

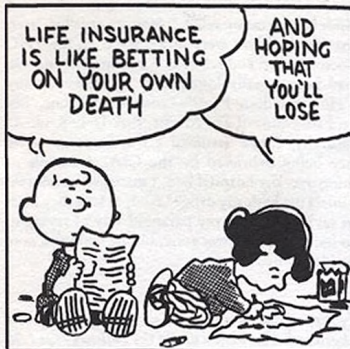
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- A Home for Problem Priests
- Stewart Brand Was My Roommate
- People Who Drink Their Own Urine

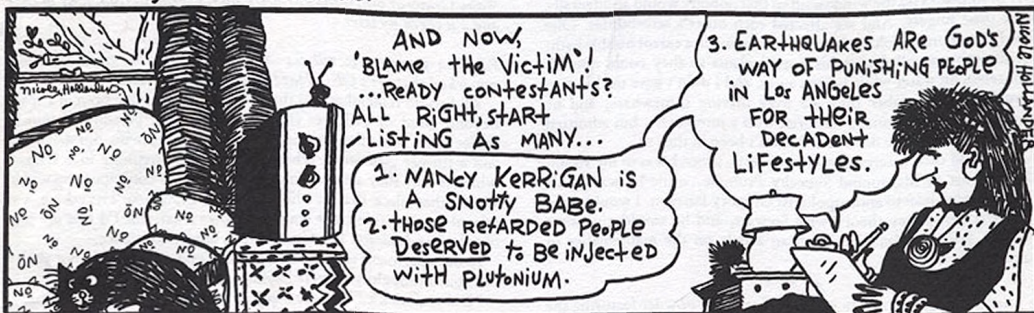
The Realist

Number 127
Editor: Paul Krassner

PEANUTS By Charles M. Schulz



SYLVIA By Nicole Hollander



DICK TRACY

BY DICK LOCHER & MAX COLLINS



COURT JESTER

Personal Propaganda

I'm pleased to announce that my autobiography, *Confessions of a Raving, Unconfined Nut: Misadventures in the Counter-Culture*, has just about sold out its first printing. If you order one from *The Realist*, we'll send a free copy of issue #124, which includes "The Parts Left Out of My Own Book." Meanwhile, here's an excerpt that was left out of the parts that were left out. . . .

The New Age Odd Couple

In 1974, I was living in San Francisco. My roommate was Stewart Brand. We were different in appearance and style. He was tall. I was short. He had closely-trimmed straight blond hair. I had long curly brown hair. His craggy features were those of a nordic god. I resembled a friendly gargyle. He wore a wristwatch even when he slept. I didn't wear one even when I was awake. He was neat and threw things away; the stuff he kept was organized in filing cabinets. I was a sloppy packrat; I had a filing cabinet but it remained empty.

Stewart was carnivorous and he ate meat. I was a vegetarian and I ate meat, but only about once a week, usually his leftovers while he was at the Zen Center a block away. He had a strange sweet tooth. In college, his favorite snack was white bread with butter and sugar. Now he liked chocolate chip yogurt and sesame graham cookies. He would even eat unbaked frozen cookie dough. He occasionally smoked cigarettes and drank wine. He turned me on to hot buttered rum and gave me a jar of batter for Christmas.

We observed each other's private idiosyncracies. I noticed that Stewart kept his National Book Award for *The Last Whole Earth Catalog* in his closet, whereas he noticed me absent-mindedly turning over thumbtacks on the window sill so that nobody would accidentally prick their fingers. And we affected each other's sensibilities. One time I came home, looking forward to relaxing in a carrot bubble bath, but the tub was filled with his potted plants so they could nourish themselves on water while he was away, and I didn't have the heart to disturb them. Another time we were driving somewhere, and he stopped to help a stranded motorist with a jump-start, but admitted that he wouldn't have done so if I hadn't been in the car.

We would each entertain our own guests. Once I was in my room, playing host to Mansonoid Squeaky Fromme, while he was in his room, playing host to anthropologist Gregory Bateson. I would share my latest conspiracy theory with Stewart, and he would give me a copy of *Scientific American* with an article on the mathematics of coincidence.

* * *

I had been experimenting with THC, a white powder featuring the ingredient in marijuana which gets one high, so this was like super-pot. On the night that The Committee, an improvisational troupe, was going to have its final performance, and as Walter Cronkite was concluding the news with his customary, "That's the way it is," I snorted all the THC I had left, as preparation for a pilgrimage to The Committee for the end of a satirical era. The last thing I remember was brushing my teeth, talking to Stewart and being overwhelmed by the drone of his electric saw. Since I was out at the time, here's his description of what happened:

"I had been building a bed while you stood in the hall doorway reporting the latest turns in your hassle with Scientology. After a prolonged peculiar silence, I peeked in the hall to find that you were gone, replaced by a vacant-eyed robot which opened and closed its mouth, made a drifty gesture with a tube of toothpaste and said, 'Nn . . . Gn . . .' Terrifying. All I could think was that the Scientologists must've finally zapped you. After a while the thing toppled like a tree, crashed and commenced baying into my buffalo rug. I phoned a friendly shrink for consultation. He listened to symptoms—you were by now into a howly slow-motion laugh, 'Haaaaaa haaaaaa haaaaaa

haaaaaa'—and the shrink suggested I take you to the hospital for evaluation. I told the nurse, 'He's the editor of *The Realist*.' 'Is that so?' she said politely. You spelled your name for her."

It was 11:30 that night when, as they say in comic books, I came to. I tried to fly so I could tell whether I was dreaming, but I couldn't flap my arms because I was attached to the bed by restraining devices—canvas straps tying down my wrists and ankles. I was definitely awake, but I had no idea where I was or how I had gotten there. I would learn later that Stewart had brought me to this hospital with the aid of a couple of students from the Zen Center. I could remember a doctor asking me, "Okay tiger, what'd you take?" I started to answer, "T-H-" I was tempted to spell out THE ULTIMATE DRUG, but my motor control was not exactly a tightrope walker's prayer, and I had to struggle just to utter T-H-C.

"Affording us bedsiders enormous relief," Stewart recalled later. "We didn't know what the hell you were down with. At the THC announcement, the doctor smiled and relaxed, 'Let him enjoy it.' On other subjects you had been equally loquacious. In answer to any question whatever—'How you doin' Paul?'—you would intone, 'My name is Paul Krassner. I am editor of *The Realist*. P-A-U-L-K-uh-A-S-uh-S-N-R-E.'" Naturally, I had assumed I was in some secret government laboratory being debriefed by the CIA. A couple of friends were now leaning over my hospital bed. I managed to ask two questions: "Did they inject me with any drug?" And, "Have they been taping what I've been saying?" It was my paranoid way of trying to bring things back into focus. Stewart was gone, but he had left a note for me on the table beside my bed:

9:30 p.m.

Hello Paul—

Since you're merely flipped out (stoned) and not dying, I'm gonna go meet my date. Background: You passed out in the hallway—at 7:30 p.m. I brought you to UC Emergency Hospital at 8. You started coming around at 8:30 and let us know you'd had some THC (and LSD?). Wavy Gravy or others may drop by later. I'll call in from time to time and I'll check by later.

—Stewart

P.S. You promised to tell the American people the truth. You also remarked that "It's OK!" Hope you remember details.

All I could remember was that for a few hours I had been in a space beyond good or evil, yet clinging hard to the paradox of human subjectivity. Birds flew by with the faces of my ex-wife, our daughter, and a former girlfriend. While my body was writhing in ecstasy—which is why they attached me to the bed—my consciousness was in some other place that felt like pure energy, where everything was related to everything else simply because it existed. I'd had my first overdose and missed The Committee's last performance.

In our apartment the next day, Stewart said, "I would've put you to bed, but I thought you were having an epileptic fit."

"Did you stick a TV Guide in my mouth like you're supposed to?"

"You were doing fine with the buffalo rug."

* * *

When I read that six members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War had been accused of plotting to use a variety of bizarre weapons—including fried marbles, slingshots, cherry bombs, and scuba divers—to violently invade Miami Beach and attack the '72 Republican convention, I immediately assumed it was a frame-up by provocateurs. *Fried marbles?* Of course! My perception of the logic of those in power was that if they accused the vets of having fried marbles as a weapon, the public would think it was too bizarre *not* to be true. When I first learned that President Nixon's favorite meal was cottage cheese with ketchup, I tried that, so it was only appropriate that I would now fry me up some marbles.

"Just don't use my teflon pan," Stewart requested.

I went shopping and found a place that sold marbles. I asked for the kind that were best for frying. The clerk laughed at what she had to believe was my idea of a joke. I returned home and melted butter in my saucepan. Then I fried two marbles. Apparently, the purpose in weaponry was that when a fried marble is catapulted from a slingshot,

it will shatter upon hitting the target. The poor person's cluster bomb. "Paul," Stewart said in his best prissy Tony Randall voice. "You sautéed those marbles. A warm buttery marble is hardly an instrument of aggression. You should've added sliced mushrooms. At least follow the correct recipe: *Deep-fry* the marbles in fat hot enough to smoke slightly and then *plunge* them in cold water. Zzzkk! Ornamental little weapons."

I carried that pair of fried marbles around for a long time, acting like a cross-fertilization of Captain Queeg in *The Caine Mutiny* with his steel balls and little Linus from *Peanuts* with his security blanket.

As I was leaving the first annual Hookers Convention, a lovely dark-haired woman wearing a black dress came out of a door, stood in the hallway and let out a loud sigh. An organizer of the event, she was temporarily exasperated. As a gesture of empathy, I let out a loud sigh in return. She walked over, gave me a kiss on the cheek and said, "Tom Robbins says hello." She was the original cowgirl. Her name was Georgia, and it was love at first sight.

Stewart had said I could use his bed whenever he was out of town, so when Georgia and I started sleeping together, we took him up on the offer. One night she was having her period and we got his sheets all bloody. In the morning we had granola for breakfast in bed. Now the sheets were all bloody and granolously. Stewart returned that day before I had a chance to get his linens to the laundry. "I'm pissed!" he said. Understandably so. I had violated his space. But a rousing battle with his boffers—foam rubber bats—straightened it all out for us.

Sometimes Georgia worked as a prostitute to help support herself and her two children. I tried not to be resentful of her Johns. "Think of them as my clients," she advised me. One time she came to the

apartment quite upset. She told me about a client who had taken her in the back room of a grocery store where there were bottles of wine. "He opened a bottle of Ripple, poured it on his cock and I was supposed to suck it off. It's the first time I was ever asked to swallow come, and I was so disgusted that when he wasn't looking I spit it back out into the Ripple bottle."

Georgia was one of the speakers from Coyote, an organization founded by Margo St. James which was trying to influence the public's attitudes and eventually decriminalize prostitution. On one occasion, Georgia was hired to speak by the Junior Chamber of Commerce in Waterloo, Iowa. She arrived wearing jeans, sandals and African beads. She told me, "The Jaycees seemed like rebellious children who were having a good time upsetting the Bible Belt." She got booed that night for saying, "Some marriages are nothing but a legalized form of prostitution."

Eventually Georgia and I broke up. I simply didn't give her the attention she deserved and she began sleeping with another guy. *For free!* I had adjusted to her having clients, but I wasn't ready for her to go to bed with somebody because she actually *liked* him. That was too much for me to handle.

I had a small black-and-white TV in my room, but when Stewart wasn't home, I would watch the color TV in his room. One night I noticed a black-covered notebook which I assumed was a transcription of his interview with Gregory Bateson. As a lazy unbeliever's version of tossing the *I Ching*, I opened Stewart's notebook at random, circled my index finger in the air and then landed on this—*Paul, you're studied and off!*—in Stewart's handwriting. "Yaaagggghhh!" I whispered.

This was positively weird. Stewart had written to himself what he couldn't say to me. My impulse was to confess this accidental discovery immediately, but I didn't know when he'd be back. Still, I had to tell somebody. But who? Our mutual friend, Wavy Gravy! He'd be sure to understand.

"Stewart's diary?" Wavy repeated. "Paul, a diary is *inviolable*. But I suppose that's your role, the Cosmic Yenta."

"But I didn't *know* it was his diary. So, does being inviolable mean that you don't want to hear what he wrote about you?"

"All right, what did he write about me?"

"He doesn't even mention you."

I finally apologized to Stewart, adding, "I mean it's not as if I *fried* your diary."

"It's just your talent for condensation as well as trespass," he said. "At last you've compressed crime and punishment into a single act. You blundered into a notebook in which I occasionally exercise ideas and exorcise demons. The damning statement about you was a low mood of vile self-opinion which projected itself onto a gallery of friends and family. To dispel the demon I wrote out the charges, and you strayed into the line of fire. Fortunately you know better than to take such a thing personally. All is forgiven."

WHEN A MAN'S WIFE TELLS HIM SHE'S A LESBIAN AND IS LEAVING HIM, HE GOES UNDER THE KNIFE AND TRIES TO WOO HER **ALL OVER AGAIN!**

Honey, I had a SEA-CHANGE Operation!

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- \$10 for a copy of *The (Almost) Unpublished Lenny Bruce*, an anthology of the controversial comedian's columns and essays.
- \$25 for a copy of *Confessions of a Raving, Unconfined Nut*, plus a free copy of issue #124 of *The Realist*.

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Urine Love

by Stanley Young

There comes a moment of decision in each of our lives when we hear that small voice within ask: "Shouldn't I be drinking my own urine?"

The answer, according to a urine-drinkers support group I attended with a friend recently was definitely "Yes!"

The setting was a modest two-story condo on a quiet street in Los Angeles. Rain had been falling earlier in the evening. It was cool, and the walkway to the front door now glistened with pools of water.

Inside it was warm and welcoming. About ten people in the living room stood in groups of twos and threes, chatting and laughing. Classical music played in the background, and a pile of books and pamphlets lay scattered over the coffee table. I picked up *The Miracles of Urine Therapy* (Water of Life Institute, 1987) and read the blurb on the back. "The therapy outlined in this book is an entirely drugless system of healing; the only ingredient is a substance manufactured by the body, rich in minerals, salts, hormones and other vital substances, namely human urine."

I put the book down and wandered over to the kitchen. On the table there I caught sight of a couple of slabs of cheese—Cheddar and Brie—a basket with a selection of crackers, some cookies, and two large bottles of fruit juice. One was apple.

I cut a slice of cheddar cheese, grabbed a

couple of crackers and, after only a slight hesitation, poured out a glass of apple juice and took a small sip. It was, gratefully, sweet and I returned to the living room where two men and a woman, all in their late thirties or mid-forties, were engaged in animated conversation.

"... and do you gargle with it?" asked the woman.

"Absolutely," replied the stocky, balding man energetically. "And I hold my hand cupped like this and let just a little slowly seep into my nose, too. It cures my asthma."

"My filling came out yesterday," chimed in the second man, "and I can feel it curing my tooth already. There's a big hole there but I'm not feeling any pain at all."

I returned to the kitchen for some more cheese and found Abby, the woman who had organized this get-together. She was wearing a fashionable knit outfit in autumn colors and had an open and friendly smile. She was holding a serving platter on which were four small carved glass goblets. Two were filled with an almost luminescent pale yellow liquid, a completely different color from the apple juice.

"... and is that...?"

"Yes," she smiled, sensing my question. "It's my urine." She picked one of the filled goblets off the platter and took a long sip.

"There's two more glasses here if anyone else wants to try," she said, offering the empty glasses to a couple standing and talking by the kitchen door. "... if you get inspired later."

Inspiration there was, in abundance. For most of those gathered at the apartment, urine

was more than a bodily excretion. It was indeed the Water of Life, a miraculous elixir and a long neglected cure. They washed their faces with it. They rinsed out their eyes with it. They rubbed it into their hair. They warmed up 4-day-old urine, scrubbed it all over their skin, and left it there to dry. And, of course, they drank it whenever they could.

"It's the runoff from your blood," said Abby, kicking off the evening's presentation and discussion. "It's got everything you need to cure yourself. How many of you here tonight have tried drinking your own urine?" she asked the room. Seven people raised their hands.

"I've only tried it a few times," admitted one tall man in the front, smiling. "I'm not slugging it down yet or anything like that. ..."

Abby smiled. Everyone has to start at their own pace, she informed us, and she had some sage advice for the new and would-be urine drinkers in the crowd.

"The first urine in the morning is the best," she said, referring to its healing powers, not its taste. The other experienced drinkers agreed that the first morning's "catch" was, perhaps, a trifle too gamy for the uninitiated.

"I suggest for the first time that you drink a glass or two of pineapple juice, and then drink your urine afterwards," said one man. "It'll taste just like pineapples!"

One man, an unemployed actor and self-admitted alcoholic in the AA program, revealed that drinking urine cured him of shingles three months ago, and he hadn't missed a day

Putting the Squeeze on Crime

Although the recent arrest of Bob and Connie Shepard for getting stoned on toad venom may well be the first such prosecution in the history of the world, it is not a new problem for local law enforcement. In 1990, Robert Sager, chief of the DEA laboratory in San Francisco, said, "If you have a toad we would have to prove that you were licking it on purpose, or that you had given it to someone else to lick on purpose."

However, this couple was charged, not with licking, but with *milk-ing* the glands of four pet toads, then drying their discharge and smoking it in a pipe. A patriotic citizen with nothing better to do snitched on them. And, in this case, there was drug paraphernalia that could be seized as evidence, along with the toads themselves. The Shepards were fired from their jobs—teaching kids about nature, ironically enough—and freed on \$20,000 bond.

Bufotenine, the psychoactive chemical in toad venom, is considered a controlled, dangerous substance, and is therefore illegal. Toads secrete bufotenine to ward off predators. It is the same toxin found in amanita mushrooms, cohoba seeds and other plants. South American Indians have used this toxin for years in religious ceremonies because of its mind-altering qualities, while some tribes have used it in blowguns to kill their dinner for that evening.

A number of troublesome questions arise.

Will the toads suddenly turn into handsome princes when they appear in court? Will a fleet of military helicopters invade Calaveras County in search of hidden toadstools? Will middle-aged hippies start raising toads indoors with the aid of powerful grow-lights? Will unethical narcotics officers raid the evidence file and start selling vials of slime? Will folks with glaucoma start rubbing their eyes with the disgusting goo? Will others ingest toad pus to combat nausea caused by the mere thought of ingesting it? Will State Senator Milton Marks

introduce the MTV bill, which would legalize Medical Toad Venom? Will would-be Virginia Senator Oliver North clandestinely import loads of toads in exchange for anti-missile weapons shipped to South Korea? Will President Bill Clinton admit that he once licked toad venom but didn't swallow? Will former addicts appear on the Oprah Winfrey show to reveal themselves, warts and all? Will pharmaceutical companies attempt to commercialize the healing properties of the venom? Will animal rights advocates object to the exploitation of toads? Will it be discovered that toxic toad venom can be used to manufacture non-toxic paper, fiber and fuel? Will the song *Froggy Went a-Courtin'* become a hit all over again? Will college students join the fad and begin to overdose on toad venom, then croak?

Attorney Melvin Belli, who will be representing the Shepards, has deposited a South American Indian in preparation for the trial. Here is a brief excerpt from his sworn testimony, which indicates what direction the defense will take:

Q. To the best of your knowledge, were you the very first individual to use toad venom to expand your consciousness?

A. That is correct.

Q. And why did you do it?

A. Well I lost a bet to an elder in my tribe.

Q. But you have since continued to ingest the substance?

A. Yes sir, I have.

Q. And how long have you been practicing this ritual?

A. For three decades now.

Q. And what conclusion have you reached?

A. Well, I finally understood that sucking toad venom does *not* get you high—it's the *decision* to do so. . . .

Belli, in a telephone interview, was quite angry. "I don't know who leaked that transcript," he said, "but I certainly don't want to try this case in the media. We shall have our day in court."

Meanwhile, just say *ribbet*.

since then.

"Now I'm so into this," he bubbled. "I soak my feet in it. I put it in my eyes. Rub it into my hair."

The man held up a 32-ounce juice bottle he carried around with him in a backpack. It was filled to the brim with a clear, pale yellow fluid.

"This is about a day's catch," he said. "That's about what I drink in a day. I call it Caribbean water—warm and just a little salty. Some say to age your morning catch, and that's what I do."

With the enthusiasm of every new convert, he misses no opportunity now to spread the good word of urine-drinking to all he meets.

"I've already lost two friends," he admitted. "They don't seem to understand."

Perhaps his friends don't understand that, like the body, one's urine is constantly changing. The actor related how his urine had gone "from a salty taste, to, well, almost smoked oysters."

"Sometimes it's exquisite," added a thin woman in the last row of folding chairs. "And if you fast on it—just urine and water—by 6 o'clock in the evening it's *fantastic*, delicious."

Several of the experienced drinkers nodded in agreement.

"It's an ancient therapy," the actor added. "It goes back to the pyramids, to the Vedas, to the Bible. It's holy . . ." He stopped for a moment, almost unable to contain himself. "If you're suffering from mental problems, it will release that, too."

"Jesus used urine therapy," said a man who had just arrived and was about to sit down on the stairs at the back of the room. He looked to be in his late twenties. "Forty days and forty nights in the desert—what else was there to drink? Ghandi used to do it in prison. He couldn't have made it otherwise."

The young man then shifted into an explanation of Christ's 'missing years,' the twelve or thirteen years when Jesus of Nazareth had wandered through Tibet and into India where, among many other ancient Eastern practices the young seeker adopted, he started drinking his own urine. When he returned to the Middle East, he continued the practice. And, apparently, also taught it to his followers.

"When they bastardized Christianity," the young man continued by way of explanation, "they took some stuff out, and part of that was urine therapy."

How different the Eucharist might have been, I wondered. The young man's historical analysis was, perhaps, difficult to substantiate. Not so the words of the next man to stand and speak.

He was a professional classical guitarist, I was later told. His face was somewhat thin, but his skin had a natural and healthy glow to it, like the complexions you see among those who drink lots of wheatgrass or carrot juice.

"George had AIDS," said Abby, by way of introduction, and, I thought, to prompt him to speak. George nodded.

"I used to have Kaposi's sarcoma on my

legs, my gums were rotting and I had recurring pneumonia," he said in a quiet voice.

He lifted the cuff of his pants to show his leg. The skin there was clear. He had arrived at drinking urine as a last resort, he told us. All his other attempts at curing his symptoms, using drugs and Western medical treatments, simply weren't working.

"I used to have gray back through here and here," he said, brushing his hand over the front and sides of his head, "and my hair was falling out."

His hair that night was slightly unkempt, but nonetheless full, healthy and a uniform very dark brown, almost black. The same color as his untrimmed beard.

George described how he had started the urine treatment all at once, drinking it, rubbing it in his hair, soaking his eyes in it and so



Hoax of the Month

Photo of a faked UFO crop circle.

—Circular Evidence

forth. Within a year, his symptoms had disappeared and had never returned. In fact, the vision in one of his eyes had improved from 20 over 400 to 20 over 75, and he rarely wore glasses now.

He thought about his experience a moment. "All my friends are dead who went the normal routes," he said. "It has your life-force in it." He looked up. "It's holy."

The room was silent for a moment.

One woman in a folding chair on the side of the room raised her hand. "But doesn't it contain . . . I mean, isn't it what the body excretes? Isn't it waste products . . . ?"

"It's our mindset," answered one tall woman in the far corner of the room. "We think it's filthy," she said, emphasizing the last word forcefully.

Several drinkers in the room had other answers at the ready. Urine, they explained, building up a mosaic of facts, is filtered blood, sterile, 96% water, and can contain your own antibodies and hormones, which helps boost your immune system. Urine also contains a load of substances that the body needs, including urea, a chief component of urine. And for those who may have been wondering whether drinking urine might lead to harder stuff, we were informed that the bowel and colon trap all the material you're *not* supposed to reingest.

"After you cross the psychological barrier," said the man beside the tall woman, "it feels

harmonious. It's a real mild taste. Not at all like what it smells."

It can fight off any pathogen on the planet," added George, the musician who had cured himself of AIDS.

"They're curing leprosy, cancer, and the AMA is against it because it's *free*," said the man who had previously talked about the urine-Jesus connection.

"I head a story," said Abby, "about a barren couple who drank each other's urine. They even bathed their genitals in it. It was very sexual."

"His sperm count rose," said a man across from her who had heard the same story.

". . . and she bore many children," added Abby.

One woman who had arrived only five minutes before, stood up. She was a naturopathic healer, and was responsible for introducing five people in the room, all former patients of hers, to the world of urine-drinking.

She herself had learned about the practice from a friend who came back from India raving about it. Shortly afterward, the naturopathic healer had root canal treatment. One night, with her mouth throbbing unbearably, she decided to drink her own urine as an attempt to get rid of the pain.

"Everybody remembers their first time," she said, smiling, and all the other drinkers nodded and smiled in appreciation.

She was amazed to discover that within ten minutes the pain subsided and subsequently disappeared. When, as an experiment, she stopped drinking her urine two days later, the pain returned.

That was nine years ago. Today she does not drink all the urine her body produces like some of those in the room. She uses it to cure cuts and bruises, and occasionally as an eye-wash, and drinks it whenever she feels her body needs it, especially when she travels.

She had just returned from a nine-day visit to Australia, and had been drinking a lot of her urine while there.

"All that traveling," she explained, "the change in time zones, that can weaken your immune system. Drinking your urine gives you that little bit of extra protection when you're weakened like that."

There was also an added benefit to drinking your urine abroad.

"When I'm traveling it's a wonderful tool," she said. "You don't have to worry about drinking contaminated water."

"For two weeks after the earthquake, people in Bel-Air and Brentwood had to boil their water," said one man in the back. "If they only knew . . ."

"Urine," added the naturopath. "Why not? It's sterile, it's pure and it's filtered. It's better than bottled water. It's free."

My friend, who had accompanied me to the meeting, was still thinking about what we both had heard and seen that night.

"When I flushed my piss down the toilet the next morning," he later told me, "I just thought: 'What a waste.'"

A Home for Wayward Clergy

by Dan Dion

The wrought iron gates of St. Jude's opened with a mechanical reluctance that contrasted with the excited voice over the intercom. The place looked like a prison, but my boss at the wine shop said it was some kind of religious compound. In truth, I would find, it was both.

Palm trees lined the winding road to a round, monolithic tower topped with a huge crucifix. I was met at the base of the tower by Father Virgil, a cellarkeeper whose slightly slurred speech and glossy-eyed look revealed him as a man who enjoys his job.

"Thank heavens you've arrived. We were painfully low on Cabernet."

I unloaded the wine. "What is this place? Some kind of monastery?"

"This is St. Jude's Pasture, a home for wayward clergy. Most are here for rehabilitation. I'm in administration. I'm . . . normal."

I wanted to know more, and I was in possession of the best verbal laxative—alcohol. I produced a tempting assortment of bottles and suggested a tasting. As the wine began to flow, he told me about St. Jude's.

"As you are probably aware, the Catholic Church is in a crisis of sorts resulting from increasing accusations of clerical . . . misconduct. In the past, a simple transfer would be arranged and the priest would move on, with the hope that the supposed victim would forget or at least deeply bury the alleged incident. Unfortunately, while the sin may be forgotten, the sinner lives on. These transfers became more of a reward than a punishment for our imprudent priests. A new flock for the shepherd, one not so skittish. The result was a string of accusations from transfer to transfer."

"People don't usually change."

"You know, for all our criticism of the Baptists, we were expecting our own priests to be born again at each new congregation. Well, the path ends here. This is the final transfer, where Rome hides its embarrassments and liabilities. We've come a long way from original sin."

"I've read about some of the recent molestation cases."

"Oh, yes, the infamous Catholic molesters! It's all blown way out of proportion by the media. A stroke of the hair here, a pat on the fanny there, all of a sudden you're a molester!"

"Well, you have to admit . . ."

"Look, we've got a lot of other problems. Pedophilia just makes good copy."

"You lock them up out in the New Mexico desert so they stay out of trouble?"

"Precisely."

"Why don't you just kick them out of the Church?"

"We do have an annual defrocking ceremony, but only for special cases. We'd rather have them drunk and isolated than angry and eager to spill secrets. Silence is golden, you know."

"You don't seem to mind talking about it. Will you show me around?"

"My son, when someone is pouring Bordeaux like these, I find myself compelled to make them welcome."

Around the tower was a virtual oasis of recreation and relaxation. There were swimming pools, sprawling gardens and shaded patios. Men played tennis, basketball and bocci.

"This doesn't seem so bad. I thought this was supposed to be a punishment."

"These are our retired sinners, their penance long since performed. They have sunshine privileges."

After another stop at the cellar, we walked up to a large, well-stocked kitchen. Men labored over sauces and pastas, soups and meats; lamb turned in a central rotisserie. The sweet scent of baking filled the air.

"I can smell that we're getting Father Adamson's apple pie tonight."

"I thought you guys all took turns making bread or something."

"Oh, no. But Father Bianchi has been messing with danishes. We like to tailor our duties to each personality. Fetishists do the laundry, Jesuits are in charge of education, queers perform the liturgical music and tend the garden."

From the kitchen we walked up to the classrooms. They were bare

and windowless; I noticed that the chairs had arm and leg straps.

"Here's where the ideological misfits get treated. In addition to your garden variety heretics, we have assorted Zen freaks, freethinkers, abortionists, Irish Republicans . . ."

"Troublemakers."

"You got it. We drown them with St. Augustine and St. Aquinas. If that doesn't lull them into conformity, the Jesuits go to work on them with some Inquisition gear we had shipped over from Spain. Very effective. We had to give up some classrooms, though, to make more room for the legal department. It's taking over this place."

"A lot of lawsuits, huh?"

"At the rate we're paying settlements, we'll be having Gallo and Ritz for communion. The days of gluttony and fine-vintage alcoholism are coming to an end. That's why I'm stocking up now."

"Do you think this crisis could financially ruin the church?"

"It's going to cut deep, that's for sure. But each diocese is legally its own identity, thank God. Rome isn't financially responsible. Some of our parishes are in serious trouble, though. In Illinois, for example, a class action won almost 20 million. It's a good thing we've got insurance."

"How would a policy like that read? Surely 'misconduct' is too broad. Does it have itemized offenses?"

"We like to think of it as under-the-blanket coverage. It's got us out of quite a few jams, that's for sure. But our premiums are skyrocketing."

"You could always raise the price of the sacraments."

"We've done that. Baptism, wedding and funeral services have gone up 30%. What we're working on now is a first communion fee, to cover all the free vino these people are sucking down. Did you know that the average Catholic will drink over eight cases of communion wine in his lifetime? Last year the Archbishop switched the standard from Zinfandel to a nasty table red. It's barbaric."

"I've heard that transubstantiation can affect the bouquet."

"It's true. And you have to drink it fast—before it congeals."

Narrow flights of stairs led us into the chapel. Behind the altar was a bloody and agonized alabaster Christ nailed up to a simulated wood grain cross. Hundreds of small doors encircled the room.

"I've never seen a circular Christian church before."

"It's a matter of necessity, really. We had to develop a rotational confessional system to accommodate the nature of our penitents."

"So priests have to go to confession too?"

"Absolutely! If those closets could talk, there would be a lot of skeletons trying to cover their ears, if you don't mind mixing metaphors. It works like this: we each pick a different confessional each time. We lean right to confess our sins, then left to hear another's. I like to boast a 1:1 confessor/receiver ratio."

"It seems like a terrible burden. You hear a priest whose actions are abominable and corruptive to the church, yet you are duty bound not to reveal it."

"It's a powerful confession to take. It's difficult not to feel some obligation to help the victims. But we have to suspend judgment in there."

"And justice too, it would seem. Couldn't that priest just turn around and ask for forgiveness for his silence? After penance, he would be forgiven. End of sin."

"You catch on quickly. The power we hold is not to be taken lightly. Take trust, for example. With so many people in your parish giving it to you, there's a much greater temptation to betray it. We'll grab another bottle and then go down. You can't tell by looking at it, but this place is deep."

He led me down a long, spiraling staircase; it was getting progressively darker with our descent.

"This next section is something new to St. Jude's. We've established an interdenominational exchange program with other faiths. We swap some of the problem cases. We've got an egomaniacal Taoist, a celebratory Jehovah's Witness, and a Hindu with a taste for double cheeseburgers."

"And you try to cure them? Sounds tough."

"It's quite a challenge, but it lets us know that we're not the only religion with deviants. What should we do with an impotent tantric?"

Dr. Death Rides Again

by Mark Morelli

Michigan doctor Jack Kevorkian's assistance in more than two dozen suicides has prompted debate over whether he is playing God. What hasn't been examined, until now, is Kevorkian's influence on the world of free enterprise.

Marty Formby always wanted to open his own business. Kevorkian's philosophy made Marty Formby's dream come true. In his business, called The Gambler's God, Formby utilizes a suicide machine similar to Kevorkian's—only Formby's patients aren't sick.

"But they are scared shitless," Formby says. "Used to be, when a guy gambled himself away up to the eye-teeth, he had to pay up or get an insane loan from a shark—then he'd have *that* to pay off. It's a no-win situation."

Formby, a former casino card dealer who is just 66 college credits short of a Biology degree, carefully screens people who have bet—and lost—much more than they can afford.

"It's much easier for them to check out peacefully here than to face the other music, which ain't harps, get me?"

Formby, whose business thrives in Atlantic City, is looking to lease office space in Las Vegas and hopes to create a mobile euthanasia unit to provide monthly service for terribly unlucky gamblers in Reno, and also for those reluctant people dragged along on bus tours in Branson, Missouri.

Copycat euthanasians consider themselves unofficial branch representatives of Kevorkian's. But without the infamous doctor's presence, and their own lack of credentials, they must often rely on gimmicks.

Danny Menning, a Fond du Lac landscaper, used to spend his cold Wisconsin winters collecting meager unemployment checks and unsuccessfully dealing with his unusually long bout of grief over the death of Lucille Ball.

"Like others with terminal Lucy grief, I hit lower than bottom. I did a little reading on how to end it all, found about this Kevorkian guy, mixed in a little American know-how, and here I am." He spends half the year operating Breath 'n' Death, and claims to provide better service than Kevorkian himself.

"I have to. Because I don't have a medical degree, I compensate with better prices. And because I don't have a high school degree, I keep things simple. Plus, I have a sliding scale."

Depending on what people can afford, Menning charges up to

\$5,000 for helping administer his own painless suicide machine ("It's like jumping a battery"), to as little as \$25 to assist in guiding a plastic grocery bag over the patient's head. Menning saves those bags for just that purpose.

"This machine don't run on pen-light batteries," Menning says. "But I hardly use it. Most rich people I know is happy, which is also good because happy rich folks like nice lawns. But when it comes to real despair, where you wish you wasn't born, poor folks is my mother lode."

The biggest surprise is that the Kevorkian debate caused the tobacco industry to reconsider its philosophy. Now, after insisting for three decades that the Surgeon General has been wrong, they admit that smoking is dangerous and often fatal. Spokesman Tony Locust said that the tobacco industry has "turned over a new leaf" and will devote its energy to making the American quality of life better.

And for those whose quality of life is *not* so good?

The tobacco industry has adopted a Kevorkian-like good will policy that provides a better alternative.

"When we finally decided that smoking was bad," Locust says, "I immediately quit a two-pack-a-day habit. Why? I didn't want to kill myself. I've got a good job, a nice home, a place on the beach, good-looking kids. I've got things to live for." He turns grim. "But not everyone does. Look at the inner city, where kids are *born* doomed."

The tobacco industry wants to distribute cigarettes on America's urban playgrounds—the first year absolutely free. Locust explains, "It doesn't solve the problem, but at least it *initiates* the suicide, albeit a slow-motion one, so that once these kids grow up and see the degradation, the hopelessness, the despair, the imbalanced society that seals them off from opportunity and makes their life a living Hell . . . well, they'll *already* be dying. That cough, that speck on the lungs, will be their ticket to Jericho."

But what about those children in the projects who *do* have loving parents and guidance, who *will* overcome the odds, get educations and be productive?

Locust contends that their nicotine addiction will be just another one of the many challenges they face, challenges they're used to. "Kicking cigarettes will give them yet another sense of accomplishment. These triumphs only contribute to their self-esteem."

Next in our series: Is Jack Kevorkian obliged to arrange for the kidnapping and assisted suicide of Pete Townshend, a musician who has gone on record as hoping to die before he gets old?

"Give him a drink."

"We tried that! The problem is, Catholics concentrate on behavior, not psychology or inner spirituality. The Papal edicts are useless."

We arrived at a huge oak door, and by the way he fumbled with the key, I could tell that the wine had taken hold. When the door swung open, I could hear screaming, weeping, and enraged profanities.

I was feeling my sobriety slipping away as well, and with it, my politeness.

"Is this your dungeon?"

"Please. We prefer to call it the recovery room. Down here we have the fornicators, blasphemers, pederasts, practicing homosexuals (in isolation), false prophets, former ascetics on binges, idolaters, flagellants, drug addicts . . ."

"What about alcoholics?"

"What about them? We gave up on the detox ward. All men have some vices. We prefer to get ours from a bottle. But it's not for everyone. It can drive some men quite mad."

"Don't you think it's ironic that the one consistent refuge for your priests isn't Christian in origin, but Dionysian? The Greek revellers had it right. Two thousand years ago these people would be revered. What you've got locked up here is a displaced generation of holy men. Wicked and depraved by your current standards, but holy men nonetheless."

"We're not living in ancient Athens, are we? Also, alcohol may be our most consistent refuge, but faith is the strongest."

"Faith in God?"

"No, no. The existence of God is a fact. I'm talking about faith in forgiveness. We're counting on it."

"I guess a religion which promises forgiveness leaves a lot of room for impropriety."

He grabbed me by the shoulders and started to shake me in a cathartic breakdown. His teeth were purple with wine and his maniacal gaze suggested some kind of possession.

"You have no idea what really goes on around here. There are secret rites, drunken orgies, chanting, sodomy, ritual dancing. It's depraved, it's savage, it's . . ."

"Bacchanalian?"

"Yes! And we can't seem to stop it! We've tried indoctrination, brainwashing, torture, even the occasional exorcism, but the tide of our own debasement keeps rising!"

"Tides can't be stopped; it's like trying to stop the moon. Maybe your church is at an end. Perhaps two millennia of Christianity is all this world can take. Some day the men in this prison may be the saints and martyrs of a different faith. People will visit the ruins of this place and see the crumbled remains of an exhausted theology, scattered among New Mexico dust and broken bottles."

MEDIA FREAK

Assholes of the Month

● Rabbi Yaacov Perrin, who, in paying homage to Dr. Baruch Goldstein for slaying 48 Palestinians in a Hebron mosque, stated that even a million Arabs "are not worth a Jewish fingernail."

● Mario Aburto Martinez, who shot would-be Mexican President Luis Donaldo Colosio in the head and stomach, then explained that his motive was to spread his pacifist point of view.

● Quebec Judge Raymonde Verreault, who gave a mere 23-month prison sentence to a man who repeatedly sodomized his 9-year-old stepdaughter; the female judge said that the girl had not been raped and would suffer no permanent effects, and that her stepfather deserved credit because he had "spared the girl's virginity."

● The LAPD Board of Rights, which found that detective Carlos Brizzolara had touched his female partner inappropriately—he had pushed her head toward his lap as she bent over to pick up a napkin in a restaurant—but ruled that he was not guilty of sexual harassment because he didn't receive sexual gratification from the act.

Filler Items

● At the Academy Awards, Whoopi Goldberg suggested that Lorena Bobbitt meet Bob Dole. On CNN's *Capital Gang*, Al Hunt of the *Wall Street Journal* chastised Whoopi not only for bad taste, but also—in a championship display of irrelevance—reminded her that Senator Dole has recovered from prostate cancer.

● Bill Clinton failed to report a \$68,000 loss on his income tax, and forgot that he had loaned his mother \$20,000, but did remember to take a \$2 deduction for the used underwear that he donated to the Salvation Army.

● From *Hot News*, controversial book publisher Lyle Stuart's newsletter: "Gennifer [Flowers] . . . told us that the Republican Party had offered her a substantial sum of money if she'd sit front-row center in the auditorium when Clinton had his critical debates with George Bush and Ross Perot."

● Canadian musical groups must register with the Ontario government's Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. One rock band, *Drop Kick Me Jesus*, has been told to drop its name "because it invokes violence in a religious context [and is] considered scandalous and contrary to public policy."

● Bob Barker, host of *The Price is Right*: "Many girls are beautiful, but this requires more than the average viewer realizes. She has to be bright. To give a refrigerator glamour requires a certain amount of intelligence."

● The never-photographed novelist Thomas Pynchon has served as a script consultant for *The John Larroquette Show*, an NBC sitcom. "We made up a novel that he hasn't written," said Larroquette, "and he gave us permission

to say that he had written *Pandemonium of the Sun*." In one scene, there is a reference to Pynchon wearing a T-shirt with a picture of an obscure musician. He requested that it be Rocky Erickson, a psychedelic rock-and-roller who was institutionalized and spent much of his life in an insane asylum.

● Jeff Jarvis in *TV Guide*: "[The ABC sitcom] *Birdland* [about a hip shrink] faces the delicate challenge of portraying insanity in these politically corrective '90s. If we can't call the patients loony, loopy or crazy, what can we call them: differently sane, rationally challenged, Psychotic-American?"

● Last Christmas, a reindeer pulling Santa's sleigh above an intersection in Beverly Hills was missing its antlers. Bill Boyd, executive vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce, said, "We had to take the antlers off one of the deer so there would be at least one female member."

● After the recent earthquake, Mayor Richard Riordan commented that the lack of looting proved that the citizens of Los Angeles were "loving and caring people." He didn't mention the thousands of police officers, sheriff's deputies and National Guard troops on the street.

● During a break in the trial of the Menendez brothers, one member of the jury said to another, "Maybe we should do 'the wave' again." She raised her hands but did not stand up, as she had done on a previous occasion with two other jurors.

● Now that Bob Dylan has allowed Richie Havens' version of *The Times They Are A-Changin'* to be used, for an undisclosed sum, in a TV commercial for an accounting firm, Coopers & Lybrand, Tuli Kupferberg claims he has turned down a lucrative offer from the U.S. Marine Corps to use the Fugs' '60s hit, *Kill for Peace*, in their new recruitment drive.

● On ABC's *Home Show*, the words in italics were deleted from Dr. Jay Gordon's comment: "When you have cartoon characters and animated beer bottles, you are advertising to children. I don't want to seem like I'm an un-fun guy because I oppose the advertising of cancer-causing and disease-causing and death-causing drugs to children, but I don't think that this should be done."

● *An Existential Guide to the Coffeehouses of Los Angeles* includes one named the Grassy Knoll, which has a small theater call the Book Depository.

● A judge temporarily barred CBS News from broadcasting a hidden-camera videotape made inside a South Dakota meatpacking plant because it would harm the local economy and reveal their production methods—namely, that fecal matter was the secret ingredient in their meat.

● The makers of Roadkill Helper have agreed to pull the joke item and other Hamburger Helper parodies from the market.

● Peter Jennings made it possible for some generous donor to Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, to attend a taping of *World News Tonight*, take an hour-long ABC studio tour,

meet the anchor, and "ask me anything you want." The lucky winner was Al Goldstein, publisher of the raunchy tabloid *Screw*, who donated \$1,000 at a Broadway Flea Market auction: "Jennings is the kind of guy I would be if I grew up thin."

● A Japanese company is marketing a brand of noodles whose taste has been enhanced by having the noodles listen to Antonio Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*.

● A Scottish bank now allows transvestites to use two of its new high-security check-cashing cards—one with a photo of them dressed as a man and the other as a woman. "If any cross-dressing customers are confident enough to go shopping dressed as a woman," a spokesperson explained, "it's possible for them to have a second card so that they can avoid embarrassment or difficulties when paying by check."

● Readers of *Dell Horoscope* have been offered a MasterCard with their astrological sign embossed under their name: "In a world of mundane credit cards, this is the only one created exclusively for astrology professionals, students and horoscope readers. The unique design identifies you as an individual empowered by your awareness of astrological influence and meaning. It will serve you on this planet—now and in the future."

● The United Church of Christ has a new "Confessing Christ" program, but one of its promoters acknowledges that among the disaffected in the church, "There is one movement that would claim Christ's death on the cross is an example of child abuse of a father toward his son."

● Cinema Beaute in New York sells kosher lipstick in colors such as Galilee Garnet and Dead Sea Red.

● Al Gore appeared on David Letterman one night with his own Top Ten list of the best things about being vice president. One that didn't make the cut: "You get to go on *The Late Show* with hip, young rock bands, and Tipper can't stop you from hearing the lyrics."

● The *Sacramento Bee* has apologized to readers (955 had canceled their subscriptions) for publishing an editorial cartoon portraying two Ku Klux Klan members reading a statement by Louis Farrakhan—"You can't be a racist by talking, only by acting"—whereupon one of the klansmen says, "That nigger makes a lot of sense."

● The (Marin County) *Pacific Sun* published a cartoon, captioned "Zion Films presents a Yitzhak Rabin film, 'Goldstein's List, or How We Haven't Learned Zip From the Holocaust,'" showing a caricature Jew firing an automatic weapon at Arab worshippers. Editor Steve McNamara said, "Yes, we have had considerable reaction, most of it negative. It was supposed to be anti-racist, not anti-Semitic. . . ."

● Alternative titles for *Schindler's List*: Billy Maher, *Close Encounters of the Third Reich*; Howard Stern, *Schindler's Fist* (porn version); Billy Crystal, *Send in the Kleins*.