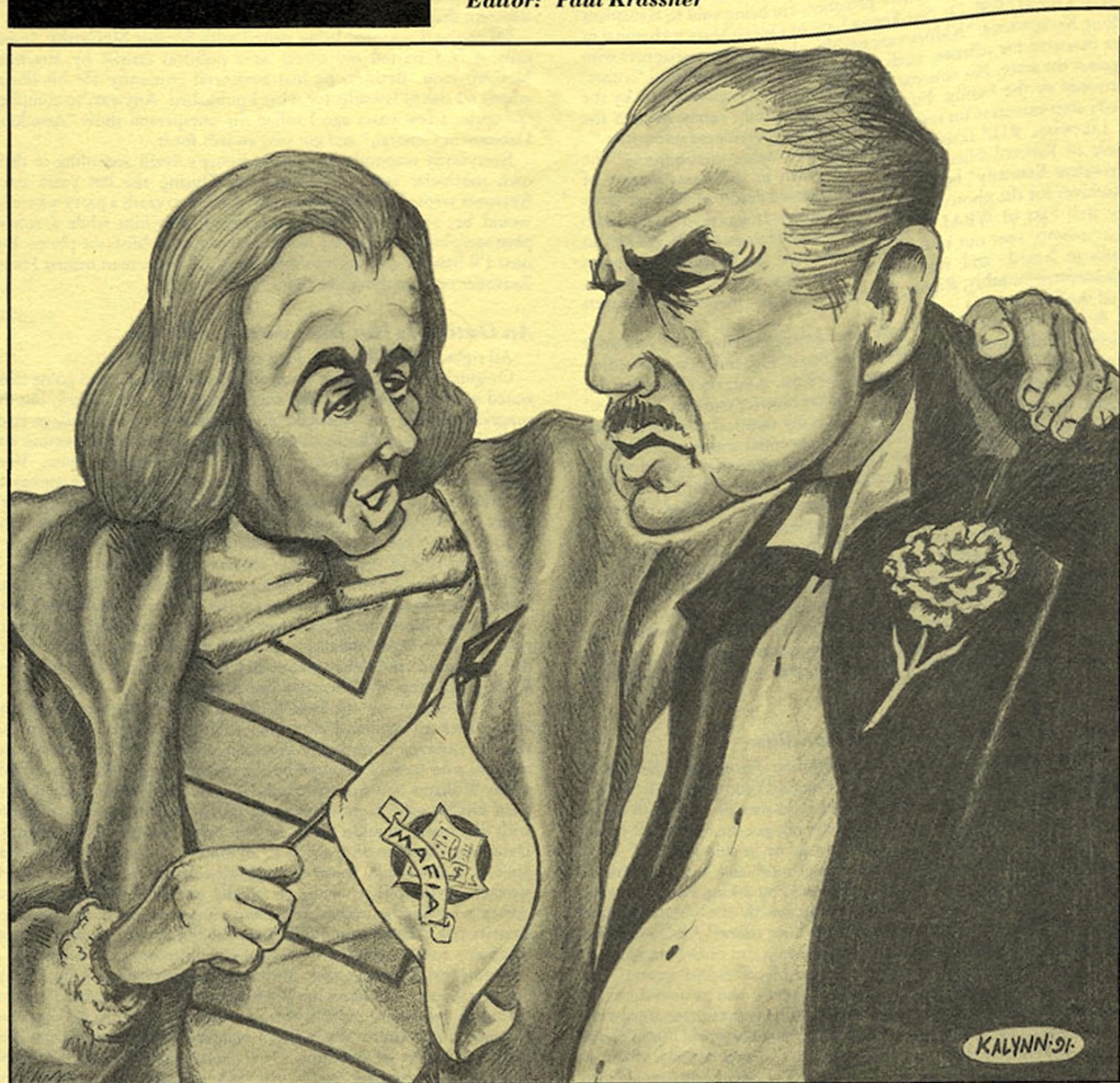


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The Realist

Number 118
Editor: Paul Krassner

- Alan Abel Gives Good Prank
- Harry Shearer Gets an Abortion
- Pee-wee Herman meets Jeffrey Dahmer



The True Story of How Columbus Discovered America

Next year marks the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. The myth will be perpetuated that he was financed by Queen Isabella of Spain. But the truth is, she turned him down. Instead, Columbus went to the Sicilian Mafia for funds. In return, they were promised a

large percentage of the Gross National Product. The Mafia, in their own egoless fashion, preferred Queen Isabella to get the credit, while they continue to get the cash.

However, according to a recent Reuters dispatch, the International Indian Treaty Council's 13th annual General Assembly passed

a resolution calling for the boycott of any multi-national corporation that helps celebrate the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' voyage to America. Or, as Dick Gregory once said, "How could Columbus discover America when the Indians were already here?"

COURT JESTER

Tricky Dick Rides Again

The *Realist* never labels an article as either satire or journalism, in order not to deprive you of the pleasure of discerning for yourself whether it's actually true or metaphorically true. Sometimes as editor I'm not even sure myself. When I published an article in #116 by George Andrews, his concluding question seemed far-fetched: Would Chinese political prisoners be forced to supply biological spare parts?

But now a letter in the British medical journal *Lancet* claims that kidneys from executed Chinese prisoners are being sold to transplant patients for \$17,000. Dr. Siu-keung Lam of Queen Mary's Hospital in Hong Kong wrote: "Kidneys are usually obtained from prisoners who are executed for offenses such as rape, burglary or political 'crimes' against the state. No consent for organ removal is given either by the prisoner or the family. Furthermore, the family rarely collects the body after execution for fear of harassment by government authorities."

Likewise, #117 featured an article that defies credibility—"The Role of Richard Nixon and George Bush in the Assassination of President Kennedy" by Paul Kangas (belated credit to Michael Ochs Archives for the photo of Nixon and Bush). It was read on the radio by Bob Fass of WBAI in New York and Haines Ely of KVMR in Sacramento, sent out to 6,000 activists over the PeaceNet computer bulletin board, and reprinted in the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee monthly, *Rights*, which goes to every member of Congress and the Senate.

A couple of further facts have since emerged: Then-CIA operative George Bush named three boats in the Bay of Pigs Invasion—*Houston*, *Zapata* (after his oil company) and *Barbara*. And, on November 24, 1947, an assistant to FBI director J. Edgar Hoover sent this "sensitive" memo about Jack Ruby to HUAC: "It is my sworn statement that one Jack Rubenstein of Chicago noted as a potential witness for hearings of the House Committee on Un-American Activities is performing information functions for the staff of Cong. Richard M. Nixon, Rep. of California. It is requested Rubenstein not be called for open testimony in those aforementioned hearings."

Nixon has long served as a personification of the Freudian slip. When a reporter asked him how he felt about the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald by Jack Ruby following the assassination of JFK, Nixon replied, "Two rights don't make a wrong—I mean . . ." Now, 28 years later, Nixon said of Saddam Hussein: "He is an international menace. If I could find a way to get him out of there, even putting a contract out on him, if the CIA still did that sort of thing, assuming it ever did, I would be for it."

Reasoner Meets His Final Deadline

In his memoirs, *It Sure Looks Different From the Inside*, Ron Nessen, press secretary to President Gerald Ford, wrote: "In Ford's first TV interview as president, Harry Reasoner of ABC told him a major public criticism was that 'you have not got the magnitude of the grasp of the presidency . . . Can you grow in this job, sir?' Ford patiently recited his educational background and his 25 years of experience in Congress. Reasoner followed by asking Ford about his ability to handle foreign policy, ending with the condescending question, 'You are aware there is a world out there?' ABC protected Reasoner's reputation by editing that question out of the broadcast."

In his own memoirs, *Before the Colors Fade*, Reasoner wrote: "The key was understanding the [Little Rock] story, and in turn there are two keys to understanding most stories. One is that there are always at least two sides to any story. The other is that the world doesn't have many real villains, very many real bad guys, if you define a villain as a person who *thinks* of himself as a villain. I've only been aware of two figures in the news during my career with whom I would not have shaken hands if called to deal with them professionally. I suppose that what Thomas Jefferson called a decent respect for the opinion of mankind requires me to identify those two. They were Senator Joseph McCarthy and a man named Paul Krassner or something like that who published a magazine called *The Realist* in the 1960s. I guess everyone knows who McCarthy was. Krassner and his *Realist* were part of a '60s fad—publications attacking the values of the establishment—

which produced some very good papers and some very bad ones. Krassner not only attacked establishment values; he attacked decency in general, notably with an alleged 'lost chapter' from William Manchester's book, *The Death of a President*. To paraphrase Clive Barnes' remarks about a movie: *The Realist* was the kind of paper that gives dirty papers a bad name. My grounds for despising them were that, based on their speech and actions, they had to *know* they were villains, but I suspect that even those two, who seemed execrable to me, thought of themselves in a much better light. And in Little Rock the people leading the opposition to desegregation, with the exception of Governor Faubus and a few other opportunists, did not see themselves as oppressors of black human beings, but as defenders of a system that worked best for both whites and blacks."

Of course I resented being paired with Senator McCarthy. Ironically, I had started my career as a political satirist by attacking McCarthyism. Besides, he had senatorial immunity for his libels, whereas I risked lawsuits for what I published. Anyway, to complete the cycle, a few years ago I called my one-person show "Attacking Decency in General," and got two awards for it.

Everybody responds to a public figure's death according to their own particular sense of connection. During the ten years since Reasoner wrote his book, I've really wanted to crash a party where he would be, so that I could shake hands with him while a cohort photographed us in the act, and then I would publish the photo. But now I'll have to give up my fond fantasy about a man named Harry Reasoner or something like that.

An Outing Is Not Necessarily a Picnic

All right, Pete Williams is a fag and Ron Reagan isn't. Originally, Assistant Secretary of Defense Williams was going to be outed as a closet gay by Michelangelo Signorile in *OutWeek*, but the magazine folded, and Signorile offered his article to the *Village Voice* instead. There was dissent among the staff, and a special meeting was held to discuss the ethics of outing. The dissenters won. *Voice* executive editor Richard Goldstein wrote: "I'll abide by the consensus we arrived at by not mentioning the name of the official in Signorile's piece. But I'm glad to report that another publication, *The Advocate*, is considering full disclosure. I believe any gay person who plays a prominent role in the military—especially within the Pentagon—is guilty of political hypocrisy." *Voice* gossip columnist Michael Musto added: "In addition to helping censor the war for us, Williams is both a tool and a mechanic of an institution that treats gays as a security risks not fit to represent our country. Is he just doing what he has to do? Yes, but so is a light-skinned black who works for the Klan or a Right to Life rep who's secretly had 10 abortions."

The *Advocate* put the Pete Williams exposé on their cover, and editor Richard Rouliard explained: "We commit ourselves to this singular instance of outing in the name of the 12,966 lesbian and gay soldiers who have been outed by the military since 1982. Since 1989, when Williams was appointed, 2,273 gay and lesbian soldiers have been discharged." Signorile wrote: "If the military were concerned with blackmail, wouldn't it be more worried about a Department of Defense spokesman with access to all kinds of classified information? Isn't it bizarre that someone as high-echelon as Williams is not affected by the policy, while an openly gay drill sergeant, cook or porter who has no access to sensitive information is considered a security risk?" Readers could then turn to the advice page and find out whether a cock ring will set off the metal detector at the airport.

Syndicated columnist Jack Anderson reported the *Advocate* story, but newspapers including the *Washington Post* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* refused to publish that column. The *New York Times* ran an item on the controversy without naming Williams; it's not as if he had been *raped* or anything. Two weeks after the original *Voice* non-outing, their own media critic James Ledbetter was allowed to

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What Has the Supreme Court Been Smoking, Anyway?

by Harry Shearer

(Sound of typing and computers in the background)

Doctor: Sit down, Mrs. Velasquez.

Woman: I am sitting down.

Doctor: My, we are pregnant, then.

Woman: Yes.

Doctor: So . . . where are we from?

Woman: We?

Doctor: You.

Woman: Me.

Doctor: Yes.

Woman: I'm from here, now.

Doctor: No, but I mean—

Woman: Doctor, I got five minutes with you, right?

Doctor: I'm afraid with the crush of clinic business these days, it's more like three and change.

Woman: Change?

Doctor: Don't get your hopes up, Mrs. Velasquez. It's just a cute way of saying three-and-a-half minutes.

Woman: Well, I don't think I should waste the time on little talk?

Doctor: Small talk?

Woman: Uh-huh.

Doctor: Okay, point well taken. So . . . to the heart of the matter, then. You're pregnant, and I'm a doctor.

Woman: And I have three other children, and I'm a borderline diabetic, and my husband lost his job when Eastern Airlines went under.

Doctor: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Was he a pilot?

Woman: No. A paralegal for the firm that was suing them.

Doctor: Ah-hah. So what can we here at Paradise Corners Community Clinic do for you, Mrs. Velasquez?

Woman: Well, I took the pill and used the, you know, thing, and still I got pregnant. We can't afford another child, doctor. And I'm a borderline diabetic.

(Continued on Page 4)

by Lenny Lipton

You may have read about Fickle James, who stood accused of the murder of Steven Langley last summer in Frustum, Alabama. The trial made the papers, and it also made history; it's safe to say that criminal justice will never be the same in the United States after James was found guilty of first degree murder but went scot-free. I was in town the week of the trial, visiting friends, and like many of the people in the town, I attended.

It was utterly clear to everyone present in the courtroom that Fickle James was guilty of the murder of Steven Langley. Here is a summary of the facts that emerged. James, an Afro-American, entered the home of Langley on the last day of May. All of the Langleys were home: Steven, his wife Elmira, and their seven children, from two to 15 years of age. James had been employed by Langley at a nearby lumberyard, and earlier that day they had had a dispute concerning wages James alleged were owed to him. James went to the Langley home with an ax, a tool he used at the lumberyard. After entering the home he proceeded to terrorize the family and chop Langley to pieces before the horrified eyes of his entire family. With eight witnesses to the deed, and the premeditated nature of the crime, there was little doubt as to the outcome of the trial and the fate of Fickle James.

The courtroom was hot and humid and there had been some talk about holding the trial in the evening when the temperature dropped to 100. Despite the fact that shades were drawn over the windows of the old courtroom, the glare from their aged yellow cloth was intolerable. To make matters worse, the courtroom was filled to capacity and there was no doubt as to the vengeful mood of the crowd; they wanted this "nigger" (a term used by onlookers) to die a death as painful as that he had inflicted. The heinousness of the crime was compounded by the fact that a black man

(Continued on Page 4)

by Bob Wieder

It's becoming difficult to get a handle on the ideological bent of the current Supreme Court. On the one hand, the Court's decisions regarding abortion seem to indicate a belief that every life, even potential life, is sacred and priceless.

On the other hand, the Court delivered a ruling that juries may be required to consider the character and personal qualities of murder victims in determining the punishment for their killers, the clear implication being that some lives are more sacred and priceless than others.

And there is a kind of pragmatic rationality to this notion. Given the legal premise that a convicted murderer must "pay his/her debt to society," it follows logically that this debt is greater if one has deprived society of a leading neurosurgeon than if one has deprived society of a transient with a long record of child-molestation.

The problem is, having declared that punishment may be proportional to the worth and calibre of the victim, the Court then went on to other business, providing no more specific guidelines to aid juries in determining appropriate punishment. Fortunately, I have come up with some rules-of-thumb that may at least work as a starting point for juries deliberating in the penalty phase.

Let's take the case of an impatient motorist who, in a fit of harried rage, deliberately runs down a dawdling pedestrian. Depending on the identity, character and social contributions of the victim, the following degrees of punishment seem reasonable.

Execution by Boiling. Pregnant women, single working parents, nuns carrying food to shut-ins, war heroes, journalists, satirists, stand-up comedians, children 12 years old or younger, philanthropists, bone-marrow donors, Ralph Nader, Katherine Hepburn, Michael Jordan.

Execution by Gas Chamber. Doctors,

mention Williams by name. He wrote: "ABC's *This Week With David Brinkley* trotted [Defense Secretary Dick] Cheney out to echo the same double standard. Cheney said, provocatively, 'When you deploy for six months on an aircraft carrier at sea, it's a very different set of concerns and considerations,' and Sam Donaldson never challenged that transparent homophobia, nor did he name Pete Williams. (You can bet your Desert Storm trading cards that Cheney appeared only on the condition that Williams not be outed on air.) To bring hypocrisy to an even more baroque level, the *Washington Post* account of the Brinkley show said that the subject of civilian versus military policy came up because of a 'controversy reported last week in a column by Jack Anderson'—without noting that the *Post* itself had killed the column!"

Meanwhile, anonymous gay activists known as Outpost spread posters around New York—especially near media centers—outing Pete Williams, among others, as *Absolutely Queer*. Which led to selective outing in the media. Goldstein wrote in the *Voice*: "The activists believe any celeb who sings in the choir is fair game. But consider this confession of a TV programmer who recently interviewed me as a voiceover for shots of Outpost's oeuvre. His superiors were apparently willing to broadcast the names and faces on the posters—but not all of them. Seems one of Outpost's targets owns the station, so his face wouldn't be shown; and another celeb whose talk show is

about to air on the same station would also be exempt."

The latter reference was to Ron Reagan. I had been hired to work on his talk show, which appeared extremely ironic in view of what I've written about his parents, but he's a fellow cultural mutation and neither of us felt at all compromised. I got fired after five weeks, only because he didn't do an opening monologue, and an additional segment producer was needed more than a comedy writer. I told Ron that he had been outed in New York. We knew the issue would come up on a program about gays. Indeed, Michelangelo Signorile was one of the guests, and he mentioned those rumors. Reagan responded, "I was a ballet dancer, and any straight ballet dancer gets a rather thick skin about this sort of thing. But it occurred to me that it's insulting to my wife of eleven years, because it says she's living a lie and I don't like that." During that taping, Pete Williams was outed for the first time on national television. And when the show aired, his name wasn't bleeped out.

Not that there hasn't been censorship. One promo for the show included a recent clip of Ron as host of *Evening at the Improv*, saying, "I am the love child of Frank Sinatra"—followed immediately by an old black-and-white clip from the *GE Theater* with Ronald Reagan saying, "Can you imagine what the Commies will do with this!" Fox head Barry Diller happened to be watching TV at home and felt it was exploitative. He outed that promo right off his network.

nurses, college professors with no history of sexual harassment, social workers, heads-of-household, abortion-rights activists, local librarians, AIDS researchers, environmentalists, Stevie Wonder, Joe Montana, George Bush (because you-know-who would then be president).

Life Sentence. School teachers (depending on the testimony of character witnesses and former students), drug counselors, foster parents, jazz pianists, animal-rights activists, youth organizers, cartoonists, Jimmy Carter, Nolan Ryan, Paul Newman.

Ten-year Maximum Sentence. Orthodontists, TV anchorpersons, functional illiterates, performance artists, persons on skateboards, car salesmen, parking meter officers, stockbrokers, local cable TV executives, lounge singers, Mario Cuomo, Madonna, any professional golfer.

Fine and Probation. Insurance claims adjusters, accordion players, racetrack touts, persons carrying boom boxes, theater reviewers, magazine editors, BMW owners, headwaiters, flagrant water-wasters, Supreme Court Justices, anyone in a fur coat, Pete Rose, Ted Kennedy, Roseanne (Barr) Arnold.

Stern Tongue-Lashing. Diamond merchants, radio talk show hosts, sports and theatrical agents, auto mechanics, Jehovah's Witnesses, street mimes, parolees, off-duty bus drivers, abortion clinic blockaders, Sly Stallone, Jose Canseco, Dan Quayle, former West Covina High School chemistry teacher Albert Greenlea (it's a personal thing).

Apology for Inconveniencing the Defendant. Oil company executives, political officeholders, airport baggage handlers, process servers, people talking loudly to themselves, insurance salesmen, telephone solicitors, Hare Krishnas, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, George Steinbrenner, Geraldo Rivera.

Financial Compensation for Damage to Car. Divorce lawyers, savings-and-loan executives, loan sharks, NRA lobbyists, child-support cheats, slumlords, bill collectors, aluminum siding salespersons, members of the logging industry, John McEnroe, Vanilla Ice, John Sununu.

Key to the City. Crack dealers, IRS auditors, tobacco lobbyists, Scientologists, toxic waste violators, child pornographers, bureaucrats, arbitrageurs, past-life channelers, TV "infomercial" spokespersons, advertising executives, Andrew Dice Clay, Don King, Jesse Helms.

Harry Shearer

Doctor: Hmmm. If I had the time to examine you, I'd be the judge of that. But take it as a given, and given also that our family planning services have had less than total effectiveness, about which I'm awful sorry. I guess you're wondering about . . . the, uh, the, uh, A-word.

Woman: Adoption?

Doctor: That wasn't what I was thinking. But no, that's good, that's a good A-word. Have you thought of that?

Woman: My cousin Virgilio works for the county, and he says they can't give away the Latino children for adoption. The only people who want Latino children he says already

know how to make plenty more.

Doctor: Yeah, that's what I've heard. White children, you can name your price. But—anyway, I was thinking about another A-word. A-something-shun.

Woman: A something shun.

Doctor: Um. See, there's a little technicality here that's kind of got my tongue—there's starboard and there's—did you come here on a ship?

Woman: No, in a Ford Festiva.

Doctor: Okay. This is a long shot. Sounds like the Supreme Court nominee who got defeated and just wrote a book?

Woman: Bork?

Doctor: No, a bo—yes, Bork.

Woman: I read about him.

Doctor: There you go. A-something-shun. Sounds like Bork.

Woman: A Bork shun?

Doctor: Hmmm.

Woman: A pork shun?

Doctor: Look, we're using up your last minute right now.

(Sound of writing)

Doctor: Here. This office closes at 6:30. Come see me at this address about a half hour later. And if you can, please try to bring \$300 in small bills.

Woman: For a pork chop?

Doctor: Yes. For a pork chop. A very clean and safe one. Okay?

Woman (dubiously): Okay. They're much cheaper on Pico Boulevard.

(Sound of door opening and closing)

Lenny Lipton

had dared to raise his hand against a white citizen of the community.

I need not trouble the reader with the tearful testimony of the wife, Elmira Langley, and children who witnessed the atrocity. It's painful to recall, and not germane to that which is before us. The turning point came after Fickle James had been found guilty of murder in the first degree and the jury was to deliberate their recommendation for sentencing. The defense lawyer, Jerome Finkelstein, a Northerner brought in for the trial by the Afro-American Defense Fund, recalled Elmira Langley, over the objection of the prosecutor, Worth Wheelis. The judge, Calvin Ferguson, a portly, red-faced, triple-chinned man in his sixties, was doing his damndest to give the appearance of fairness, and allowed the re-examination of this key witness.

"Mrs. Langley," asked Mr. Finkelstein, "did your husband ever hit you, beat you?"

"Your honor, I object!" cried prosecutor Wheelis, "This is wholly irrelevant and will only cause further suffering to a woman who has suffered so much."

"Your honor," countered Mr. Finkelstein, "in *Payne vs. Tennessee*, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that a prosecutor may present evidence about the victim's character and the impact on the victim's family at the sentencing phase of a death penalty case. If such a right is reserved for the prosecutor, may it not also be reserved for the defense? I believe that this interpretation takes no great stretch of logic."

"The witness is directed to answer," said a

visibly aggrieved Judge Ferguson, wiping his chins with his hanky.

"My husband was a kindly man, but he was given to fits of anger, and sometimes he struck me," said Mrs. Langley.

"He more than struck you, Mrs. Langley. I have witnesses who will testify that he beat you frequently. Did he not do so?"

"Yes, but only when he was angry. If he thought I was flirting with another man, or the cakes I baked were burned, things like that . . ."

"Bad enough to put you in the hospital?"

"Only four or five times in twenty years," she sobbed.

The people next to me weren't fazed by this revelation. One man told his neighbor, "It served the bitch right." This observation was greeted with a murmur of agreement, and others expressed their thoughts with even stronger language.

"Did your husband ever ask you to have an abortion, Mrs. Langley?" There was another objection from the prosecution which was overruled.

"Yes," Mrs. Langley replied in a feeble voice.

"On how many occasions?"

Her answer was inaudible, and she was instructed to repeat it.

"Seven times. I had seven abortions."

"And did you want to have these abortions?"

"No, I did not."

"Then why did you do it, Mrs. Langley?"

"Steven made me. He forced me to. I didn't want to do it. I'm a religious woman. I thought it was a crime against God and creation. I told him it was murder, but he said we already had enough mouths to feed. He said he would be displeased if I didn't go through with it."

"Only displeased?"

"He said that he would beat me so that I'd miscarry."

My neighbors in the visitors' gallery were outraged. The same man who had called Mrs. Langley a bitch now turned his even more ferocious wrath against the deceased Mr. Langley, calling him a bastard and a baby killer. Those in the gallery agreed wholeheartedly with this assessment. The courtroom was in an outraged turmoil and the judge called for order.

After the jury had returned, and they read their recommendation for sentencing, there was another uproar. I remember the cheers, the cries, the shouts, but most of all I remember Alex Smith, a stringer for *Time*, who turned to me and said: "In this part of the country they're good ol' boys and they hate blacks, but it seems like they hate abortion even more."

Fickle James was let off with a year of probation. The man he killed was considered to be a person whose life was entirely worthless—a scab on the back of Alabama. Fickle James, a homicidal ax-wielding black man, walked free. So it was that the Supreme Court decision ruled the day—the crime of murder may be worse than it appears if the victim is a good person who will be missed by friends and family; or less than it appears if the murder victim is a wretch, hated by one and all.

Pee-wee Herman's Onanistic Ordeal

by Dawna Kaufmann

Okay, okay, you've heard all the jokes. But is it fair to kick a guy when he's down? The answer is yes—when the guy is Paul Reubens, aka Pee-wee Herman, aka the Spawn of Satan. As co-creator of the original *Pee-wee Herman Show*, I can honestly say that while I don't know if he was whacking his weenie that night in July, I do know that Reubens is the biggest dick-head I've ever met.

Back in 1981, when he was performing with L.A.'s Groundling Improvisational Theater, I was already a network TV producer, having just survived a late-night show that was butchered by CBS for being too controversial. I dreamed of creating another series for late-night; one that would look harmless enough on the surface, yet demented for those who looked closely. I came up with, as our publicity later called it, "A Late-Night Kiddie Comedy Show For Big Kids Who Refuse To Grow Up." All I needed was a host.

My friend, Cassandra Peterson (now known as Elvira, Mistress of the Dark), a member of the Groundlings, told me to check out Paul Reubens, who had been performing the Pee-wee character, in costume, for a while. His act consisted of hurling Tootsie Rolls into the audience, and that was all. I realized that there was potential, so Paul and I met and quickly formed a plan for combining our talents. We would split profits 50/50. We had a verbal agreement, and later drafted some basic paperwork.

Over the next few months, we signed up more Groundlings as writer/actors, including Phil Hartman (now on *Saturday Night Live*), John Paragon (now directing films), Lynne-Marie Stewart, John Moody and others. Artist Gary Panter created the Playhouse environment, and Jay Condom (now Jay Cotton) wrote original music. In all, some 50 incredibly gifted people donated their lives to work on the project, most of them with just a vague promise of rewards in the future.

The *Pee-wee Herman Show* opened as a midnight Saturday play at the Groundling Theatre, where, as producer, I promoted it as a "live TV pilot" and invited every showbiz contact I knew and even more I cold-called. The show was a smash immediately; 2000 names were on the waiting list for tickets.

We soon moved uptown, to the Roxy Theatre on the Sunset Strip, doing five shows per week. When TV offers started pouring in, Paul's agents and lawyers got involved, and on his urging, effectively cut me out of the picture. I was still producing, but not included in the decision-making for the sale of the project I had inspired. They say in Hollywood you have to get ripped off once, in order to learn how not to get screwed again. I now use John Gotti's attorneys.

The last show at the Roxy was taped as a one-hour special for HBO's *On Location* series. I was paid a minimum sum as producer, and the cast and crew received token payments. Paul's attorneys gave the key members, myself included, contracts promising teensy net profits of his net profits. In my case, this represented quite a difference from our original agreement, but Paul was untractable, and all the power was on his side.

We severed our friendship, to say the least, and Paul went on to sell the idea to CBS as a children's Saturday morning series, and to make TV history. I still get occasional checks—the last was for \$9.90—on

(Continued on Page 6)

by Paul Krassner

He should've been praised for indulging in safe sex, for not increasing global population, for allowing horses on the street to remain unfrightened. Instead, Pee-wee Herman got busted for playing with his wee-wee in the darkened privacy of a porno movie house—for yet another victimless crime—manipulating his genitalia, masturbating, beating his meat, fucking his fist, choking his chicken, snapping his snake, yanking his wanker, turning Japanese, jerking off.

What could Pee-wee's defense possibly be? Would his attorney play the Divinyls' hit record—"When I think of you, I touch myself"—in court? Will he plead guilty—"I know *you* are but what am *I*?"—or temporary sanity? Joan Rivers proclaimed she was positive that he would be "going for help." From who, Scientology? Or from a public relations firm to give him a flaccid image? It all seemed straight out of an old Lenny Bruce bit, where just such a hardened criminal must ultimately be rehabilitated by going "cold jerky."

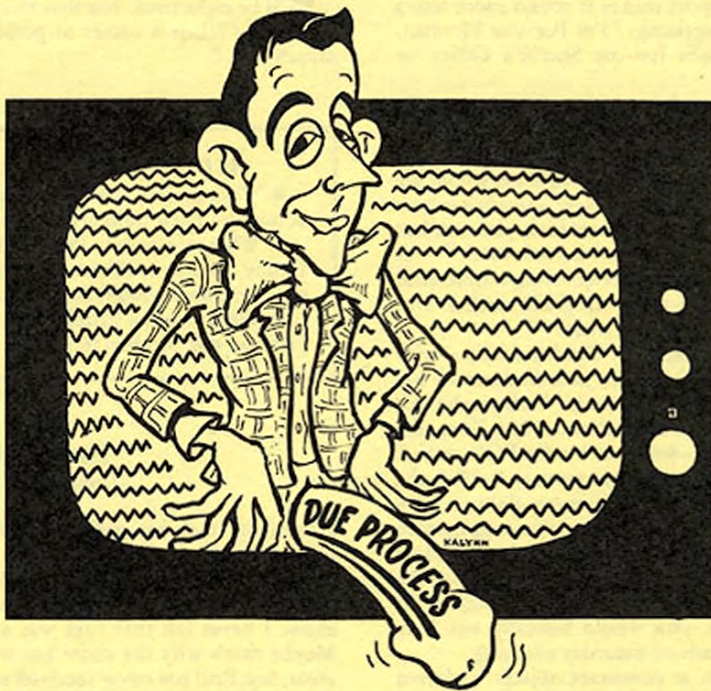
No sooner had Robert Klein walked onto the set of the David Letterman show announcing, "Free Pee-wee," than T-shirts went on sale with that slogan and the subtitle, "His great adventure got out of hand." Then Klein sat down, looked into the camera and suggested in retrospect, "Pee-wee, get a VCR." Harry Shearer had less expensive advice: "Here's a quarter, Pee-wee, buy a newspaper." Shearer's answering machine informed callers that he was "at the movies with Pee-wee Herman." This writer's answering machine asked callers a rhetorical question: "Did the cops force Pee-wee Herman to wash his hands before they fingerprinted him? Inquiring minds want to know."

Radio shock-jock Howard Stern broadcast an old audio of Pee-wee talking about "Billy Baloney." And Arsenio Hall pointed out, ever so child-like, that Mr. Hand got in trouble with Mr. Policeman." A letter to the *Los Angeles Times* observed: "Amazing. Pee-wee Herman gets arrested for doing the same thing people pay to see Madonna do in concert. Neat." A few weeks later Jay Leno used that exact same observation on the *Tonight* show, adding, "At least he wasn't talking during the movie—that would've bothered me."

Jeff Brown, San Francisco's public defender, told the *Bay Guardian*: "Every zone of privacy in a person's life is gradually being intruded on. This Pee-wee Herman thing is an example—I'd like to say an absurd example, but it's happening so many places—of the kind of Orwellian society we can develop into. It's absolutely ridiculous. Police have enough to do in terms of cracking down on the Jeffrey Dahmers of the world, and tracking down drug dealers in that area [southern Florida] of the United States."

Indeed, *Newsweek* reported that "The [three] undercover detectives were said to be working on a drug case, and when their leads did not pan out, they decided to check the theater for sex offenders." Oh, sure they did. NPR commentator Daniel Pinkwater remarked that Pee-wee "should've waited till he got home—like the police."

San Francisco Examiner columnist Bill Mandel wrote: "It's widely accepted in Hollywood that Reubens is gay. But he was arrested at a porn theater showing hetero flicks—*Nancy Nurse*, *Turn Up the Heat* and *Tiger Shark*. So now the 95% of America not privy to Hollywood's outing gossip—'I still can't believe Rock Hudson was that way'—thinks Pee-wee Herman is over-heterosexual."



Only the porno producers could take any genuine pride in this incident. Their movies were obviously effective in the arousal department. No false advertising claims there. In fact, one porn theater advertises on its marquee, "Fast Stimulation"—certainly an appropriate promise in this age of the three M's—masturbation, MTV and microwave. In an era when everything is accelerating, who's to determine the precise moment an ejaculation can still be labeled as premature? Rob Lowe? Robert Bly?

The police report states that Pee-wee was observed at 8:25 p.m. and again at 8:30 "with his exposed penis in his left hand"—a visual oxymoron? However, the cops arrested him in the lobby. Yes, they got him coming and going, but at least they waited until he was finished. So much for police brutality. At first there was a rumor that Paul Reubens told them, "Don't you know who I am? I'm Pee-wee Herman!" If true, that meant his ego needs had overshadowed his survival instincts. But the police report makes it sound more like a futile attempt at preventive plea-bargaining: "I'm Pee-wee Herman. Maybe I could do a charity benefit for the Sheriff's Office or something to take care of this."

Psychologists were sucked out of the woodwork and onto the newscasts—Joyce Brothers, Lee Salk, Barbara De Angelis—who advised parents to tell the truth about what happened, and offered this keen analysis: "Obviously a guy who's playing a child his whole life has to have some kind of problems." *Entertainment Tonight's* expert was Soupy Sales—who argues, "He can masturbate his brains out, but you don't do that in a porno theater when you're a role model"—as though Pee-wee had reason to expect an inadvertent sting action. And *A Current Affair* even interviewed Pee-wee's 6th grade teacher. Did he used to fondle himself in the cloakroom or what?

The same TV industry that has embraced G. Gordon Liddy—who boasts of having planned to assassinate journalist Jack Anderson—has shunned Pee-wee Herman. *Time* magazine stated, "Perhaps the real crime . . . was the successful pretense of childishness." No, *Time*, the real crime is child abuse. Not by Pee-wee, but by the FCC, which allowed itself to be pressured into delaying, until January 1, 1992, the implementation of new limits on commercials in many children's TV shows. The restrictions, mandated by Congress, were supposed to take effect October 1, 1991, but the Association of Independent Television Stations lobbied for the delay so that stations could sell the maximum number of commercials for Christmas toys, explaining: "If it were not for the fourth quarter, you would basically not have children's TV." And 202 junk-food ads on Saturday morning.

Child molestation is treating kids as consumer objects. Indecent exposure is Henry Kissinger doing the weather report.

American children are being properly prepared for a lifetime of psychic rubbing of what D.H. Lawrence called "the dirty little secret." A 1987 Planned Parenthood study revealed that 65,000 sexual references a year were broadcast during prime afternoon and evening hours; average TV viewers now see 14,000 instances of sexual material every year as they busily finger their channel selectors and fantasize about freedom of choice.

Although Toys-R-Us and Kiddie City hurriedly pulled Pee-wee dolls off their shelves as if they were practicing reverse voodoo, WNEW disc jockey Dave Herman urged parents to let their kids play with the Pee-wee dolls they already have. In the last four years, Media Home Entertainment has sold a half million video cassettes of *Pee-wee's Playhouse*. Will paranoid parents now forbid their youngsters from watching them in the hope that self-censorship will prevent self-abuse?

Meanwhile, across the nation, Pee-wee Herman jokes were lubricating lunches and sales meetings alike. They were being phoned, faxed and communicated on computer bulletin boards. Jokes are, after all, a form of information. The *New York Times* editorialized: "It's no surprise that raw jokes are sweeping the country in the wake of the grisly Dahmer multiple-murder case in Milwaukee and the Pee-wee Herman case in Sarasota. . . . What is surprising is the equivalence given to the two situations. Thoughtlessly, people tell masturbation jokes and cannibal jokes interchangeably. . . ."

Masturbation joke: Pee-wee Herman has fired his lawyer because he can get himself off.

Cannibal joke: Jeffrey Dahmer has hired a lawyer but it'll cost him an arm and a leg.

Actually, both events are related, inextricably, by the blatant contrast between police under-zealousness in the Dahmer case and over-zealousness in the Pee-wee case.

Theaters in Los Angeles and San Francisco immediately began midnight screenings of *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*. The Pee-wee Herman Defender's Club emerged—"Pee-wee only did it," explained the organizer, "to take a little bit of heat off of Willie Kennedy Smith"—and launched a campaign to protest by sending CBS red bow-ties with a pledge to boycott products advertised on the network until *Pee-wee's Playhouse* re-runs are reinstated.

But then what? Maybe he can resurrect his career the way Donna Rice did after the Gary Hart affair—she did a TV commercial for jeans with the ironic brand name, No Excuses. More recently, Milli Vanilli did a commercial for Carefree sugarless bubble-gum, wherein they attempt to lip-sync a Rossini opera.

We'll be right back, but first this important message from Pee-wee Herman: "When it comes to personal computers, I'm a Wang man myself. . . ."

Actual Facts About Pee-Wee Herman

- What do Pee-wee Herman and Mikhail Gorbachev have in common? Their dolls are disappearing off the shelves.
- What reference to Pee-wee Herman was censored from the Emmy Awards? Gilbert Gottfried: "If masturbation's against the law, then I should be on Death Row."
- What famous people were born on August 27? Pee-wee Herman and Mother Teresa.

Dawna Kaufmann
(Continued from Page 5)

a franchise that has generated about \$60 million, but that's how creative bookkeeping works.

Aside from the monetary issue, *Pee-wee's Playhouse* is a giant disappointment to me. It was designed as a late-night show, not a children's show. I never felt that Paul was a suitable performer for real kids. Maybe that's why the show has won countless Emmys in technical areas, but Paul has never received an award for his characterization.

Also, while the series should have been a showcase for improvisational talent, it got mired in such a rigid formula that it lost any critical spark. But I'm not the only one who's tasted sour grapes after dealing with Reubens. He has such a strange habit of alienating those closest to him, *Spy* magazine chronicled it in a story titled "Pee-wee's Courthouse."

And now that Paul Reubens' mug shots have shocked a nation with his "Jesus on heroin" appearance, am I justified in my glee? You decide. I will say that while I don't consider allegations of jerking off in a public place (twice, no less!) a big thing, no pun intended, I'm watching the developments carefully.

CBS has yanked its reruns of *Pee-wee's Playhouse*, which doesn't surprise me as much as why they would program the show in the first place. And, with appropriately dopey logic, Disney World has pulled a two-minute film that featured Reubens' voice, while not removing his voice from their popular Star Tours attraction, which would be too expensive.

Certain celebrities and others have spoken out to "Free Pee-Wee," citing that what Paul may have done was not done while in character, and therefore poor Pee-wee shouldn't be judged. And that's a strong argument.

I am amused by his friends who have talked to the media, explaining that Reubens is simply "a loner." Isn't that the same way people described Jeffrey Dahmer? Consider their respective sins: Dahmer killed, mutilated and ate the organs of citizens of a vastly over-populated planet, while Pee-wee masturbated and caused a sticky mess for some porno theater's clean-up crew. (*People* magazine reported that the XXX-rated South Trail Cinema prides itself on mopping its floors twice a week.) I think it's clear who the real criminal is.

An Interview with Alan Abel

by Sam Green

Q. How'd you get started in this business of pranks?

A. Back in the early '60s I submitted a story to the *Saturday Evening Post*, and it was about a fictional organization that wages a campaign to clothe all naked animals for the sake of decency. I felt that if we were going to be prudish about adults romping around in the nude, then what about all those animals, that people sleep with and dress and generally treat like human beings?

Not surprisingly, the *Post* rejected the story, but along with the form letter they sent a personal note from the senior editor, David Lyle, who said he found it abominable, disgusting and don't ever bother us again with this kind of material. And I realized he had taken it seriously.

So that's when I got an artist to do a painting of a horse wearing Bermuda shorts, and I took it to the *Today* show—Dave Garroway was doing it—and, Christ, I was on the air the next morning. They loved it, they thought it was a real tune—we'll play it for all it's worth—and that started me really doing the pranks as a means, I guess, to get exposure and do standup comedy, or deadpan comedy, without making it seem like you're doing a comedy act.

And so it became a great cover for bypassing all the auditions and all the red tape that you have to cut through in order to get on these major talk shows, and it worked like a charm. Then I got so many bookings I had to enlist a friend of mine, a fellow actor who at that time was unemployed, Buck Henry, and so Buck joined my team and between us we were crisscrossing the country for several years, just doing talk shows in New York, California, Chicago.

We picketed the White House, asking Jacqueline Kennedy to put clothes on Toni Macaroni, the horse that Caroline had, and that made the *Washington Post* front page.

Q. How did your recent *Lotto* prank come about?

A. I have this class that I teach occasionally at the Discovery Center called "Don't Get Mad, Get Even." It's a seminar where people come in and want to find out ways to retaliate without being criminal or getting arrested or doing anything physical to get somebody, just to use their imagination. And, out of that class, people would come to me with their personal problems. An actress, Lee Chirillo, came to me and said that she was very despondent because she had just turned 30 and she had just lost her boyfriend and her job—she was going through what I call mentalpause.

She needed something to happen in her life and I thought, well, the lottery had gone up to gigantic proportions—it was 30 million and there was no winner, and then it was going up to 35—and I said, "Let's get our group of merry pranksters together and stage a party in which you claim that you won the lottery, if there is only one ticket pulled and it's from the New York area, because the real winner waits two days to come out while he consults his lawyers and accountants. In that

vacuum, you could probably get on page one"—and she finally agreed.

So, there were about 15 of us involved, and we each chipped in a couple of hundred bucks and rented a suite at the Omni Park Central Hotel and threw dollar bills out the window and drew a crowd. Then the crowd called the media and we soon had a suite filled with reporters. When they saw the caviar and champagne and the pay stub of "the winning ticket," they assumed that she was the winner.

They ran with it, which surprised me, because I was hidden in another room, watching and listening to all the proceedings, and it was just total chaos. We had everybody there, all three networks, and we had the *New York Times*, the *Post*, the *News*, *Newsday*—they were all there, and it was a slow Sunday. The Giants had lost to the Rams, so everybody in New York was down about that, Noriega was

Hoax of the Month

Mark Kramer made up a story about squirrels in Central Park getting stoned from eating the residue of crack in packages thrown away by humans. It was published in the quasi-satirical tabloid, *Weekly World News*. Then it was picked up by the *London Times*. And, in turn, it was picked up by the *New York Times*. Kramer confessed his prank on the *Today* show, and was chastised by *Weekly World News* for his lack of professionalism. "Even if you invent a story," warned his editor, "you stick by it. We're journalists here."

in jail, there was no real front page news, and so we really lucked into it.

And there I am listening from the other bedroom of this suite, and I can hear Lee answering questions. She had a pat routine worked out. She was going to put bathrooms in all the subways with the money. She was going to Washington and lobby to get Congress taken off salary and put on straight commission. She was going to have a federal law that would force doctors to publish their medical school grade averages in the phone book.

Any reporter worth his salt should have really taken these notes down and said, "Well, it's great copy, but wait a minute, it's funny and could this be a humorous prank of some sort?" I'll tell you, I was absolutely flabbergasted when I saw the lead story on all three channels in New York that night. And then the papers came out, and on page one: "\$35-Million, and She's Single!"

We got another free ride for a whole week, including *Prime Time*, *Hard Copy* and *Current Affair*—we got all the electronic tabloids—plus, later, the overseas press came in and thought they would have a good giggle at the American press for falling prey to such a prank. And Lee Chirillo has been working ever since, doing music videos and print ads and some comedy. It worked out marvelously for her.

So that particular prank was born out of one girl's desire to become Queen For A Day, and I'm just overjoyed that we did it with that

in mind. But, of course, my motive also was to poke fun at the lottery, which I think is a sham. You can't win, and all these poor suckers go out there and spend their bread money and baby milk money to buy tickets hoping for that eternal dream of money, and they don't get it.

Q. These pranks—on one hand, they are fun and funny, but you're also making a pretty strong statement about how gullible the press really is. I'm wondering if that was your intention at all?

A. Well, it's not so much my intention. I guess it's just a weakness on their part. The intent is to amuse. We're doing this kind of living, comedic theater on the world stage. And we just do it to have some laughs in between the axe murderers and the serial killers that dominate the news.

There's too much emphasis on violence. I just feel like there has been the wrong emphasis for so long, and so competitive now, but there are far better ways to utilize the resources that give us instant touch with what's happening, and that's why I like to jump in as I do and create a little havoc and do it in a friendly way and get people to laugh.

Most reporters like to feel that they are above the human breed that exists on this earth and that they, like the *New York Times*, have only all the news fit to print and nobody else has anything anywhere near them. So when they ran my obituary ten years ago, they were really upset to find out that I was very much alive and had staged the whole thing.

Q. That's actually one of my personal favorites.

A. Well, mine too. Because I was able to hover over for a few days and find out who my friends were, although I lost a few in the bargain. There are some who still won't forgive me to this day, because they felt it was a terrible, dastardly deed. But I just wanted to kind of do it once, and I also wanted to see how much space I would get in the *Times*. I did very well. I got close to eight inches, which was two inches more than the guy who invented the six-pack, who died on the same day. I just went out to Robert Redford's Sundance Ski Lodge, checked into the hotel, went skiing, and then suddenly I disappeared and they found my skis in the shape of a cross and assumed that I had expired. After a couple of days, no body was found, and they reported it duly and properly to the authorities.

The *Times* picked it up and called the funeral home in Utah, at a special number that was given to them, which was actually a house trailer that a friend of mine sat in and answered the phone as the funeral director. He established and documented the fact that he was in charge of arrangements, and from that point on it was easy.

It was really quite a marvelous feeling to sit there in this apartment in New York and see all this unfolding as my little elves kept bringing me newspaper stories and I could see it on television as well. And then when I was resurrected, of course that made the really big story, and they had to write a retraction. It was the first time the *New York Times* ever retracted an obituary.

MEDIA FREAK

Spiritual Humor

One of the most overworked lines by standup comics comes from a TV commercial: "Help—I've fallen and I can't get up." Now there's a variation on that theme: Jesus is in a disco having an incredibly hard time dancing. Finally he gets so frustrated that he stands up in the middle of the dance floor and shouts, "Help—I've risen but I can't get down."

And this riddle has also been making the rounds: What did the Dalai Lama say to the hot dog vendor? Answer: "Make me one with everything." It was eventually told to TV producer Norman Lear, who later sat next to the Dalai Lama himself at a dinner and couldn't resist telling him. The Dalai Lama didn't get it.

Consumer Culture

Privacy Journal reports: "Some airlines have begun posting ads on the back doors of airplane rest rooms, hoping to reach a captive audience. Technologists in Boston have developed a plastic mold that can stamp discernible holograms on food—a logo on a chocolate bar, for instance, or a message on meat. Bell Atlantic, which operates the phone companies from New Jersey to Virginia, purchased a patent for a methodology that patches short commercials into the 4-second intervals between rings when you dial a telephone call. Before long, you may be hearing a jingle for a Caribbean cruise or for coffee while waiting for the called party to answer."

Heavy Metal On Wall Street

A full-page ad in *Drug Store News* features a long-haired, jewelry-laden musician with the headline, "I made \$2.7 million last year. Want a cut of the action?" The copy reads: "Bon Jovi, Skid Row, Iron Maiden, Slaughter, Judas Priest—they're household names in some 10 million homes with teenagers across the country. Anywhere there are fans, there's big money to be made. Introducing Mega Metal Collector Cards. The first card collection devoted exclusively to heavy metal. More than just pictures, personal biographical information providing an inside glimpse of the band members themselves. The way they'll sell, they might just make you a fan."

Just Say Nothing

Spin magazine assigned a pair of reporters to write an article about Partnership For a Drug Free America, but won't publish it for fear of offending tobacco and liquor advertisers. The organization is financed by the R. J. Reynolds Company, which pushes cigarettes and beer.

And *Rolling Stone* published an article by Linda Feldman titled "By Keeping the Chemicals Flowing, American Industry Kept the Cocaine Cartels in Business." However, they left out this bit of information: "Exxon Chemical and Shell Chemical are the leading suppliers of an ordinary chemical called methyl ethyl ketone—the chemical of choice for Columbian businessmen to process cocaine base into cocaine."

Collateral Damage

From *The Urine Nation* newsletter on drug testing: "A flight attendant, anxious about taking a urine test in a crowded, noisy office was unable to produce the required urine sample. So she drank a glass of water—and another—and another. She drank over three quarts in three hours, and still couldn't pee. Hours later, the 40-year-old woman was in the hospital, her speech slurred, her thinking fuzzy. The diagnosis—drunk on water. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* reports several other cases of water intoxication, which causes water-logged brain cells and dilution of body minerals. One person is known to have died. The U.S. Dept. of Transportation's rules specifically state that a person required to be tested may be forced to consume water for up to 8 hours or until a specimen is produced."

Ways of Fighting Back

AP reports that a Pittsburgh abortion clinic, Women's Health Services, used the positive vibes of reggae music to drown out protestors. A reggae band was hired simply to play louder than anti-abortionists chants at a demonstration by Project Multitude.

And *San Francisco Examiner* columnist Rob Morse tells of "Adopt-a-Picketer," a program used in various branches of Planned Parenthood. Supporters adopt an anti-abortion picketer and pledge a certain amount of money for each time that particular picketer shows up. Every nine months, Planned Parenthood bills the pledger, and every week they put a notice on their door telling the pickets how much they've helped raise for the clinic.

Filler Items

• *Asshole of the Month*: Richard John Neuhaus, editor of *First Things*, published by Religion and Public Life, for his reluctant conclusion that "atheists cannot be good citizens."

• Actor-turned-director Sean Penn speaks out: "Let's face it, we have an insane fascist in the White House."

• *Working Woman* magazine lists the two hottest careers for college graduates as bankruptcy attorney and "out-placement specialist"—counseling the newly unemployed.

• Inmates who throw food at guards in a Louisiana State Penitentiary may be served spatter-proof meals; all ingredients would be mixed together and baked into a loaf.

• Jay Leno's contract with the *Tonight* show is 90 pages long.

• David Letterman on imprisoned drug-lord Pablo Escobar: "This is the first time anybody is going to be profiled on two TV shows—*America's Most Wanted* and *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*."

• In Saigon there is now an entertainer by the name of Elvis Cong.

• *Rumors of the Month*: The CIA planted a copy of *Final Exit* at the alleged suicide site of reporter Danny Casolaro. And Ben & Jerry will name a new ice cream flavor "Banana Yeltsin."

Unleavened Thought

California's new snack tax inspired State Board of Equalization chairman Brad Sherman to explain: "Our staff has reflected Solomonic wisdom in determining that regular matzo, your full-size bread of affliction as mentioned in the Torah, is not a cracker, which is taxable. However, matzo miniatures have been determined to be crackers since there's no evidence when the people of Israel left the land of Egypt that they were popping bite-size matzos into their mouths."

The Pee-wee Herman Jokes

• Pee-wee says it was all a big mistake—he was just learning to count to eleven.

• His favorite baseball team? The Montreal Expos.

• His favorite holiday? Palm Sunday.

• His favorite sandwich? A Reuben—hold the pickle.

• His favorite TV show? *Diff'rent Strokes*.

• He's going to star in a movie called *My Left Hand*.

• You've heard of the Twinkie defense? Pee-wee is going to use the Winkie defense.

• He doesn't need a defense fund because he can hold his own.

• His lawyers don't think the evidence will stand up in court.

• When the cops arrested him, he said, "You're kidding! You mean this isn't a sperm bank?"

• Told by a 14-year-old girl to her father: "What's this called?"—holding her thumb and forefinger together and forming a circle—"Pee-wee's Playhouse."

The Jeffrey Dahmer Jokes

• He had his mother over for dinner and she said, "I don't know if I like your friends." He answered, "That's all right. Try the vegetables."

• He once tried to make it in Hollywood, but he couldn't get a foot in the door.

• Arm and Hammer baking soda wanted him to do a commercial, but all he gave them was a cold shoulder.

• More bad news for Jeffrey Dahmer. He just found out he can forget about getting his cleaning deposit back.

• Classified ad: "Jeffrey Dahmer apartment available. Comes with roommates. Some assembly required."

• He was very gracious. He would always get you a beer with a good head on it.

• His favorite song? *You Gotta Have Heart*.

• His favorite movie? *Five Easy Pieces*.

• A bidding war is about to start for his soon-to-be-published autobiography, *The Silence of the Limbs*.

• He's just signed to star in a controversial new movie, *Boyz n the Fridge*.

• Bulletin: "New charge against Jeffrey Dahmer. Accused of sending arms to Iraq."

Combination Pee-wee/Dahmer Jokes

• If Dahmer and Reubens were matched on *The Love Connection*, would this not give a whole new dimension to "whacking off?"

• What did Jeffrey Dahmer say to Pee-wee Herman? "Don't play with your food."