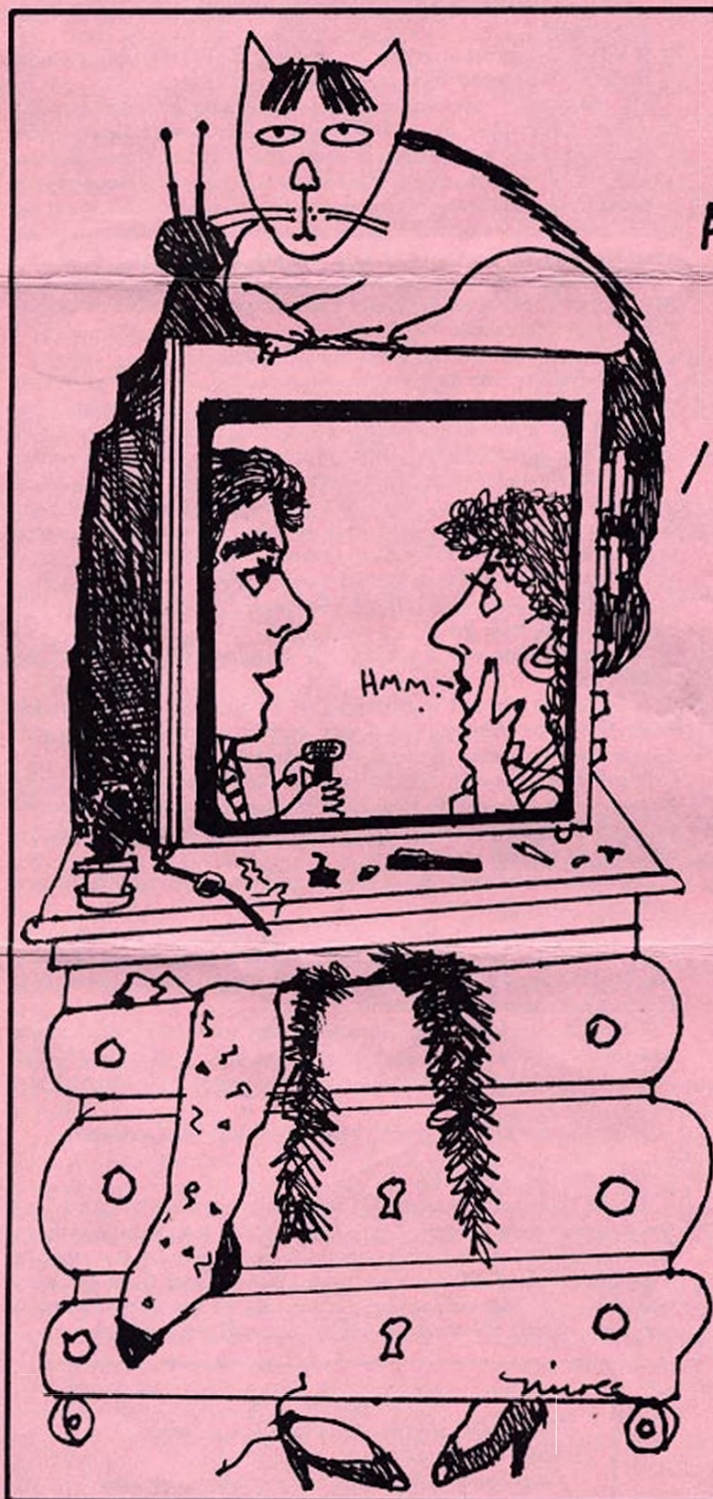


The Realist

Number 104
Editor: Paul Krassner

June, 1987
Price: \$2

The Harlan Ellison Roast
Starring Robin Williams



AND NOW MRS JONES...
FOR THE DISHWASHER
AND THE MATCHING
OTTOMAN, CAN YOU
NAME THE GROUP,
SOMETIMES CALLED
"THE MORAL
EQUIVALENT OF
OUR FOUNDING
FATHERS" WHO
HAS PROFITED
FROM THE
SMUGGLING
OF PLANELOADS
OF COKE INTO
THE U.S.?

COURT JESTER

I Was a Pope for the CIA

Last month the *Los Angeles Times* Sunday Calendar published my report on an international humor conference.

In the original manuscript:

"I had dinner with [the Russian delegation] at the Holiday Inn. They were all having barbecued pork ribs, so the waitress placed gigantic bibs around their necks. The bib on Alexei Pryanov, editor of *Krokodil*, the satirical tabloid published by the Soviet government (circulation 5.3 million) read, 'Superman.' The bib on Vladimir Mochalov, art director of *Krokodil*, read 'Miss America.'

"We were discussing censorship. They insisted they have none, although it came out in conversation that a particular cartoon idea—showing British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher spread-eagled on a bed, with an American saying, 'Where do you want these missiles?'—was not published because it was 'too coarse.'"

The phrase "spread-eagled on a bed" was apparently too coarse for the *Times*. It was changed to "in a compromising position."

Other paragraphs were left intact:

"I, in turn, said that I can publish anything I want in *The Realist*, but that I also write a column for *National Lampoon*, and recently they turned down my account of snorting cocaine with the Pope. The *Lampoon* editors loved it, but were afraid of an organized letter-writing campaign to their advertisers. Would *Krokodil* be interested in publishing the piece? Superman and Miss America graciously declined my offer. . . .

"At UCLA, there was a special event, 'Soviet Humorists Meet American Humorists.' As a member of the panel, I was asked to try to make the Russians laugh. I chose what I felt would be an appropriate demonstration of freedom of humor.

"For a political satirist," I began, "these are ripe times." I paused for the interpreter to translate. "Of course, the arms-for-hostages scandal is different from the Watergate scandal. There we had the Nixon tapes, with 18½ minutes missing. Now all we have is former CIA director William Casey getting a brain operation. But what makes this suspicious is that they only removed the section from August, 1985 to November, 1986."

"And the Russians laughed along with the Americans."

It was the following section that proved to be particularly offensive:

"There were disputes as to the difference between comedy and satire, between tragedy and catastrophe, between science and art, between nitpicking and hairsplitting.

"One speaker claimed that there were no more jokes about the Pope since the attempted assassination, even while a joke was circulating around the corridors, about how the premier of Russia wanted clocks to be the same around the world, complaining: 'I called Queen Elizabeth to wish her happy birthday, but I was a day late. I called Rome to express my sympathy for the attempted assassination of the Pope, but I was two days early.'

"Indeed, it was a priest speaking on 'Humor and Religion' who ended his talk with this joke: 'What happened when the Pope opened the window? He invented Polish Air Conditioning.'

"Moreover, another presentation featured a roast of the Pope with the aid of imaginary slides on a screen that remained blank. I couldn't help but yell out, 'Focus!'"

I received a complaint from a Survey to Determine Motives for Anti-Polonism:

"Instead of doing it in the privacy of a psychiatrist's office, you unloaded your own psychological excrement on Polonians and Poles by publishing an anti-Polish joke of a nameless 'priest,' knowing full well that 'teachers' and Polonian children's peers like those in enclosed articles with belief systems like yours will be encouraged by your public display of bigotry to continue tormenting Polonian children."

Copies were sent to the *Times*, the Office of Civil Rights Assessment and the UN Human Rights Commission.

The articles concerned the use of "anti-Polish jokes" in the classroom. In Brownsville, Pennsylvania, a teacher was suspended without pay. In Los Angeles, the company insuring the Board of Education paid \$1500 to avoid going to trial.

Among the motives I was requested to expand upon:

- Agreement with philosophy of Nazi writers' propaganda of the 1930s.
- Desire to eliminate Polonians from consideration for top level jobs.
- Guilt from enjoyment of benefits derived from exploitation of Polonians in sweatshops, coal mines, and on small farms.
- Hatred of Communists and association of U.S. Polonians with Poland's Communist government.
- Need to experience instant 'superiority' by defaming Polonians—stemming from own feelings of inferiority.
- Receiving payment or other reward for mutilating psyches of Polonians.
- Trying to 'Americanize' Polonians by shaming them into change of surname.
- Wish to use psychic abuse to provoke Polonians into criminal reaction resulting in their incarceration or death.

My response: "I appreciate your concern with the inclusion of a so-called 'Polish joke' in my article in the *L.A. Times* Calendar. The name of the priest was, I felt, irrelevant. His profession was relevant, since it was in the context of a Pope joke at a humor conference where a speaker had said there were no more Pope jokes since the attempted assassination. Please do not confuse my reportage of the incident with any sympathy for the point of view implied by the joke. To quote a stereotypical reference does not mean a journalist is guilty of bigotry. My motive was to give the reader a sense of what the event was like. I hope you understand."

The *Times* piece also included the following:

"That evening, my keynote presentation was titled, 'Confessions of a Raving, Unconfined Nut.' I explained that the phrase came from a poison-pen letter-to-the-editor of *Life* magazine sent by the FBI after *Life* had published a profile of me in 1968. The letter stated: 'That a national magazine of your fine reputation would waste time and effort on the cuckoo editor of an unimportant, smutty little rag is incomprehensible. . . . To classify Krassner as some sort of 'social rebel' is far too cute. He's a nut, a raving, unconfined nut. . . .'

"When the session [with the Russians] was just about over, a man asked, 'Who among you is the KGB agent? Please identify the FBI agent traveling with you.'

"Suddenly there was a feeling of discomfort that permeated the auditorium.

"I had no choice but to surrender to the impulse. I stood up and wordlessly acknowledged that I was the FBI agent. And the tension was broken by a wave of appreciative laughter.

"Paul Herzlich had spoken a few days previously on 'The Evaluation of a Stand-Up Comedy,' emphasizing the importance of parsimony. Now he said to me, 'That was the most parsimonious punchline I've ever seen.'

"For me, it was a moment of functional humor, even if I had blown my cover in the process."

I titled the article, "I was a Comedian for the FBI." However, the *Times* had to confiscate and reprint nearly one-third of a million copies of the Sunday Calendar because the headline on the cover read, "I was a Communist for the FBI."

According to Herb Caen in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Fearing Krassner would sue, the *Times* recalled and destroyed some 300,000 copies at a cost of about \$100,000. Krassner would have laughed, not sued."

Or maybe I would've settled for \$50,000 and really laughed.

Personal Postscript

This is to thank the extended family of friends who helped me through my recent surgery. I even heard from a woman with arthritis for whom I had once tried to obtain the heated toilet seat used by the Queen of England when she visited this country. Such graciousness. They had a special screening of *Gandhi* for her, with the second part first, so that she would think India is still a British colony.

Subscription Info

The Realist is published every few months.

Rate: \$23 for 12 issues.

Back Issues: #99 thru #103 available at \$2 each.

Address: Box 1230, Venice, CA 90294.

A Bitter Pill

March 3: I read in the *Monitor* today about how some Pro-Lifers blew up an abortion clinic. Well, all right!

March 5: The wimps. There were two of them in the *Monitor* today, two different editorials condemning "religious terrorism." It's the same old song. Whether or not we agree with their views, they say, we cannot condone such methods in a civilized society. Come on, *Monitor*, show some balls!

March 12: Jim and Tammy are all right! Jim came down hard on sex education today. Tammy, bless her sweet heart, broke into tears at the thought of all those lovely unborn babies. Then Tammy and her lovely daughter sang a lovely song titled, *How Can I Be Born Again, Jesus, If I Ain't Been Born the First Time?*

Why can't our people be like that?

March 13: It wasn't always like this. Take Sister Mary Baker Eddy. Sister Mary Eddy had balls. I got down my copy of *Science and Health* and admired the fire in her writing. Where are you now, Sister Mary Baker Eddy? If you were alive today you'd have your own TV program, too. You'd be spreading the word of Christian Science, your eyes caked with makeup, your love handles bulg-

ing through your gaudy dress, fire and brimstone fanning out from your lipstick-encrusted mouth. We need you, Sister. We need you.

March 16: I see that some Fundies in Tennessee got some science books yanked out of a school library. Another triumph for religious fervor.

March 17: Falwell strikes again! Today I read that he's gotten the *National Lampoon* pulled from the shelves of 7-11s. You don't see our people jerking the *American Journal of Pharmaceuticals* off the newsstands.

March 20: Why, why, why? Why don't we have any *cojones*? Why can't we get down and dirty in the political arena? Why can't we defend our First Amendment rights at the expense of everyone else's? Why can't we get Ted Turner to put us on the air? Maybe even colorized. All we stand for is a chain of bookstores that take up all the best locations.

March 21: Another show of balls. Pat Robertson finally got them to slap an X rating on *The Wizard of Oz*. Magic, you know.

April 7: The time has come to act. My mission is clear. Satanic Anti-Christian propaganda must be barred from the airwaves before our children are led down the path of impurity.

So I've written letters. I've written to *St. Elsewhere*. I've written to *General Hospital*. I've even written to the re-run syndicates, demanding that they lay to rest Dr. Kildare, Ben Casey, and that grinning fiend, Marcus Welby.

April 20: I ran to the door when I heard the mailman pull up. Would they come today? I rifled the envelopes looking for the stationery of NBC, CBS, TBS. Nothing. Again, nothing. Oh, but it's not as if they didn't respond. They responded. Oh, yes, in their own way they responded. I found a flier from the Sunshine Pharmacy. Sudafed, 20% off.

I can see them smirking.

May 13: Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay.

May 15: Arrived in Boston. Had to walk by a dozen clinics and pharmacies on my way to the Mother Church.

They shoot *St. Elsewhere* here. A coincidence? Do they think they can fool me?

Brother Freddy listened with a bland smile on his face. He reminded me of the jaded cop who took my complaint against the doctor who had sutured my throat after I'd been hit by that car. I could have predicted his answer. "The Church of Christ, Scientist does not feel that anything can be gained by adding more hostility to the American climate." I kicked him where his balls should have been.

They couldn't bring me down until I had burst into Brother Teddy's chambers. "They will bury us!" I screamed. "While the Fundies are seizing the White House, we'll just be counting our Pulitzers. While the abortion clinics are being driven into dark cellars, the pharmacists will continue to dance over our corpses." Brother Teddy smiled genially and recommended bed rest and plenty of fruit juice.

May 16: Riding home on the Greyhound I was wracked with pain. The agony of defeat took on physical form, driving a wedge into my fevered skull. I groaned and pressed my hands to my temples. The innocent-seeming woman sharing my seat, in a guileful display of concern, inquired if I had a headache. Yes! I said, never dreaming what she plotted. Then, instead of encouraging me to turn my thoughts to God, she furtively slipped me a bottle of caplets. God forgive me, but for an instant of madness I was tempted.

It was the childproof cap that saved me. By the time I had finally torn it open ten minutes later, my senses had returned. I hurled it to the floor, the caplets scattering like the insidious seeds of a poppy.

His agents are everywhere.

May 19: He's coming. The Prince of Darkness. The Lord of the Flies. The Duke of Nyquil.

May 21: Call it fate. Call it the paw of God. Today I was relaxing by listening to my *Ray Conniff Singers* album when my cat jumped on the turntable. His tiny paw disrupted the delicate mechanism and the turntable began to play backwards.

At first the reversed lyrics were only an eerie jumble of sound. But then, clearly and



Cartoons Cause Campus Controversies

The *Daily Bruin* published a comic strip depicting a student saying to a rooster, "Excuse me, but aren't you a rooster."

"Yes," replied the rooster.

"Wow, that's cool, but how did you get into UCLA?"

"Affirmative action."

The Black Student Alliance called it "a blatant attack upon affirmative action and Third World students. What it's implying is that we get in because we're not qualified."

At a meeting of the university's Communications Board, 60 students from various special interest groups denounced the cartoon, calling for action.

The editor and art director were suspended for one week without pay. But they were reinstated the following day when the board realized it had denied them due process. The artist was dismissed outright, however.

The cartoon was reprinted in the context of an editorial in the *Daily Sundial* at Cal State Northridge. The editor was suspended for two weeks without pay.

A writer for the Arizona State University paper commented: "A good cartoonist is not someone who is out to grind an axe or convert the multitude to his views. The best are able to present opposing positions with equal fervor."

As if to prove that point, the two cartoons above—both by the same artist, presenting irreconcilable views on abortion—were published in the *State Press* within a few days of each other.

unmistakably, I heard the hidden message: "Take Contac, take Contac," to the backwards tune of *Tiny Bubbles*.

Everywhere. Everywhere. They are everywhere.

May 22: The poor children. Oh, the poor children. They listen so sweetly, so innocently to their rock music, thinking that they hear only a harmless message of sex and violence. But they never dream, they never glimpse the terrible truth.

May 23: The clerk at the record store looked at me in shock. One of the employees had to help me carry the stack of records to my car.

With trembling hands I placed the Bon Jovi album on my wayward turntable. The message screamed at me immediately: "Preparation H will make you happy, happy, happy!"

They were all the same, all the same. Even the Beatles, those gods of the counter-culture, were not innocent of the conspiracy. "Paul is dead," the backwards *Abbey Road* whispered. "Paul is dead. He'd be alive today if he'd taken Vivarin."

All of them, all of them, the same. Except, thank God, for Carol Channing.

May 26: My copy of *Fifty Favorite TV Themes*, not available in any store, finally arrived in the mail. I had dared to hope that a refuge of innocence existed somewhere. What, I had prayed, could be cleaner than a situation comedy? But nooooooo! He is everywhere. Even Gilligan and the Skipper are his agents. When I played their theme song backwards, I distinctly heard, "Four out of five doctors surveyed recommend Excedrin over faith in God."

June 4: I had just mailed my exposé to the *Monitor* when I caught a spot on the news that broke my spirit. Fundies had discovered Satanic messages in records played backwards. They had beaten me to this, too. Beaten us. Beaten my church.

Will we never take the lead?
June 5: Where are you, Sister Eddy? I know you would admire my balls. But I don't know how to use them. I need your touch to stiffen my resolve.

June 8: I bet Gene Scott takes Bromo-Seltzer.

June 10: Jesus asketh for his cup of suffering. Thou asketh for thine cup of non-aspirin pain relief.

June 11: The wages of sin is death. But do the clerks in our Reading Rooms get paid as much as Oral Roberts?

June 12: Oral. Oral. Oral. Oral. Oral.

June 13: Anal. Anal. Anal. Anal. Anal. Anal.

June 14: Intravenous. Intravenous. Intravenous. Intravenous. Intravenous. Intravenous.

June 15: Die. Die. Die. Die. Die. Die.

June 16: We won't die. We won't foam at the mouth and clutch our stomachs in agony and vomit our guts out. Only they, they who partake of the evil, will die. We will drink our apple juice and read quietly on the White House lawn. I will gaze out from the Oval Office, chewing my bowl of high fibre oats,

and know that I have freed this land from pain.

August 23: It is done. It is in the news now, everywhere in the news. Now they know how strong we are.

August 28: Liar. Liar. Liar. He robs us even of this. That pill-popping, suppository-pushing scribbler of anonymous ransom notes, trying to make it seem like some random act of hatred and greed. Don't listen to him, World!

It wasn't some lone psycho who contaminated those bottles of Tylenol. It was Jesus!
—Will Jacobs and Gerard Jones

Any Messages?

I met Henry Flickman at Club 1999, a popular restaurant for the many lawyers who work in the skyscrapers of Century City. The light was subdued through the tinted windows. A Stan Getz album played softly in the background.

I had come prepared for a showdown with one of the shadiest lawyers in town. He was reserved, distant, on guard. We were both tense.

"Look, Mr. Reporter, other countries have ombudsmen, government consumer departments, but our system works fine. No reparation without litigation, that's what I say."

A waiter came with the beer I had ordered. "Tell me about the last case you won."
"A mother was indicted for molesting her 11-year-old son."

"Sounds tawdry," I said.
"Yup. Neighbor walked into the house and caught her standing in the bathroom, massaging the kid's pecker. Everyone thought it was a slam-dunk of a case, but I got her off."

"How?"
"I just pointed out that she was merely attempting to administer one of those home urine tests. She was worried he might be smoking marijuana."

"Yeah. That case got a lot of publicity. But didn't the kid try to frame her by bringing some pot to school, claiming that it belonged to her and that she was a dealer?"

"Didn't work, though. The woman managed to convince the school principal it was untrue. That same day—after school hours—she took a urine test right there in his office. The kid's accusations just didn't hold water, and the principal never called the police."

"You took this case *pro bono*?"
"Sure. I earn a lot from my civil suits, so I try to put something back by defending the poor."

"Didn't you also stand to benefit from the publicity that a sensational case like this attracts?"

"I don't catch your drift." He looked uncomfortable for a moment. "How do you mean, publicity?"

"Aren't you also a member of the board of directors of Test-Ur-Own?"

"No. I quit just before the case came to trial. I have scruples. I want to make a difference in the world, you know. I have integrity."

"So how did you make your living last year?"

"One big settlement. A tragedy, really. A woman in Houston ordered a *Lose Weight Now* cassette tape from Listen and Win—a corporation out of Houston. They use hidden subliminal suggestions."

"Hidden where?"
"Well, not hidden really. Embedded is more accurate. They're embedded into the music below the normal range of hearing."
"So she didn't lose weight, and you filed suit?"

"Not exactly. She'd ordered a different tape for her teenage daughter at the same time. She'd wanted little Alicia to run for president of the student council, so she bought her *Gain Confidence, Be Assertive and Win!*"

"And neither worked?"
"They worked *too* well. The factory had mixed up the labels on the tapes, and they ended up listening to each other's tape."

"And?"
"The daughter walked to school every day for half a year listening to *Mantovani Does the Beatles* with weight loss phrases hidden in the background."

"For instance?"
"Well," he said, pulling out a sheet of paper from his briefcase, "I like fruits. It makes me full, and I am thin and beautiful. That kind of thing. Shall I get you another beer?"

"Yeah, thanks. I am kind of thirsty. Then what happened?"

"Well, three months later, little Alicia died of anorexia. I filed suit for criminal negligence. They never had a chance. The weight loss tape carried the express warning *Do not repeatedly expose individuals of normal weight, especially children, to the program*. They knew they were licked, and we settled out of court."

"How much?"
"Oh, around three million. I was prepared to haggle, but Alicia's mother was adamant. She just wouldn't let me compromise and she was right. 'I'm a good person,' she'd tell me, 'and I am going to win.'"

I looked around the bar. Several young lawyers were standing in knots, talking intimately. Everyone appeared very relaxed and casual. A couple in the corner had pushed their attaché cases aside and were stealing a few kisses.

"I'm about to take on another case dealing with subliminal suggestions," said Flickman conspiratorially, as he lifted his glass to his lips.

"Another death?" I asked. He didn't seem like such a bad guy now. It was getting very warm in the restaurant, and I removed my tie.

"No. Worse. A drop in fourth quarter earnings for Neiman-Marcus."

Flickman took off his Italian silk sport jacket, and called the waiter over for another Marguerita.

"They had installed subliminal messages in their Muzak to deter shoplifting."

"How?"
"They embedded phrases such as *I respect private property and I will not steal*. But, just

(Continued on Page 7)

The Pearly-Gate Blues

I'm a Born-Again Christian who loves to please ministers, and I'm writing to express my disgust at Jessica Hahn for talking about her experiences. I'd never kiss and tell, nor would the other women I know who love to please our wonderful servants of God.

Let's face reality, ministers are men and many get worked up and need a good woman to relax with. Some are married to women that don't satisfy them, and divorce would ruin careers, so they need the help of understanding followers.

It doesn't matter to me if they are single or married as long as they are discreet! Now Miss Hahn has gone and exposed an enjoyable relationship and has turned it into something dirty to be dragged through the press.

I never felt like a "piece of hamburger" and don't believe they drugged Miss Hahn. The wine may have gone to her head, but forget that drug excuse. She must have been excited about knowing she was going to have a private moment with her idol.

Sex with ministers is wonderful. I've had great moments that I cherish. Trips to religious conventions (even Hawaii) as an aide, hot moments in church after the worshipers have left, and so on. Even once during a practice sermon to an empty hall—he climaxed to shouts of Hallelujah!

Ministers are great lovers. They are not into drugs, drink very little and are rarely kinky. One did experiment with the flagellation of Christ, but he was afraid someone would see the welts, so we only lived out that experiment once.

—K.C.

FCC Is a Four Letter Word

The FCC, that governmental agency which regulates broadcasting, or more correctly, has refused to regulate anything, has finally decided it wants to regulate something: obscenity. Not just George Carlin's infamous "seven dirty words," but material involving "sexual or excretory activities or organs" which the community finds "patently offensive." Under this ruling, presumably, coverage of the President's medical problems will no longer be allowed.

The most patently offensive form of obscenity in broadcasting—children's TV programming—apparently isn't covered by the ruling, with the exception perhaps of ads for Betsy Wetsy. Kids who watch cartoons on Saturday morning are treated to a bevy of bears, wuzzles, muppets, puppies and aliens who, unlike their predecessors, aren't so much creatures of the imagination as animated versions of existing toys.

The reason for the striking similarity between toys in the stores and toys on TV is that toy companies, thanks to the FCC, now

produce Saturday morning cartoons. The marriage of toy company and TV production studio will be consummated electronically next year through the advent of interactive television. Youngsters will be able to purchase toy laser guns and other gadgetry costing as much as \$250 to conduct battle with the video versions of the intergalactic battleships and bionic people for sale in the same stores as the laser guns.

And what is advertised during these full-length toy commercials? Sugar. Frosted Flakes has a commercial on Saturday mornings offering a special gift in every box of cereal—a package of candy! Nabisco advertises Giggles, cream-filled cookies with smiling faces which, appropriately, have no teeth. When the FCC authorizes interactive scratch-and-sniff TV, be prepared for a new batch of animated cartoons produced by cookie companies, starring singing Twinkies and dancing Ding Dongs.

—Robert Myers

Pinochet Honors Helms

Renowned statesman, man of letters and populist president of Chile General Augusto Pinochet recently honored North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms with a state barbecue and celebrity roast as an expression of support for the Senator's efforts to oust U.S. Ambassador Harry Barnes, a suspected communist and sympathizer of the oppressive American media regime.

The event showcased an impressive diversity of Chile's cultural heritage, highlighted by a dramatization of Chilean soldiers re-gassing a funeral. Also included were performances by the Junta Guerrilla Theatre, the Cattle Prod Dance Troupe, and one of the Senator's personal favorites, the Volatile Latin Jazz Quartet.

Included in the celebrity roast were several well-known Chilean comedians who are reputed to have made jokes about Pinochet's weight, two Chilean newspaper reporters, and several unidentified American tourists.

In speeches following the barbecue, Pinochet presented the Senator with a *piñata* resembling the head of Mexican President de la Madrid. Pinochet also reported on the progress of the Jesse Helms School of International Diplomacy currently under construction on a Santiago military base.

For his part, Senator Helms congratulated Pinochet on his work in Chile and presented him with a small chest of gold and diamonds imported from South Africa.

"I assure you that the American people and their President stand firmly behind solid governments like your own," Helms told Pinochet and those still in attendance after the barbecue and roast. "Regardless of what the media and those Communist pollsters say."

—J.D. Kleinke

Puts Feet in Mouf

Former Los Angeles Dodger manager Al Campanis, who lost his job after making allegedly racist remarks during an ABC *Nightline* interview, has released a clarifying statement concerning the controversy:

"All I said was that blacks might not have the necessities to become baseball executives. So what? I was a baseball executive, and I sure don't have what it takes to be black. First, I'm white. Second, I can't dance. Third, I have a very small penis. Some of those guys have hunks of hickory on 'em that make a Louisville Slugger look like a toothpick.

"I'll never forget the time Ernie Banks knocked one out of Wrigley Field with his dick. Or how about the time when my pal Jackie Robinson tied an American flag to his pole, and everyone in the Polo Grounds stood up and sang the national anthem? Once, Willie Mays got hit in the groin with a fast ball, and the trainer had to tape it up with the infield tarp. . . ."

—Richard Levinson

Double Jeopardy

According to the Centers for Disease Control, 66% of AIDS is transmitted by homosexual or bisexual contact; 17% by sharing of needles; 8% by both needle-sharing and homosexual contact.

I get the impression from these statistics that if you're going to shoot dope or fuck butts—you're better off doing both at once.

—Lynn Phillips



Great Moments in Theology:
The Pope Refuses to Kiss Baby M

Roasted

Of all the things that Harlan Ellison has yelled out (and he has a black belt in Mouth), of all the times he has lunged across the desk at a terrified producer, threatening to rip out his liver, he never expected to be sued by an unknown writer for a compliment.

At the Hollywood Press Club on a Saturday night, Ellison is being roasted for the benefit of his own defense fund. Film critic Digby Diehl hosts a group on the stage which, he says, "personifies Ed Meese's personal nightmare."

The roasters: comedian-actor Robin Williams; Ray Bradbury, the grandfather clock of science-fiction; screenwriter David Gerrold; Phil de Guere, producer of *Twilight Zone*; Stan Lee, the dirty old uncle of comic books; Robert Psycho Block; sci-fi writer Robert Silverberg; *The Realist's* Paul Krassner; and, of course, the lawyer, Henry Holmes, Jr.

The auditorium is packed to the rafters at \$25 a head. Bradbury notes that "no bigger crowd has gathered since Harry Cohn's funeral—give 'em what they want and they all show up." And what do we get? An insult, meta-insult orgy for one of the angriest short guys in town. Why? So that Harlan can pay his legal fees.

"It's an eerie feeling," says Gerrold, "to think that the proceeds from tonight's benefit are going directly to pay the maintenance on Henry Holmes' Rolls Royce." He exaggerates. "Really, Paramount Pictures paid for the Rolls. We're buying the cellular phone."

It is reported that Harlan is the most famous native of Painsville, Ohio. It is revealed that "his parents were normal, but the milkman was a syphilitic dwarf."

Dwarf? "Harlan Ellison is so short that he goes up on his girlfriend," says Silverberg. On the dais, Williams and Krassner simultaneously cross that joke off their imaginary lists.

Short? "Actually, this isn't a roast," says Krassner, "it's more like a microwave."

There are more short jokes than you can shake a toothpick at. "Short? I carry a life-sized portrait of Harlan in my wallet." Or, "Nasty, brutish and short. It's a multiple choice. A: Hobbes' description of the conditions of life; B: Harlan Ellison; C: Sex with Harlan Ellison?"

Speaking of sex with . . . "If it's true that you are what you eat, Harlan would be a vagina."

Gerrold is still on the lawyer. "Henry Holmes is really a very religious man. Every day before he goes into court he says the lawyer's prayer: Oh, Lord, let there be evil-doers and thieves; let there be strife among our children; let there be hardship and travail; lest thy servant perish."

Gerrold must be reminded that this is a roast for Ellison. "I know, but it's hard to concentrate on Harlan when there are so many other tempting targets."

A telegram is read from Isaac Asimov, with a P.S.: "Kick him in the balls—signed, Frank Sinatra."

But seriously, folks, it's a first Amendment thing. Michael Fleischer, a comic-book-novel

writer is suing Ellison for a statement he made in a review in *Comics Journal* back in 1980. He thinks that Harlan defamed him in print. Ironically, Harlan in his way really meant to compliment Fleischer, calling him "crazy" like H.P. Lovecraft and other renowned writers. But Fleischer is seeing a psychiatrist and an attorney, so he takes the epithet literally. This makes Ellison very mad.

"Angry? Harlan has had a chip on his shoulder so long his armpits are infested with termites."

Holmes remarks that instead of suing, Fleischer should have just stood up in the same forum and said that Harlan is full of shit. But now, it's pending—the defendants are Ellison and Gary Groth of Fanagraphics, publisher of *Comics Journal*. The plaintiff is suing for a million dollars plus punitive damages, interest and attorney fees.

"The fact that Ellison is a self-made man," says Gerrold, "relieves God of a great responsibility." He admits to being Harlan's friend for six years. "Of course, I've known him for eighteen years. . . ."

De Guere has the dubious distinction of having given Harlan his longest period of employment. "It took him nine months before he figured out how to shoot himself in the foot at *Twilight Zone* and get canned. But of all the people I have worked with, Harlan is by far the shortest."

Childhood friend Silverberg takes exception. "He's not so short any more. He's wider than he used to be, he's thicker, and he's taller. By damn, he's moving in all directions." They are so close that Silverberg is "the only one who would stab Harlan in the front."

"Harlan doesn't have a short fuse," says de Guere, "he is a short fuse."

Lee disagrees. "Harlan is a very difficult person to arouse. Ask any of his former wives." Ellison has a special place in his heart. "He's right up there with the tax collector and the periodontist."

Block, "who has provided a permanent career for Tony Perkins," is amazed at how many people have nothing to do on a Saturday night. He recalls first meeting Harlan in 1952. "He was 18, and I was unlucky."

Back in those days, Block reminisces, "Harlan was interested in re-writing other people's work. He took me into a nearby drug store and showed me how he had erased all the M's off all the Murine bottles." But I wanna tell ya . . .

Harlan is not all bad. Block notes that he never stops working—"except for those four glorious weekends when he got married"

And he's got politics too. Krassner points out that "Harlan is on the right side of a lot of important fights. He's fought against racism and sexism. That's why this whole panel is white males."

Harlan an egomaniac? Krassner says that's true, "partially because at the moment of sexual climax, Harlan calls out his own name."

Williams shouts: "Was it good for me?" Krassner continues: "Harlan has a type-writer with only two letters—M and E. And

on it, he has written 42 books as well as 300 of Steve Allen's songs plus a few of Lyndon LaRouche's speeches."

Krassner says that "Harlan has always refused to get involved with the drug world—as a user. However, he is a dealer. In fact, he was the connection for Kathy Evelyn Smith."

There is a long "Oooooooh" from the audience, now in Roast Heaven. They know that Williams and Robert DeNiro had been with Smith and John Belushi the night of Belushi's death.

"Oh, that's a good one," says Williams, holding himself in his chair.

"Listen," Krassner says, "if she didn't plea-bargain, you wouldn't be here tonight."

Mock steam pours out of Williams' ears. Roasting.

Silverberg tells about the time Harlan passed his new watch around. It was one of those watches with huge numbers. What with Harlan not being the punctual type and his buddies knowing it and all, one of the guys set the thing two hours ahead—just to see if he'd notice. He didn't notice, and he was on time for all of his appointments the whole next week. Well, that worked so well they decided to push his desk calendar a year ahead, and Harlan actually met three deadlines.

Now it is time for the star of the evening, "the Messiah of comedy," as Rona Barrett has called him.

"Robin Williams has been called the king of improv," says Diehl, "and he has proven it tonight by interrupting everybody, stepping on their lines, doing schtick. He's been about as annoying as he can be."

"I loved that review, though," says Williams, referring to Diehl's pan of *Club Paradise*.

"I was hoping you hadn't seen it, Robin. It's said of you in Hollywood that you don't read your scripts. Anyway, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to bring you Robin Williams, fresh from *Club Paradise*, his biggest failure yet."

Say, whose roast is this anyway?

"Thank you, Gary Franklin [the film reviewer Diehl replaced]. What can you say about a man who's a TV critic? A man who looks at a good film and letters it like a report card. Is that art? I think not. And I'd like to thank Harlan's lawyer for proving, God, is there a reason for law? I think not. And I'd like to thank Mr. Krassner for all the Kathy Smith references. That's some funny stuff." Fake hostility.

"I really don't know Harlan for shit," confesses Williams. He calls him "a tall Paul Williams, a white Paul Simon."

Words fly like a swarm of gnats on speed. Williams is visiting Ellison's house. "It's like Notre Dame done by Sears. There's Harlan, naked, playing in his toys with a beautiful shiksa goddess jumping up and down saying, 'I like him. He's smart.'"

Now Williams is Georgie Jessel, now he's a little boy in the bathroom—"I'm reading Bradbury, dad." Now it's *Star Trek*, wait, a penis joke. "If you're hung like a field mouse, don't stand in the wind." And now a toast,

gee, he's overcome, he suppresses a sob. "It's just taken me so far down to be here. I wish I could cry but I don't care."

Tumultuous applause.
"Well," says Diehl, "it's been basically a really hostile, ugly night, with a lot of lame old jokes and sentimental drivel. But we still have the ritual forgiveness to look forward to." He introduces Ellison, "a man with the milk of human kindness dripping from his fangs."

"Ha, ha. Very funny, I'm sure." Harlan is sad. "I had a friend once, but the wheels fell off." He's got no friends. "Zip friends," he says. "Dust is my friend," he says. "And what of these fuckers here? Robin Williams can't even get a pair of pants that fits him."
"There's a reason for that, Harlan."

"Yeah, sure. It was for you they made up the phrase, 'Is it in yet?' You wanna talk about taste, Williams? I've got four words for you: *Club Paradise* and *The Survivors*."

"Yeah, on a double bill with *Man With a Dog* [for which Ellison wrote the screenplay]."

Harlan goes on with his counter-insults. David Gerrold? "He's been in and out of the closet so many times we're having him Martinized in the morning."

Bob Silverberg? "He put the roast into deficit spending because his live-in wanted to fly down with him for the event because she wants to meet Robin Williams. You wanna meet him? Look up here, bimbo! Karen, Williams. Williams, Karen . . ."

Robert Block? "He has made a living for the last 200 years sticking ice picks in his characters' eyes and is responsible for an entire generation of Warpo's who think that entertainment is dinner prepared with a chainsaw."

Stan Lee? "One cannot say enough about Stan Lee that Stan Lee hasn't already said about himself."

Digby Diehl? "It was Digby who got fired from the *Herald* for saying that Judith Krantz is to literature what Dachau is to health spas. A man whose noblest desire is to become Gene Shalit."

Phil de Guere? "It was wonderful working for Phil. Like twelve months in the fucking Gulag. Phil is to kindness what Attila the Hun was to good table manners."

Ray Bradbury? "The king of the goyim—hey, I just figured out how to make you suffer. I'll read you one of Bradbury's poems."

Paul Krassner: "I want to thank my old chum Krassner for being here tonight. I want to commend him on his restraint in the remarks he made. Or perhaps it was only caution on his part because I promised if he fucked around with me I'd let on that he caught his herpes from Nancy Reagan."

Henry Holmes? "Now I can pay the staggering usurious legal fees this little gentle bastard lays on me every month."

As the weary crowd begins to squirm in their seats, the party is winding down. "Harlan's only fear is that he'll get in a car accident and have to re-live this event," says Diehl, taking the podium once more. "And in the

true tradition of roasting, that tradition being to talk dirty and mention a big name, thank you all for coming. And join us next week when our guest roasteer will be Mother Teresa."

Krassner blurts out, "I fucked her."
Screaming, hooting, stomping.

Williams jumps onto his feet. "Gandhi is going, 'Who is this man? He may not get through the gates of heaven for that line.'"

Ellison says, "Thank God Krassner got off one good one."

"I guess I just fell into the insult mode," explains Krassner.

"Basically," says Silverberg, "the roast is a really ugly, repugnant, immature and childish art form. I hate it. And I will only do one if Harlan is the target."

A compliment was originally perceived as an insult, and consequently we have had an evening of insults which were really compliments.

By the way, Harlan won his case. Say what you will.

—Nancy Cain



MESSAGES

(Continued from Page 4)

like that other case, there was a mix-up at the factory again, and all their West Coast stores got saddled with copies of *Control Your Spending Habits*."

We laughed together. The waiter passed by and stopped.

"Hey. Couldn't help but overhear—I know that one. It's nifty. I listen to it before I go out shopping. I saved a lot of dough these last few months. No, sir, I am not an impulsive buyer now. *I only buy what I need*—that's my motto now."

"Do you listen to any other tapes?" I asked. The waiter sat down on the empty chair and leaned in.

"Yeah. I belong to a club and get a new one each month. Some real good ones, too, like *Evening Delights* and *Let's Get Physical*. Course, the girls never know the music's got messages in it. They just like to listen to my 'sexy samba music.'"

"Don't you think that's unfair?"
"Hell no. I love it when a chick whispers in my ear, *I am a loving being and want to*

open up to you."
The waiter had finished off the Margueritas he'd been carrying and was gazing dreamily out of the window. The couple under the ferns who had been kissing were now getting steamy. A group of young lawyers by the bar were ripping up briefs and motions and showering each other with the homemade confetti.

I tried to find the piece of paper with all the incriminating facts I had prepared, but just didn't have the heart to attack Flickman. He's a good person, I thought, and *deserve* to be liked. It was like an auditory *deja vu*. I felt I'd heard those words somewhere before.

"I deserve love," said the waiter, and ambled over to the couple who were now humping on the floor.

"Gee, I'm thirsty," said Flickman slowly. "Let's eat, drink and be merry. Weekends were made for Michelob."

"You know," I said, "I feel comfortable with you. You make a difference in the world. You're thin and beautiful . . . and a beer sounds great."

We were toasting to each other when I noticed that the music had changed from Bossa Nova to mellow rock, and with it the atmosphere in the restaurant was shifting. The lawyers at the bar were brushing the confetti out of their hair. The couple in the corner were now back on their feet, adjusting their clothes as they looked around a trifle sheepishly.

The busboy came over to the table to clear off the plates as the waiter walked by officiously.

"Hey, Sam," said the busboy. "Another tape came from that Music Club you belong to. Has a weird title though—*California Lifestyle Sampler*. I just played it over the P.A. and it only sounded like Bossa Nova. What gives?"

"If you fight for the little man, Mr. Flickman, how come you didn't raise the constitutional implications surrounding subliminal suggestion tapes?"

Flickman was tightening the knot in his thin designer tie. "What do you mean?"

"Thought-control, brain-washing, that kind of thing."

"It's not an invasion of privacy if they're sending out messages like *I respect private property*. Why, that's a cornerstone of our system."

"This is a saccharine version of Big Brother. It's bad enough having Ray Conniff and Barry Manilow seeping out of loudspeakers in public speakers, but this . . ."

"Look, Mr. Reporter. If you don't want to hear them, don't listen. I don't have to read what you write."

He left me standing with the check. A Lawrence Welk version of *Girls Just Wanna Have Fun* played softly in the background.

The waiter walked by. "What's up?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing. You know, Star Wars is a great idea," I said.

"Funny. I was just thinking the same thing."

—Stanley Young

MEDIA FREAK

Inside Joke

In a public service announcement, Mary Tyler Moore mentions a few effects of diabetes. When she says that it causes blindness, the camera cuts to a man wearing shades. It's actually Michael O'Donoghue, who is not blind, although on *Saturday Night Live* he once said, "I'd like to do my impression of the entire Mormon Tabernacle Choir stabbing themselves in the eyes with knitting needles," and proceeded to act out such an occurrence while he screamed in excruciating pain.

Schlock Radio

They are willing to discuss anything but their salaries, which are truly obscene.

On a *West 57th* documentary on shock radio, it was mentioned that d.j. doesn't mean disc jockey, it means dick joke. But the word "dick" was bleeped out.

However, on the Oprah Winfrey show, *Chicago Tribune* columnist Bob Greene wasn't censored when he got laughs talking about "Danny Dick and his brother Dickie Dick."

While the FCC attacks politically-conscious, listener-sponsored KPFK, Howie Mandel, guest-hosting on the Fox Network's *Late Show*, carried raunchiness to new heights.

He told actress Lisa Hartman, "It's times like this that I'm glad I'm sitting down and there's a desk in front of me."

He gave her a life-size photo of his head superimposed on her body. She gave him a life-size photo of her head superimposed on his body. He said, "This is what's so great about show business, the give and take. I give you a little head and you—"

Later he said, "I wanna talk about having sex with elephants."

He asked vocalist Stacey Q., "You haven't inserted a battery anywhere, have you?"

And when she mentioned having once ridden an elephant mistakenly referred to as Dildo, he said that she had been "riding a Dildo in the circus."

He took off his shirt and, touching his nipples, said, "They're starting to get hard now."

He told Dr. Joyce Brothers, "I wanna see your breasts—now!"

She responded, "I'd rather starve."

"Did Merv Griffin ever see them?"

Looking into the camera, he said, "We're just talking about cooking, Mom," adding in a stage whisper, "and then she's gonna show me her tits."

But the FCC, in its concern for innuendo, is not about to take back their broadcasting license from Fox, powerful enough to outbid ABC, CBS and NBC for the right to televise the Emmy Awards.

They're too busy waiting to catch Howard Stern playing those secret tapes of young Marines panting and moaning with voluptuous KGB agents on the Embassy carpet.

Millennium Megalomania

Pat Robertson claims that the Lord has granted his Christian Broadcasting Network exclusive rights to televise the Second Coming of Christ. The May issue of *Penthouse* quotes him as saying that God informed him in 1968 that "I have chosen you to usher in the coming of My Son."

Covert Action points out that CBN—the fourth largest TV network in America—has been funneling aid to the contra armies in Honduras and Costa Rica. Robertson obviously has to do something to pass the time till the Second Coming. Meanwhile, the blood on his hands is not necessarily that of the lamb.

Condom Wars

There are rubbers all over the place.

The second International Whores Convention in Brussels last October endorsed the use of condoms as a safe sex practice.

In February, *The Oldest Profession Times* reported that legislation would be introduced



in the U.S. to make it illegal for police to destroy condoms or use them as evidence of intent to commit prostitution.

In March, the *San Jose Mercury News* quoted a San Francisco vice squad officer: "We definitely do seize condoms. We will seize any physical evidence that enhances the case."

Time magazine quoted the president of LifeStyles as saying that AIDS is "a condom marketer's dream."

But *New York Native* complains of homophobia in the industry, which refuses to advertise in gay publications. A representative of Trojans said that "gays will see the ads on TV."

Networking news showed a Unitarian minister handing out condoms to his congregation.

PBS had a woman demonstrating how to put condoms on by using her fingers.

Michele Philips took condoms out of her purse and handed them to Joan Rivers.

Bill Murray took condoms out of his pocket and handed them to David Letterman.

Phil Donahue tossed condoms to members of his audience like a rock star throwing flowers to fans.

And Oprah Winfrey asked a former hooker, "How do you get a prophylactic on

a person without them knowing it?"

The reply: "You put the condom in your mouth and it's under your tongue, and you can do it very easily, without the man knowing it."

But this is only for professionals. Don't you kiddies try it at home.

Fighting Back By Not Buying

• After a 6½-year boycott of all Nestlé's products, the company agreed to comply with the World Health Organization's infant formula sales code. Now the same group which organized that protest is building a consumer boycott of General Electric, which manufactures parts for every first-strike weapon, including the B-1 bomber, the MX and Minuteman missiles, the Trident submarine and the neutron trigger for every U.S. nuclear bomb. Since GE owns NBC, it is unlikely that Tom Brokaw will ever deliver any news on the boycott except in a plain brown wrapper.

• An ad hoc group of ice cream lovers, who resent cynicism directed at them, have begun a grassroots boycott of Dreyer's, because of their commercial featuring John Ehrlichmann of Watergate infamy, saying that the taste is "unbelievable"—the word UNBELIEVABLE appears on the screen—"and I know a lot about that." A boycott spokesperson says, "We will not eat Dreyer's ice cream again until they leave Ehrlichmann twisting slowly, slowly in the wind."

Filler Items

• When Pepsi-Cola entered the soft drink market in Thailand, their slogan, "Come alive, you're in the Pepsi generation," was translated as, "Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the dead."

• On the TV series *Jack and Mike*, one of them had a miscarriage. The final rationale was: "Maybe this was God's way of telling us that we're not ready to have a kid yet."

• Marie Osmond sold exclusive photo coverage of her wedding to the *National Enquirer*.

• Bumper sticker: "The Rat Race is Over—The Rats Won!"

• Scoop Nisker is limited to 90-second features on KFOG in San Francisco. He's willing to do two minutes for the same price, but the rock radio station has refused his offer because their research shows that the attention span for the spoken word is 90 seconds.

• T-shirt: "Another Meddling Foreign Journalist."

• Capsule review of Shirley McLaine's *Out On a Limb*: "The movie of a lifetime, though not necessarily this one."

• Electronic typo, on CNN: "Singer-songwriter-dancer Peter Allen kicks off a six-titty tour. . . ."

• Mort Sahl is supporting Alexander Haig for President.

• Resident aliens are required by the INS to have a green card with a photo showing the fully exposed right ear.

• The Center for Futures Research at USC will cease operations on June 30 for financial reasons which they had not predicted.