly known as the San Diego Comicon, which, its new name notwithstanding, is still being held in the *trés internationale* city of San Diego...I suppose they mean "international" as in "Gateway to Tijuana...")

What makes this con (that's fanspeak for "convention") particularly exciting is that, for the first time ever, several of the comics-addled Immortals actually have *professional* reasons for attending these annual rites of geekdom.

The Randster, of course, continues his eternal fight to obtain a larger audience for his brainspawn, *Rob Hanes* (*Et tu, Image?* Better luck next year, Rand!) Maybe then, the typical comic fanboy's response to the question, "Who's Rob Hanes?" won't be "Oh, yeah, didn't he used to play shortstop for the Orioles back in the '70s?"

Meanwhile Mssr. Triant ("Deadlines...I don't need no stinkin' deadlines") Delegeane, while also pulling heavy duty as the doting sire of two lovely young fangirls-in-waiting, has recently clawed his way up to the majestic level of Managing Editor at Matt Groening's *Bongo Comics*. Ay, *Caramba!*

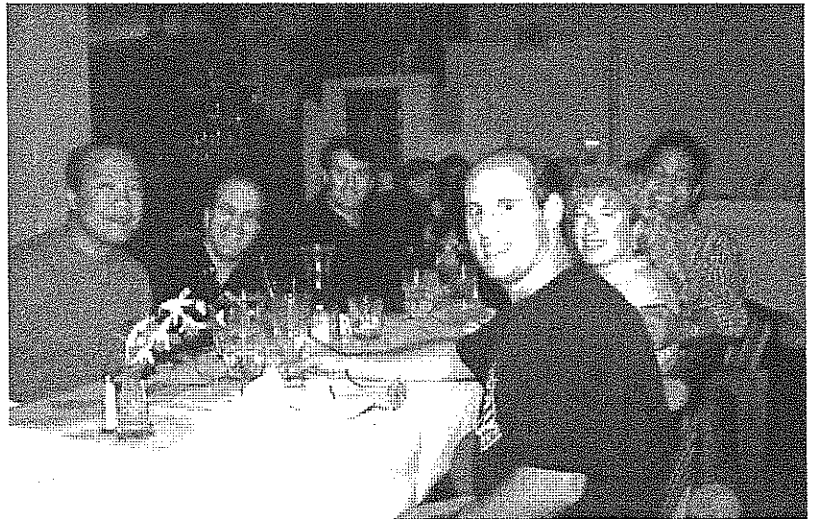
And the Brickman, of course, has become fandom's most fabulous freelancer. What new revelations will pour from that mighty pen of this nerdy newshound? Are the rumors true that Topps Comics will shortly be chronicling the death of Bazoooka Joe in a shattering 15-issue

miniseries, "Death Be Not Stuck Up?" Discriminating fanboys just *have* to know!

All of which leaves the *Immortal Chronicle's* faithful editor, ol' "Hollywood" Bob Westal light-years behind in the dweeb derby, despite his brief glimpse of the high life in the wake of the epochal *Three Days of the Fanboy*. But don't worry, he keeps muttering something about this movie he's working on. (We suppose that's why he recently moved to tiny digs near the corner of Hollywood and La Brea. Who in the Sam *!\$# does

he think he's kidding? Bob, baby, just because you live in Hollywood doesn't make you a filmmaker, but don't feel too bad, it also doesn't make you a street hustler.) Look for Pokey to be working very hard at appearing to "hang" with his more successful kindred whenever he spies one of the pubescent paparazzi who haunt the corridors of San Diego's glittering convention center. (And, hey, Bob, where's my footnote? I feel left out! Don't I rate one of your incomparably "clever" digressions? *I'm waiting...*)

In any case, anticipation is running high for this con. Yours truly, the lovely and talented *Lola*, will be joining the gang this year. Of special interest to Your Intrepid Immortals Reporter: the Immortals' legendary annual post-con assembly at "Pea Soup" Anderson's Restaurant and Motor Inn in Carlsbad, where I'll finally be in a



ABOVE: Where Immortals dine. Around the table from left: Homer Tom, Bob Westal, David Gordy, Randy Reynaldo, Sadina Rothspan, and Terry Delegeane.

position to confirm or deny the existence of the fabled "green baths" that are said to invariably follow this annual confab. (Though all Immortals uniformly deny the existence of any such emerald ablutions, how do they explain those startling verdant splotches this Reporter noticed matting Bob's radically resplendent chest hair back in '94.)

No Soccer Players Please: Despite marriages, the birth of children, and other distractions that would have divided the solidarity of lesser Immortals, the weekend ritual of playing ball and meeting for brunch to discuss film, books, world politics, and, yes, bodacious babes (as well as the debatably non-bodacious...Longtime Immortal watchers will ne'er forget the nasty "Barbara Hershey is less attractive than Shelley Duvall and Kathy

Bates combined" incident of 1993!) survives.

Nevertheless, dark clouds loom with the World Cup finals taking place just as this publication is "put to bed." You see, everyone who knows Señor Reynaldo knows there are three things the Randster disdains: *France, Brazil and Soccer*. So far, all remains quiet, but word on the mean streets of Culver City has it that this week's game has been canceled....Are the other boys fearful of a repeat of the nasty incident in a park abutting a convocation of the Franco-Brazilian Friendship Society several years back, which resulted the following verbiage emerging from the otherwise congenitally congenial cartoonist: "*No, you listen you Low-scoring-Frog-Eurotrash-subtitled-filmmaking-Jack-Lange-Jean-Paul-Belmondo-reject-from-Les-Miserables, you-bossanova-beach-*

going-samba-guitar-playing-Gilberto-Gil-and-Antonio-Carlos-Jobim-loving-eater-of-delicious-spiced-meats-frequent-sex-having-kicker-around-of-balls!"

Baby Blues: And, finally, we move on to a more hopeful and life-affirming note as paralegal and trivia meister Dave and wife Lois await the nearly imminent arrival of the Gordy-ling in their new home in a particularly hard-to-find (just say the word's "the last Seinfeld" to Bob and see the tears gush forth!) location somewhere in Mar Vista. Thank goodness for *Ben Stein's Money*, says the Gordial one, no longer in financial *Jeopardy*.

It's going to be a boy, so expect the discussions of the pros and cons of the designated hitter rule to continue unto the fifth generation.

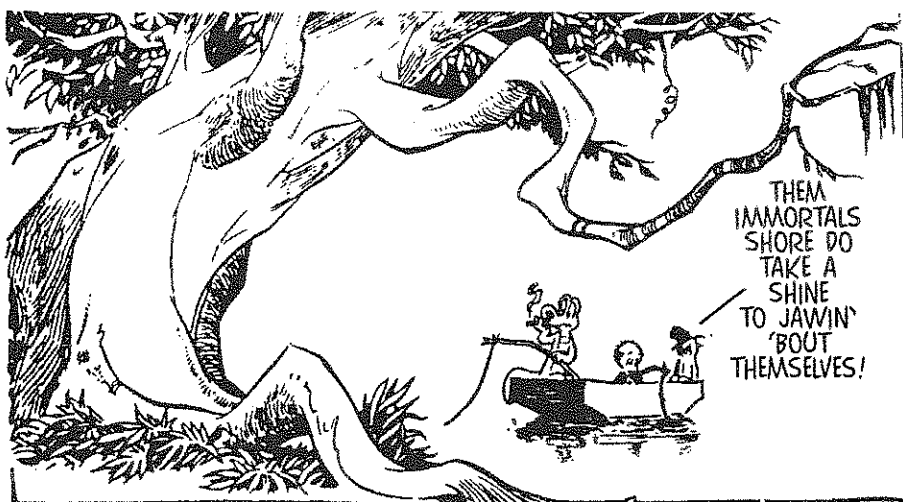
A recent Sunday also saw the Immortals Ladies's Auxilliary getting together for Ms. Lois's shower. Joining Lois on the lookout for any male-Immortal interlopers will be the hot-sauce guzzling Ms. Sadina Rothspan (actually, that's *Dr. Sadina Rothspan to you*), and the ever serene (and alliterative) Donna Deleageane there to provide advice on geeks 'n fatherhood.

Well, gotta rocket: word has it that, with his parents out of town and unavailable to crack the whip as he completes his dissertation, Ray "Taterman" Marcus has been spotted at various Yorba Linda strip clubs, supposedly doing some last minute "research" for his thesis on the Nixon administration. Yes, we know Tricky Dick hailed from Yorba Linda, but, c'mon, can you imagine him hooting "Shake those muchacha-maracas!?" Ray, try doing your thesis next time on the Kennedys. Now *they* knew how to party!

May iced tea kisses and pastrami dreams be yours 'til next time. Toodles! ♦

Lola Monique Sanchez is the former lifestyle columnist for Fangoria. Watch for her forthcoming title, One with the Immortals: Life with America's Unknown Glittering Literati and Other Humiliations (WCG Comics Press).

Lola will gladly pay for any gossip, dirt and incriminating photos about the Immortals that she can use for this column. Especially about Mr. Westal.



"ONE FINE DAY..."

BY TATERMAN

There is something we need to deal with, and I think you know what it is. Boys, we need some nicknames. Oh, I can hear you now, your cryin' and bellyachin'. "What's the matter?" you'll say. "Our names are good enough for the day-to-day."

And it's true: "Randy" is good in the office, "Homer" is fine in the pool hall, and "Bob" is fine in the street, on an afternoon pitchin' pennies. But there are times when a man — or woman, for there are women among us — needs a special name. A name that defines your essence and makes the ravens scream. Thus, on my connecting flight back home from Memphis to Los Angeles, I came up with the following names for our members, for the Immortals themselves and the Immortals' Ladies Auxiliary. These are only suggestions, but I must tell you that unless someone takes a violent dislike to their new name, I will be tempted to start using them on a casual basis, in print if not in person. And remember while reading them: a nickname is not something you like, it's something you have to live with. So here they are:

- Bob: "Pokey," or "Uncle Ogan"
- Dave: "Skeeterhawk" (or "Skeeter," for short)
- Homer: "Cousin Ho"
- Randy: "Scribbler"
- Ray: "Taterman"
- Scott: "Pantalones"
- Terry: "Bubalicious the Shoeless Bear" ("Bubalish")
- Donna: "Mater-a-ma-heart"
- Lois: "Lulu Belle"
- Sadina: "Rosebud," or "Willow Wand"

Now, I have prepared a short narrative — a drama, if you will — to show how easily these names fall into place. Had this column been written in 1962 instead of 1998, it could have saved our parents a whole lot of trouble.



One hot summer's day Pokey, Taterman, and Scribbler were outplayin' ball, out on the field by Dawson's Creek, when along comes Pantalones, whistlin' a merry tune.

"Hey, Pantalones!" they cry. "Come sit for a spell! Have you seen Cousin Ho?"

Pantalones, he lay low, but then after awhile raises his head, and seein' as how it warn't no one who had lent him money, but rather his old chums instead, well, Pantalones, he answers back. "Hrmp! Hrmp!" says Pantalones, in his Falstaffian drawl. "Nay, dear friends, I have not seen Cousin Ho, and a good fellow he is. But I have just come from

Bubalish and Mater-a-ma-heart, in their burrow by the weeping willow, down by the sounding sea. Their little ones, Junebug and Teeger, they're comin' along just fine."

"That's good news, good news," the others all say, as they scuffle in the dirt with their feet, or their shoes for those 'as had 'em. "Those little gals will be heartbreakers for sure, when they grow up, for sure." There was general consent.

Just then Skeeterhawk and Lulu Belle happened by, lookin' at each other all tender-like, an' holdin' hands as ya please. Lulu Belle was with child. "Howdy, fellas," Skeeter says. "Y'all know Lulu, my wife." Lulu Belle, she just smiles and blushes, and looks away, kinda bashful like, wearin' a purty yeller dress.

"Sure, how ya doin' there, Lu?" they say.

"I'm right fine, boys," she says. "That's good, that's good,"

they say. The Immortals sure like their women.

Then Skeeter up an' asks, "Hey Scribbler, how's your Rosebud?" as he pushed his straw hat back on his head, his yarmulkah peakin' out underneath. Scribbler, he nods and smiles, and then looks kinda dreamy. "She's fine, just fine," Scribbler says, showin' off his big white teeth. "I reckon she's finishin' her treatise right now on nefarious communicable diseases. But she's doin' just fine, thankee," he says. Everybody grins.

Then Taterman pulls a pocketknife and stick outta his back pocket, wipes his brow with his red hanky, and begins to whittle, seein' as how the ball has come to rest. "Well, fellas, you know what they say."

"What's that, Taterman?" asks Pokey, sometimes known as Uncle Ogan. (Pokey's depending on his mood, or

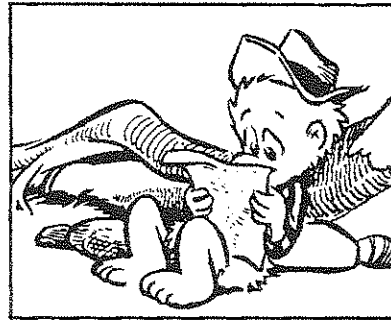
how much whisky is in 'im, Ogan is the jester of the group, or else the wise old owl. He's a political southpaw, too, havin' worked for them anti-muke fellers, until he was run outta town.) "I say, what's that, Taterman?" he says, the smell o' liquor on his breath, his eyes jus' a-rollin' around.

"Well," Taterman says, gazin' at his friends, "our ol' life is a fine row to hoe, make no mistake. And it'd be a blasphemy to not pay tribute where tribute is due." The others nod, those as wore hats

removed 'em, and the small band of friends stand silent, heads bowed, givin' their thanks to Great God Almighty (while one or two in the group look around and snuffle, glancin' guiltily through squinted eyes. "Prayer in the schools," Pokey mutters to himself).

That done and the Lord be thanked, they put back on their bonnets, and Pantalones takes a flask from outta his hip pocket. "Yep, it's a fine day, a fine day," the old actor says, as they all crowd around and take turns for a snort. Then they head for the shade of a grand old tree, laughin' and scufflin' along the way. "A fine, fine day...." ♦

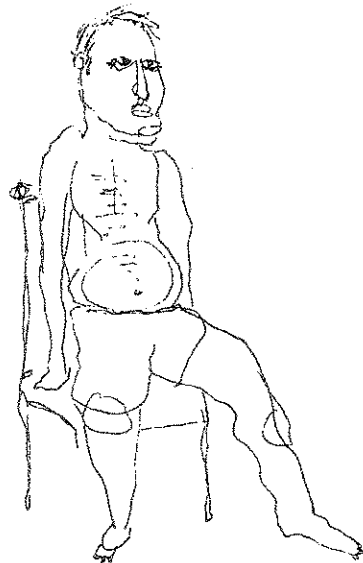
The art misappropriated for the purposes of this article belongs to the late cartoonist Walt Kelly, from his comic strip POGO. To add insult to injury, it was used without permission.



IMMORTAL CLASSIFIEDS

101 IMMORTALS SEEKING WOMEN

SWM, 36, graduate student in 20th century U.S. history, currently living at home with his parents, with little money, no job, few prospects, still le-



gally married. Looking for romance over inexpensive wines, good coffee, and the possibility of taking long walks. Formerly possessing a reputation in my youth, I now enjoy a good book, with a blanket on my lap. My rheumatism is sporadic and not incapacitating. Beyond that, I am in good health, and willing to do what is required of me. **YOU**: have a car, are intelligent, funny, and attractive, oh, so delightful, and willing to recite Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven," clad in a gossamer gown, before small groups of intimate friends. Dearest: I have made a study of the kama sutra my life's work, though I'm afraid some of the details have been lost in translation. Perhaps we can find them together? No players, serious replies only, please. Reply to: www.immchron.org; or contact the editors of this publication — they'll pass your message along.

SWM, 36, "Editor"/would-be *auteur*. 5'5", 165 lbs. of pure muscle, fixates on issue themes. Seeks highly suggestible, VGL SW (preferably legally blind) for mov-

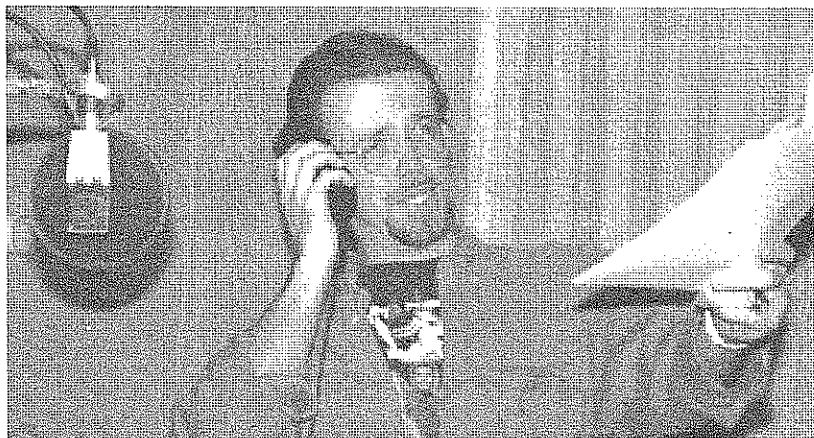
ies, fine dining, blaspheming, and more. Satan-spawn OK. No smokers, please.

201 FOR SALE

COMICS Aging fanboy/artist who should know better seeks to unload

BELOW: "Waiter! There's a girl in my soup!" (Photo by Raymond Marcus)





LEFT: Grand Immortal Scott Brick dictates his column.

The Brickman COMETH

Beginnings suck, first lines especially.

In my brief career as “professional writer/burden on society,” opening line angst has plagued me incessantly. Whenever I sit down to my computer, trying to crank out yet another brilliant opening line that’ll inspire the reader to keep reading, I’m constantly reminded of the movie *Throw Momma From The Train*, wherein Billy Crystal laments the fact that all the classic openings are taken. “Call me Ishmael...” — taken. “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...” — taken. “Who is John Gault?”; “Chapter One: I Am Born”; “On the first Monday of April 1625, the market town of Meung, the birthplace of the author of the *Roman de la Rose*, was in a wild state of excitement...” — taken, taken, and again I say taken. It really pisses me off.

Okay, enough. I’m going a long way to convey the obvious — I have no idea how to begin. I know what I’m going to say, have for over a month now, it’s just the *how* of it all that’s been difficult to tackle. You see, though I realize incorporating this issue’s “blasphemy” theme is optional, I feel I should mention it in some backhanded way at least, feeling as I do a sense of responsibility for it. I could, after all, have ignored Bob’s unintended slight to the Lord High Jack Benny; then again, if I had, this month’s theme would probably have been about Barbra Streisand, so I’ve obviously done everyone a favor.

While procrastinating, I’ve been wondering how best to tackle my own theme while simultaneously working ‘blasphemy’ into the mix as a side angle. It’s been tough, perhaps because I’m far more comfortable talking about Jack Benny in glowing terms rather than as a clever contrivance for video-night mayhem. In that, I am not alone — Jack’s friends and loved ones were admirers all, having nothing but cherished memories of the man. (But all that comes later; I’m getting ahead of myself.) So I’ve decided to focus on the *reason* behind this issue’s theme, namely Jack.

The question I pose in this issue’s installment is, ‘Why is this column called The Brickman Cometh?’ Hopefully, Jack will get worked in along the way.

(By the way, if this were a professional gig I’d’ve been bounced off the job several paragraphs ago. “Four hundred words and two-thirds of a page before we get to the Nut ‘Graph?’” my editors would fume. “This ain’t your Shakespeare gig, Brick, cut to the chase!” Hee-hee! The joys of creative control!)

“Why is this column called what it’s called?” some of you may be echoing in disbelief. “Shouldn’t it be, ‘Who the hell is this guy and what misguided soul gave him a column in the first place?’” No, the column’s a done-deal, but the title... now that’s a problem. You see, I’ve dreamed about this day for many years. My own column, at last! And just like the countless actors (myself included) who’ve wondered what they’d say during an Academy Awards acceptance speech, I’ve wondered long and hard what I’d call my column.

In my mind, I always knew it’d have to be something personal and self-referential. Not necessarily an inside joke, mind you, but something that really addressed the author’s identity. A good example was *Spawn* creator Todd McFarlane’s old column for *Wizard*, “Everybody’s Got Opinions.” Maybe it’s taken you a moment, but hopefully by now you’ve realized this ongoing commentary was called *EGO*. Simple, succinct, and a great indication of who the author is.



ABOVE: One of Scott Brick’s heroes — and certainly one of the Immortals’ patron saints — Jack Benny. We also believe Mr. Benny is mentioned somewhere in Mr. Brick’s column.

For various reasons, I decided long ago that I'd utilize my nickname in the title, because nicknames often say a great deal about their owners. At the time I decided this, of course, I had no nickname. Early attempts at styling myself "The Terror" (from the Cheers' song "Black Denim Trousers and Motorcycle Boots," about this guy called "The Terror of Highway 101") were unsuccessful. Fortunately, so were the names my third grade classmates chose to call me instead. Eventually "The Brickman" stuck, and I've been using it happily for years. I love it for many reasons: it's quick, it's clean, and it sounds like a superhero, or at least like a guy who loves superheroes and wishes he was one.

Nevertheless, I felt a certain amount of angst when considering "Brickman" for my column's title. Did it really say enough about me? All this angst about my nickname led me to ponder, for the first time in years, how I was perceived. What might others, my non-immortal cohorts, have to say about me?

By an odd coincidence, the first time I began considering this nebulous issue, I happened upon some of my "author bios."

Wizard magazine, my primary employer, dashes off clever bios at the end of each feature article, poking fun at the author by using a theme discussed in the piece itself. Early on, for example, I wrote an article about The Sandman, a superhero who puts his victims to sleep: "Scott Brick wrote this article in his sleep," *Wizard* said. Clever, right?

As my editors got to know me better, they began making more detailed bios, such as the time I wrote about Robin, the Boy Wonder: "Scott Brick, also known as 'The Brickman,' used to run around in green Speedos until that horrific chafing incident." That one really pleased me, because for the first time, 'Brickman' was used in print! A truly momentous day.

The more articles I wrote, the more I began to realize what my editors thought of me. Some bios made me laugh, some made me cry, and some just made me wonder "Who the hell wrote this thing?"

Once, while writing about

various telepathic Marvel Comics superheroes, *Wizard* wrote, "Scott Brick lives in California, loves on the astral plane, and disobeys laws that only he can hear." Man, if I hadn't wondered before how my editors saw me, I definitely did after that one.

Unfortunately, the more I sought clarity, the less satisfaction I got. After interviewing William B. Davis, *The X-Files'* Cigarette-Smoking Man, *Wizard* said, "Even though Scott Brick doesn't smoke, he wants to be known as Nicorette-Gum-Chewing Man." When I wrote about vacationing to Vegas to ride "Star Trek: The Experience," they said, "Scott Brick would like to vacation more, but El Niño's storms have made further contact with the outside world impossible." When I wrote about *Dune's* Third Stage Guild Navigators, who imbibe the spice Melange to "fold" space, my editors said, "Scott Brick tried smoking oregano to induce space travel but can't remember if it worked."

Every once in awhile, they'd say something pretty close to accurate. For instance, the time I interviewed Harve Bennett: "Scott Brick has wanted to interview Harve Bennett for years. He now considers his work on this planet 'done.'" Yeah, pretty accurate if somewhat pathetic. "Scott Brick has been in and out of the slammer since he was old enough to 'borrow' 1-900 calls from a pay phone with a paper clip." That one's so close I'll decline further comment. "Scott Brick also has an action feature... he'll slap you silly if you pull his chest hairs." Yes, absolutely, but of what use was all this to me in my search for identity? Lots of guys will slap you good and hard if you pull their chest hairs. What makes me special?

Just as I began to lose hope, *Wizard* teased me by calling me Brickman again, after my interview with Batman editor Denny O'Neil: "Scott 'The Brickman' Brick once killed a man for the greater good, but didn't enjoy it." Man, I got such a rush out of seeing Brickman in print again that I completely overlooked that killing reference (which, I feel compelled to iterate is completely false...!)

My deadline loomed, and while I knew it was folly, I kept turning to the bios in my search for identity. Just as I began to lose hope, *Wizard* teased me by calling me Brickman again, after my interview with Batman editor Denny O'Neil: "Scott 'The Brickman' Brick once killed a man for the greater good, but didn't enjoy it." Man, I got such a rush out of seeing Brickman in print again that I completely overlooked that killing reference (which I feel compelled to iterate is completely false...!)

My deadline loomed, and while I knew it was folly, I kept turning to the bios in my search for identity. "Scott Brick jumped on his couch when he was little, but has since grown old and soulless."; "Scott Brick fears the turn of the millennium. He just knows he's gonna have to reprogram the clock on his VCR."; "Scott Brick was not offended in any way while writing this story, though he has absolutely no clue what 'Snootchie bootchies!' means."

This wasn't helping.

Finally, there came the piece where I talked about an upcoming toy that, while only 7 inches in height, nonetheless has a massive 26-inch wingspan. This piece produced a bio that said a lot about who

I am: "Scott Brick has his own 26-inch span. He's pretty popular." Heh heh.

Nonetheless, as pleased as I was by that bio's accuracy, it was time to quit screwing around and name my column. I thereby decided that if I was to find any kind of self-validation from my bios, I would just have to grab the very next one.

It turned out to be an article about *The Darkness*, a superpower that gets passed from fathers to sons at the moment of conception. The bio? "All Scott Brick's father passed to him at birth was a gene for excessive flatulence. Scott considers this to be his superpower."

* * * * *

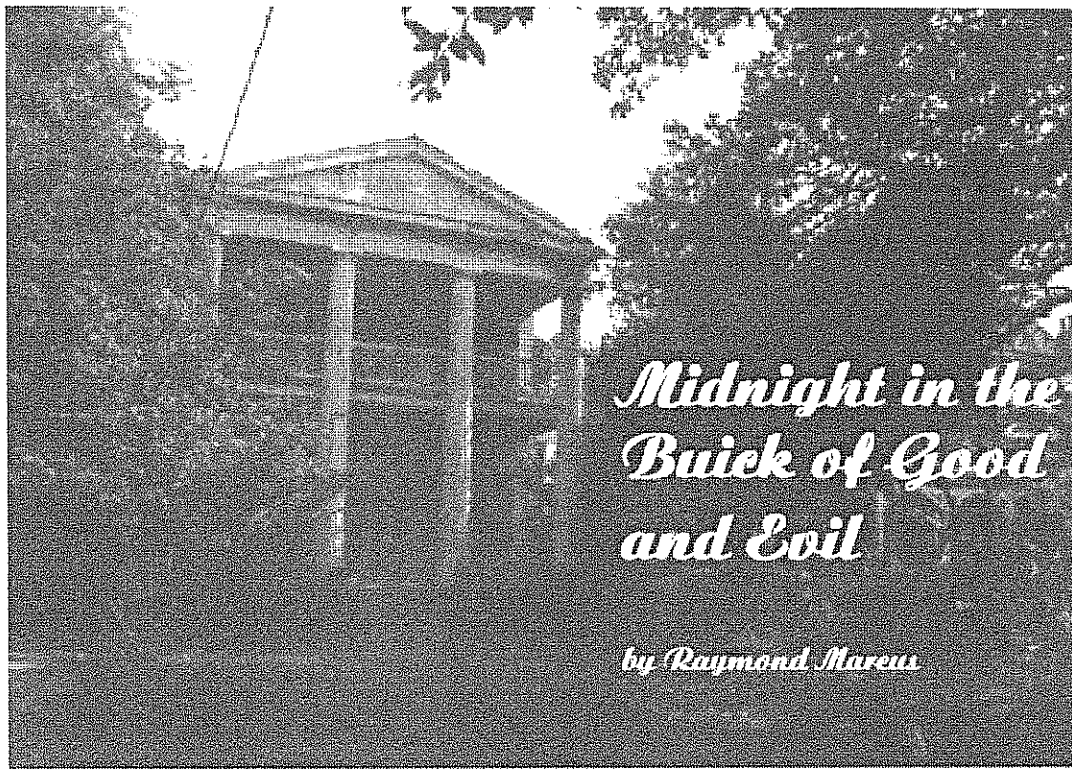
Which is obviously why I've settled on The Brickman. It's quick, clean, and sounds kinda like a superhero. Plus, by saying "The Brickman Cometh," it makes a theatrical allusion to Eugene O'Neill's play "The Iceman Cometh." Not bad, eh? Comics and acting, all in one reference!

Now, all these many pages later, you may still be wondering what this has to do with Jack Benny. Not a lot, except insofar that during my identity quest, I also began pon-

(see **BRICKMAN** on back cover)



ABOVE: Jack Benny with the almost equally beloved Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, the not-beloved-at-all Mary Livingstone (Mrs. Benny), and surely someone's very beloved donkey.

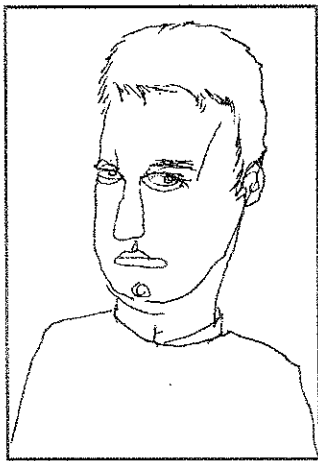


Midnight in the Buick of Good and Evil

by Raymond Marcus

LEFT: Where we lost our virginity.

BELOW LEFT: The author's self-portrait.



I have decided for my first column that I will offer a few glimpses of my mid-May trip to Alabama, where I had my final interview at a magnet high school down in Mobile. Without further ado, I shall begin with the end. On Sunday the 17th I missed my flight back to Los Angeles by a minute. This, then, is my story.

I missed my plane because I had walked the four miles to the school and back from my downtown hotel that morning, taking pictures of the grand old buildings in the historical district of Mobile. Towards the end, glancing at my watch, I rushed back to the hotel,

stuffed my clothes in my suitcase, paid the bill, filled the gas tank, tipped the maid, and drove the 20 miles out to the airport, speeding like a woodchuck on holiday. But when I arrived at the gate, through the plate glass windows I watched my plane depart. Another day and night in the South lay before me. Alligators stirred in the swamps.

For those of you who have never been there, and I believe I speak to all of you, Mobile is a small and friendly town, about 200,000 people. (I found the Deep South to be a very friendly place, with people often going out of their way to offer help or advice. On my flight out the next day, for example, a young married woman sitting next to me offered to lend me her ear plugs, after I casually remarked that the crying babies in the two rows ahead of us were making me feel homicidal. I politely declined, but I can't imagine anyone in New York, L.A. or D.C. making the same offer to a stranger. The people down South are awfully nice, and I had many similar experiences.)

I waited standby for the next flight and then another, but these were already filled with people ahead of me, several of whom were drinking whisky and wearing strange white clothing. The evening flights were booked even fuller, and by now it was getting on. Realizing that I wasn't leaving

any time soon, I rented another car, having already turned in my other one. I chose the car over a hotel near the airport, which would have meant just sitting around watching cable TV and getting as much free ice as I could. The city center was still 20 miles away, and a cab there and back would have been too expensive; money was running low. (The previous night I had been drinking and gambling, and had lost nearly everything I had to a couple of ringers from Atlanta. On the last hand I was down to my panties, but was saved by a lucky straight.)

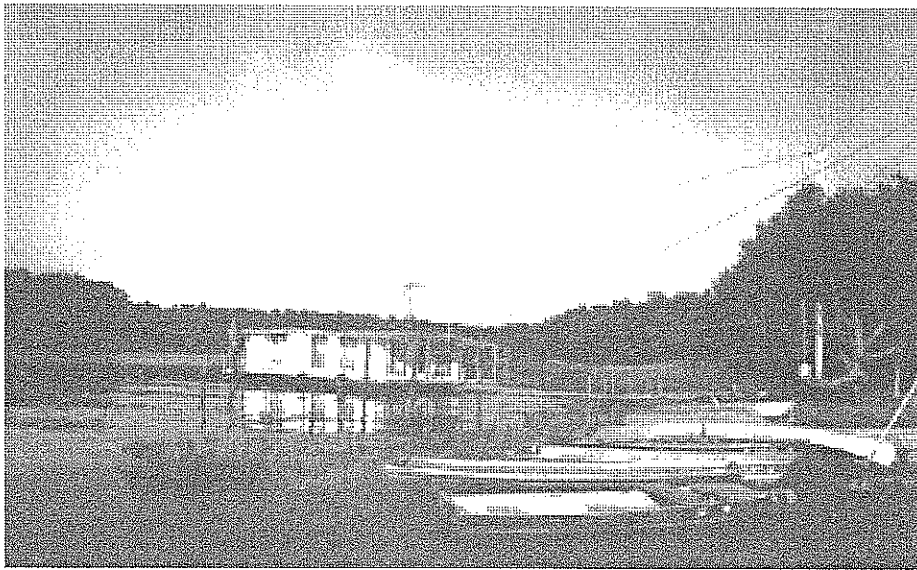
So, for my final night, I decided to keep my mobility and sleep in the car. Mobility, gentlemen, is very important. You must maintain your mobility.

This is particularly true in the South. The South is a deceptively languid place. One must be ready to move at a moment's notice, for when something happens, boy, it happens quick. You never know when you will receive a late night phone call to join a possum hunt in the woods, or when you must flee into the swamp with your luggage, the hounds crying behind you. The hounds, gentlemen, the hounds.

So, pensively, cautiously, I drove back into town as the late afternoon rays hit my windshield. Alabama in May, 90 degrees in the sun. Driving down lanes thick with magnolias, dusky-eyed maidens gazed out at the street, listlessly smiling through half-closed doors, while somewhere, somewhere, the faint sound of a tinny piano, and the banjo, yes, the banjo, could be heard through the leaves. Then a gunshot. Was that a gunshot? How strange.... As I slowly drove through the streets I could hear the ivy grow.

After taking more pictures of the beautiful old homes, real Tara-type stuff, I drove to a bayou east of the city and talked with a bait shop lady. She owns 100 acres of swamp, and has run her shop for 50 years. During that time, alligators have eaten three of her dogs. "Three that I know about," she told me. "Don't know what happened to the other ones."

After the bayou, I got back in my car and drove down to the Gulf Shores, down to the Gulf of Mexico. On the way there I took country roads instead of the main highway, so I could see the small towns, farms, and sharecroppers along the way. This was much the better idea, as the main drag looked like every other highway in America, the generic high-



LEFT:
*Where I
last saw
Fido.*

way we know so well, with McDonalds, Burger Kings, clothing outlets, gun shops, American Legion posts, DAR gift shops, and dance halls of the Ku Klux Klan.

I arrived at the Gulf after sunset and walked along the beach for an hour, while couples strolled past me, holding hands, and families with pails and flashlights hunted for soft-shell crabs in the surf. One even washed up over my foot (a crab, not a family). And although I was the only person walking alone along the beach that night, with the soft moonlight playing on the waves, young lovers passing me by, please do not think that I was the least bit conscious of it. (Dear God, oh God...am I to die alone?....)

Near the shore I had a late-night seafood dinner, of oysters, coffee and beer. I sat in the empty restaurant, all other tables vacant, and read my book by the light of a flashing neon sign (this is true). Then I drove back to Mobile, watching the stars and taking my time, with Beethoven's Seventh on the one classical station on my dial. How I love the immortal Bard!

In the rich part of town I looked for a nice quiet street, which I found with little trouble (little feet pattering around the car, very strange). The night in my car went well, with no cops or carjackers around, though the back seat was only four feet long. (When the rental people asked what kind of car I wanted, I said, "Which mid-size has the largest back seat?" They threw in a free bottle of beer.) Upon waking in the morning, I found that during the night some possum had done his business on my hood. I leaped out, hoping to skin him, for I had bought a how-to book and have always wanted a possum hat for winter. But the little rascal had scampered. Anyway, the night passed peaceably, for it was a quiet street. In the future, when some day I buy my own car, I plan to sleep in it on a regular basis. Might even get me some houseplants.

I won't go into the school now, because that

is a whole other story. It seemed a good school, with a touch of Gothic decadence, and the students seemed like real good kids. I will say that the dorm duties of a hall director didn't look too appealing, since one is required to be on duty every other weekend, unable to leave the campus at all, as well as several nights during the

week, making room checks between once and seven times a night, depending on the noise. At the age of 36 and a bachelor once more, it didn't look like fun. ("Sure, we can go back to my place, my dear, but we'll have to keep it down. I live with 200 teenage boys who are at an age when they think of little besides sex. If we make the slightest sound, they will

be pawing at the door like famished kittens. Does that make you feel uncomfortable?")

I will say that my history lecture went well. I spoke on the Great Depression and the New Deal to a class of 11th graders. Little did I know that Alabama is still in the Great Depression.

"The New Deal?" they said. "Was that a Reagan program?" "No," I replied. "Reagan's the one who killed the New Deal, after profiting from it shamelessly."

To be fair, the students in this charter school were smart, motivated, and highly interactive, and

I had no trouble at all drawing them in. In fact, I practically had to beat them down with a stick. "Less enthusiasm, damn you!" I cried. "It's only history!"

In mid-June, however, I was informed that although I had been one of two finalists, sadly, I did not get the job. My lack of teaching experience continues to mar my chances, although this was the closest I have come. Initially desiring a school in New England, I had aimed for the coast of Maine, and hit Alabama in the belly. Unfortunately, it was only a glancing blow, and Alabama will now proceed into the 21st century without me. (The state, while beautiful, is politically a tad regressive. While driving east from Mobile across the bay I narrowly missed the "George C. Wallace Tunnel," opting for a bridge instead, even though it was on fire)

So, as the summer of 1998 nears mid-passage, as the millennium looms over us like a frowning burgermeister, out of my dozen or so interviews for schools from L.A. to Long Island, I am still in Pasadena. With Duke Ellington on the radio playing "Autumn Leaves," I continue



ABOVE: *George Wallace slept here.*

to wind down my thesis, while experiencing my worst bout of celibacy since the late 1970s.

My plan now is that if nothing has materialized by late August, I will drive my 3,500 books and my few sticks of furniture, still in storage on the outskirts of Washington, D.C., where my wife Ketayoun and I used to live, and bring them all back home. I shall then enroll in a local teacher certification program, to become registered in the state of California. Then I will try and receive the state's problems. So you folks may have me around for another few more years. ♦

Don't Get Me Started!

by Terry Delegeane

The subject is blasphemy. Hmmm ... blasphemy. Yep, to blaspheme. Blah blah blah. As in "to go on about, to bore." SPH! Almost like a spitting reflex of some sort. Spitting on something to degrade it or show contempt, or to literally get a bad taste out of your mouth. "Me" — a name I call myself. So either we are talking about reviling or abusing or showing a lack of reverence for something of high import — a sacred cow, a religious ideology — OR, I am suppose to bore you with some contemptuous, bile producing thoughts that bug me. Hmmm ... as usual, it all comes back to me, glorious me! The world can now revolve again. So what is Triant's rant. What bugs me? Don't get me started...

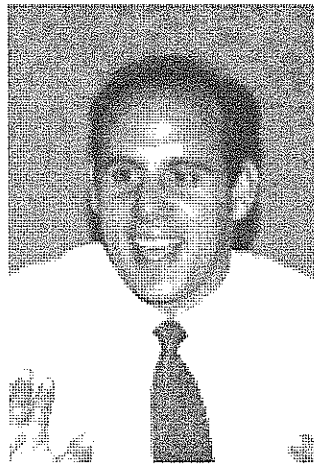
Television Talk Shows: You can have them. I should stop right there before I tick you off, but here goes: Johnny Carson — overrated. Boy, did the last 25 years of that show suck or what? How many times can you watch Johnny drum his cigarette case after a commercial break. Couldn't someone tell Doc Severinson to wear some freakin' jeans for one godforsaken day. And Ed McMahon — wow, there's a great career choice — sitting on a plaid couch and laughing while being informed in no uncertain terms that you are an alcoholic. The only satisfaction he ever got after feeding Alpo to Irish Setters was watching a marsupial whiz on Johnny's head once a year. (Twice if you count the *Best of Carson*.) *Star Search* and Publishers' Clearing House were steps up for him. Back to Johnny — how can someone go to work every day and die on stage every night and not let it get to him? (Answer: Ask one of

several wives named Joanna.) Carson was never anything but a pretender (another sucky show). He pretended to be Benny. He reiterated guests' jokes without getting a laugh. And the jokes never changed for 30 years. You know you're in bad shape when Bette Midler comes on to end your show with class. (Okay that was all right, but c'mon, it's Bette Midler, perhaps the most unattractive woman in show biz, outside of Harvey Korman!) Thank god he's gone!

Jay Leno — another loser. What the hell was this big thing about who would succeed Carson? It certainly didn't put David Letterman or Leno in a good light. Mr. Nice Guy Leno just comes off like a big wussy. "Oh, I'm the nice guy with the big freakin' jaw, gray hair and crappy jokes that don't hurt anybody, but I have to ask this because my ratings are in the crapper — who are you sleeping with?" Leno. Would you like to be known as the lantern jaw comedian — does that say anything about your talent? Whatever talent he had got dulled down by his insipid need to surpass Letterman in the ratings and by stupid stuff like "Iron Jay." This guy isn't a performer, he's just a big lisping head that paces the stage, gives high fives, drives a lot of old cars and motorcycles, and generally does his Sally Field "please like me schtick" every night.

Let me just say it early on in case you hadn't figured it out yet these talk shows are just big dressed

up commercials for anybody with something to plug: a movie, a television movie, an album — and we watch them for a whole hour



LEFT: The author in a rare contented moment.

(Carson used to go on for 90 minutes) There is no difference between talk shows and infomercials. We call them entertainment. They are classified as variety shows by the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (What's that?) But there is no variety from night to night or show to show. And there are big bloody wars over who gets booked where first as if it was really even important. Ultimately, talk is cheap. Very, very cheap, but Hollywood pays big bucks for it. I personally am disgusted with myself anytime I find myself tuning into any of these shows — either out of interest or

just because it is on. At least a perennial lackluster show like *Saturday Night Live* wants to entertain us with some semblance of humor. It is not a blatant commercial for the host or the band — oh crap, I got sucked into that one too. All right, just turn off your TV after 11:00 (that is if you just watched *ER* or *Homicide*, not *NYPD Blue* — that overrated sucky cop show that doesn't deserve to be mentioned in the same parenthetical statement as *Homicide*), or just turn it off all together and have a life!

Incidentally, can anybody tell me why David Brenner, Orson Bean, and David Steinberg are even on these shows anymore? Who the hell are they?

Speaking of Letterman. I wasn't? Oh, yeah, have you ever seen a more bitter and lonelier man on TV every night? He hates the audience, he hates his show, and looks like he wants to rip Paul Shaffer's head off every night. I know I do. (Don't get me started on Canadians.) Letterman is living in his own private hell five nights a week — he did it on NBC for a decade or so and he's doing on CBS. Anybody for a threepeat? I haven't seen someone have so much contempt for what he does every night since John Tesh was on *Entertainment Tonight*. But Tesh showed us all — he should be crowned King Vanilla for his pronounced commitment to mediocrity — and I might add the remarkable amount of money he has made by blanding the taste of the American public. This guy writes "music to eat tapioca by." Letterman will become a ham radio operator in Greenland within the next 10 years; or he'll blow his head



LEFT: Talk show host Jay Leno doing something he's actually good at.

off on the air. One of the two — I left my tarot cards in my other suit!

Magic Johnson — good basketball player, fine humanitarian, very tall pillar in his community, man infected with the AIDS virus. Every night someone steps up on a very tall stool just to kiss his heiny and remind us of all these things. Not a show — just a testimonial dessert. Sinbad — really does anybody think this guy is funny? I'm not talking about the judges on *Star Search*. By the way, if Shirley from *What's Happening* had procreated, she would have given birth to Sinbad.

Bill Maher of *Politically Incorrect* thinks he is so superior to his cohorts — "Oh we talk about real issues — we are really important — we have intelligent guests" His guests usually stop on his show between doing Jay and Tom Snyder. In fact if you watch Snyder the same night as *Politically Incorrect*, the guest has usually walked across the hall from *PI* without changing clothes. He takes on "heavy" issues and almost always has some very attractive blond Republican Nazi on his show. Coolio has been on the show so many times I think Bill and he are an item. Smug, self-righteous and ultimately uninteresting.

Which leads me back to Tom Snyder. He has announced his retirement of sorts recently. Have you ever seen someone squirm on TV as much as Snyder during his opening bit? He is so unsure of himself that he must be totally bombed before each show. By the way, was Snyder ever any good? I remember watching the *Tomorrow Show* and it seems to me he has the same callers calling, and he is tossing the same softballs (speaking of softballs don't get me started on Larry King and his introduction of H. Ross Perot to an unsuspecting public — firstly, because I don't have cable and, secondly, because that that ole H. Ross said he never used stood for "Hitler") to his guests today as he did back then. Remember the much hyped Charles Manson interview? Tom starts with a "Tell me Chuck, why'd you do it?" And after Beezelbub swats a few flies away and mutters some incoherent answers — he quite literally tosses in

a trademark "Fair enough, I'll buy that!" Also, are Snyder and Paul Moyer, that lousy NBC newsanchor on NBC related or something? What a pair of chumps!

Conan O'Brien — I am still asking "Why does this guy have his own show?" After being on for a few years now, he is finally getting some respect. The show is funny. It is more comedy and less talk, but the big problem is Conan. I'm sure he is great in a writer's room telling jokes, but he single handedly destroys almost every bit with his lousy set-ups, desire to top sidekick Andy Richter, and the sense that he is about to lose control of his show at any minute. Besides that, his pastiness is alarming. Here is an experiment. Take a loaf of white bread and cut enough of the crust off to line the edge of your television set. Tape the crust to the set. Now watch the show for a couple minutes. Now stare at the bread. Do it a couple of times to be sure. There is no difference.

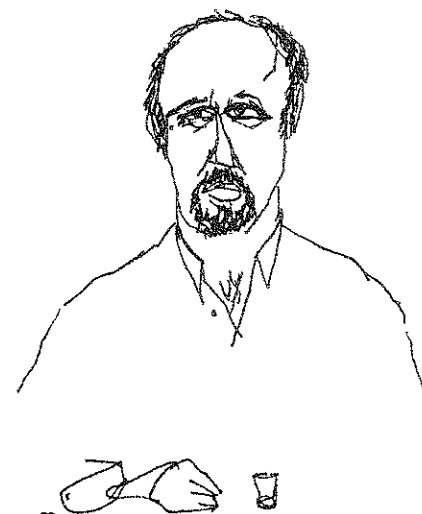
Rosie O'Donnell revived the genre by reintroducing the Mike Douglas/Merv Griffin format in the afternoons — but it still seems like the old talk show stuff. She's funny and benefits from the charm of being enamored by all of her guests. It's as if this a private show for her to indulge her little Tom Cruise fantasies and Broadway musical segments, but you know what, she ain't all that talented. She's loud and she is loud. She reminds me of that hill-billy gal that used to chase after Popeye. In fact, rather than giving into her Rupert Pupkin-like private talk show and garbage like that awful *An Affair to Remember* scene from that craporama you might know as *Sleepless in Seattle*, Rosie should be preparing for what I believe would be her greatest role to date — the big screen adaptation of *Laverne and Shirley*, costarring Ellen Degeneres.

Finally, there is Jerry Springer — this show is pure entertainment (Phil Donahue, Jenny Jones, Montel Williams, Ricki Lake, Sally Jesse Raphael, Maury Povich, and Geraldo Rivera have nothing on this *menage à crap*). Oprah, who can do anything she wants now and has added "legitimacy" to her daily talk

show with a well intentioned and hugely profitable book club, is to thank for this spectacle. She lowered the common denominator of talk show to public confessional by literally admitting that she was the victim of every taboo-breaking topic that appeared on her show. If it is okay for Oprah then it's okay for me. I need to get it out of my system to make myself a better person. It doesn't matter how much vomit I spew on others, I don't have to clean it up. (Don't get me started on the teachings of Scientology).

Let me put it this way: people gather around train wrecks just to see how many bodies get carried out. Then they try to guess which end is the head and the feet under that sheet. Springer's show is just as hypnotic and as compelling as the approaching apocalypse. It is like Sodom and Gomorra and I dare you to turn away once it is on lest you turn into a pillar of salt. Words can't explain the psychology of this show. First of all, where do they find these people to talk about what insidious human beings they are and how do the similarly dung-infested, addle-brained retards they invite onto the show to unload some terrible secret upon get roped into appearing on the show. Is it confession or celebrity? Is there a challenge out there about how low the human psyche can go? This program is the ultimate statement about America and all of its excess, desire for celebrity in exchange for public humiliation, pride in depravity. Oh, people like to see a chair fly, but that is as real as professional wrestling. It is the squalor. Some say we like to see how much better our lives are than this trash. I say it is the obsession with trash and how awful people can be. I say this country is hungry for something that will stop them from looking down their own pants.

Springer always closes with a final thought about, say, the 500-pound hermaphroditic stripper who's having an incestuous affair with a someone 50 years his/her senior who happens to be the she-male who gave her/him up for adoption



at birth. He'll say — she/he can't change who he/she is and maybe we can all learn a lesson from a person who only wants to be loved. Springer is a con man, a snake oil salesman. He feeds the voyeur, but bestows respectability on the fallen. That's crap!

Here's my final thought.... Every bit of bile and sputum I have written is garbage! I am full of crap! You know, some of it I believe and some I don't. It may have started funny, but by the end of this piece I started getting a little uncomfortable, and I bet you did too. Where did all that come from and can a simple shower wipe it clean? Is Springer a symptom or does it define the problem? Is our benign tolerance of "everybody's right to do whatever feels good as long as it doesn't hurt anyone" acceptable? I call that apathy, irresponsibility, and above all BLASPHEMY! Yes, I take that very seriously and eventually you knew I was going to get around to it. I call it irreverence to the God that made us all — an insult to the Savior that shed blood on a cross to purge us of the very things Jerry Springer throws in our face every day. Yes we are hungry, not for things that feed the appetite but for redemption. I don't have to tell you where to find it, do I? ♦



BRICKMAN (from p. 15)

dering the way I *wanted* others to think of me. Had I the ability to control the way I would be eulogized,

what would I have my loved ones say?

And that's when I thought about Jack. Personal bias aside, Jack was one of the most universally-

loved entertainers who ever lived. I've never, in all my extensive readings, uncovered a single uncharitable remark about him, and believe me, I've looked. I've been fortunate enough to speak with men and women who knew him, worked with him, and all have done nothing but praise the man. It seems as though working with Jack was the defining moment for many people's careers, be they performers, writers or directors. When I interviewed Harve Bennett, after discussing his upcoming project, we spent several minutes reminiscing about Jack. (Harve dated Jack's daughter Joan.) Harve was typical of most people in that just mentioning Benny's name brought a smile to his face, and tons of cherished memories to his lips.

Anyway, I'm reminded of an interview I recently saw with Fred de Cordova, legendary producer of over two decades' worth of Jack Benny TV shows. de Cordova kept smiling and shaking his head, saying over and over of Jack, "Wonderful man. An excellent man."

Now here's a guy who's been

dead nearly a quarter of a century, whose memory is still enough to make men say, all these years later, "excellent man." Considering that, I shake my head and smile, just like Jack's friends, and I realize that what others say about me has nothing to do with determining my own worth. Jack's remembered so fondly not because of what he said, but because of who he was. If, after I'm gone, I can one day be described in de Cordova's words, then God be praised, I've lived a good life, but it's who I am that matters most.

So it's "The Brickman Cometh," fellow Immortals. That's my title and I'm sticking by it. This ongoing report will be about who I am, who I want to be, and how I'm getting there. And, about how my Immortal brethren are helping me along the way. To all of you, I cry, "Onward!" ♦

Scott Brick sleeps much better now that he has finally decided on the name for his column. He has recently obtained a pump to further improve his wingspan.

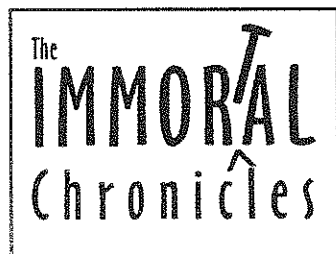
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Send your letter to:

The Immortal Chronicles
c/o WCG Comics
3765 Motor Avenue, Suite 1121
Los Angeles, CA 90034
(or by e-mail to j9k@aol.com
randy.reynaldo@csun.edu.)



c/o WCG Comics
3765 Motor Avenue, Suite 1121
Los Angeles, CA 90034

