

The Realist

• Newt Gingrich at the Bohemian Grove
• Jerry Garcia, Bill Kunstler and Tim Leary
• The Revenge of Gennifer Flowers

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Editor: Paul Krassner

Reactionary Chic

by Matt Neuman

It was about 2 a.m. Bernie Leonard was having trouble sleeping, nothing unusual for him. Most nights when he couldn't sleep, Bernie would slip into his cheetah-skin smoking jacket and his white tiger fur slippers, plunk himself down behind his grand piano-sized desk carved from a centuries-old California Redwood (a gift from the California Lumber Industry), contemplate the view from the ten-million-dollar penthouse he shares with his wife, Lapeer, and fire off another angry letter to the *New York Times*, spewing his disgust at the "oppressive liberal agenda" that was "ruining this great country by wasting our precious resources" on a bunch of "laggards and thieves." He distrusted government, and his distrust had grown, so much so that, recently, the 66-year-old scion of Wall Street actually considered buying a gun.

That's how angry Bernie Leonard had become.

On this particular night, however, Bernie didn't write a letter to the *Times*. Instead, he had a vision. A vision that would change his life. In it, he's addressing his "troops" at the next board meeting (he's CEO of Reynolds, Roberts and Stone, a major Wall Street investment firm started by his wife's grandfather in 1910) when all of a sudden the doors to the conference room burst open and dozens of gun-toting federal agents storm in — they grab his "people" and begin to fire at the file cabinets where the financial records are kept — and then Bernie reveals from beneath the rich woolen blend of his Armani suit a semi-automatic assault rifle, the kind of semi-automatic assault rifle that liberal crybabies like Clinton and Sarah Brady want to ban, and he starts firing away, semi-automatically, at the jackbooted swine. He saves most of his people, he saves his company, he saves his financial records. He's a hero.

It's only a dream, a fantasy, but it does something to Bernie: it "reactionizes" him — just as, once, many years before, scenes of atrocities on the nightly news "radicalized" another generation. Now, Bernie Leonard is a true believer — a loyal foot soldier in the real U.S. Army, the brave defenders of our right to bear arms and paranoid delusions. Suddenly, Bernie Leonard hears a *call to action*. It's time to do his part.

The next morning, Bernie could barely wait to tell his wife the good news.

"We're going to throw a party for the boys!" he shouted, trying to be heard above the whirring of her electric toothbrush.

"What boys?" she spritzed, fully aware they had no children, no heirs to the throne, no inheritors of the Leonard family fortune most recently estimated by *Fortune* magazine as between two and three billion dollars.

"The boys in the militias! The Posse Comitatus! The Aryan Brotherhood! The real Americans!"

Lapeer Leonard, *nee* Lapeer Reynolds of the blue blood Newport 400 Reynolds, was taken aback. Normally she was oblivious to politics. To her, the right to bear arms meant sleeveless dresses were back in style. And she certainly was an innocent when it came to anti-one-world anti-Semitic white supremacist paranoid schizophrenic militant Nazi survivalist fringe groups. She knew that her husband had strong feelings about the government, how he hated to see the few tax dollars he actually paid go "directly into the pocketbooks of welfare queens driving purple Cadillacs." And, she knew that "a party is a

party," and she could always get excited about the prospect of entertaining all their wealthy, influential friends.

"What kind of food do they eat?" she asked, already thinking ahead. "I'll call Arianna, maybe she'll have some ideas."

In the season of Reactionary Chic, the meeting of Wall Street and Waco is not all that surprising. What these rebellious wackos in the hinterland represent to the wealthy wackos on Wall Street is nothing less than a frontal assault on their biggest rival: the government — more specifically, the Internal Revenue Service. Less government, less taxes. *No* government . . . you get the idea. So, on the night of July 4, 1996, at the huge penthouse apartment of Bernie and Lapeer Leonard, a cocktail party was given in honor of those 2nd-Amendment-interpreting militiamen of the way right. Everybody who was anybody in the rarefied world of reactionaries was invited, and many showed: Bill Buckley was there. So was Bill Bennett. So was Rush Limbaugh. Even P.J. O'Rourke popped in for a whiskey and a (shhh . . . Cuban) cigar. And, of course, money people, *big money* people. And me, one of the dozen or so "servers" from the catering company. (How I hooked up with the catering company is another story — one best told in the presence of a lawyer.)

The first to arrive was, not surprisingly, Bay Buchanan, GOP fire-brand Pat Buchanan's look-alike sister/campaign manager — and the first to appear at any function where *hors d'oeuvres* are served. I personally explained to her that the tiny white-and-gray curlicues were pressed dove and gray whale caviar rolled up in a butter pastry, and

(Continued on Page 4)



The American Broadcasting Company's New Logo
"The three most graphic images of the 20th century are the Coca-Cola bottle, the Nazi swastika, and Mickey Mouse."

— Life magazine

COURT JESTER

Ah, Sordid Announcements

• Last issue, I reported that Leonard Lewin is dead. I couldn't be happier than to make this correction — he's alive — and preparing for a literary rebirth. His classic hoax, *Report From Iron Mountain*, a 1967 satire of think-tank scenarios that have since become realized in fact, will be republished in May. The book, which once inspired paranoia on the radical left, now inspires paranoia on the radical right.

• In January, Atlantic Records taped a couple of my stand-up performances in San Francisco, but the A. & R. guy, who had discovered Hootie and the Blowfish, treated me as a low priority and kept stalling on the production of my comedy album. Finally, Danny Goldberg — as one of his last acts before being fired as chairman of Warner Brothers Records — assigned me to their Reprise label. On September 10, they taped my show at L.A., the Bookstore in Santa Monica. There was, of course, a two-book minimum.

Who Killed Jerry Garcia?

Even though President Clinton occasionally wears a Jerry Garcia designer necktie, Garcia himself never wore a tie. But he did have a drawer filled with black T-shirts, along with a copy of the *Urantia Book*. He once told me of a legend that anyone who read that 2097-page bible from cover to cover — which he had done — would receive a mysterious visit from three elderly women. Although they never arrived at his door, he accepted that disappointment with grace. When *The Realist* was re-launched in Autumn 1985 after an 11-year hiatus, it featured my interview with Jerry Garcia. Here's an excerpt:

Q. Does the world seem to be getting weirder and weirder to you?

A. Yeah. The weirdest thing lately for me was that thing of the Ayatollah and the mine-sweeping children. In the war between Iran and Iraq, he used kids and had them line up like a human chain, holding hands, and walk across the mine fields because it was cheaper than mine detectors.

Q. That's just unfathomable.

A. It's amazingly inhuman. And people complained about the Shah — a few fingernails and stuff — but this is kids walking across mine fields. It's absolutely surreal. How could people go for that?

Q. But how do you remain optimistic? There's 48 wars going on now simultaneously — and yet the music is joyful — even "Please don't murder me" is a joyful song.

A. Well, when things are at that level, there's kind of a beauty to the simplicity of it. I wrote that song when the Zodiac Killer was out murdering in San Francisco. Every night I was coming home from the studio, and I'd stop at an intersection and look around, and if a car pulled up, it was like, "This is it, I'm gonna die now." It became a game. Every night I was conscious of that thing, and the refrain got to be so real to me. "Please don't murder me, please don't murder me..."

Q. Oh, so it came out of a literal truth — it wasn't even metaphorical.

A. No, not really. It was a coincidence in a way, but it was also the truth at the moment.

Q. And, if you extend that logically, statistics show that more than half of young people today think there'll be a nuclear war in their lifetime — but they are also concerned about whether they want a career or marriage.

A. Well, you've got to do something in the meantime. Nuclear war — that's easy to see, because it's true that most of the energy is still going to the old arms build-up. It hasn't changed a bit, and it's more horrible than ever, and not only that, but we haven't done anything to get rid of all the old shit, so that thing has been growing and growing for the last 40 years. If you're a kid now, that's what you see, that's the immediate past, 40 years of this shit, and nobody's made any serious effort to turn it in any direction. I'm scared too, frankly.

Q. It used to be there was one weird old man with a sign saying, "The World Is Coming to An End," but now you've got it embossed on bumper stickers. Still, you know that New Age parable of the 100th monkey — about these monkeys on an island that have subsisted on sweet potatoes, and they've always eaten them with the sand on.

A. Oh, I know about those monkeys. They wash the sweet potatoes in the salt water now.

Q. But one young monkey started it.

A. A young female monkey.

Q. And then the other monkeys started following suit, and when there was a certain critical mass — that's the metaphor of the 100th monkey, it could've been the 97th or the 108th — when enough young monkeys were doing it, then the first adult monkey started. Reverse generational influence. Then other adult monkeys started doing it.

A. Yeah, there was a moment when all of a sudden it seemed as though all the monkeys knew how to do it.

Q. And then, even on adjoining islands — a psychic connection. And, how that applies to human behavior, no matter what we're doing on an individual or a group basis, if we take ourselves as the 100th monkey, we could be the one to change the tide.

A. Absolutely. It always did seem like it was a matter of numbers, like you really only needed a percentage of people kind of pulling psychically in the right direction in order to just avoid the worst possible scenario, and it always seemed that the positive had some kind of natural inclination to get the weight. Destroying things lacks a certain element of organization, it's operating at a disadvantage essentially, because the idea of building things always requires some kind of agreement. Destroying things doesn't require that, it kind of works against itself in the long run. Yeah, I believe that idea. I always believed that psychedelics meant that in a certain way. I always felt that if enough people got turned on, there would be sort of a consciousness jump, a paradigm shift in reality somehow. It's much slower than anybody imagined. That's the way I've chosen to deal with it philosophically, to avoid getting too discouraged in the meantime, just to think, well, it's gonna take a long time.

Q. Do you think that the renewed interest in the '60s is a deep interest in terms of perpetuating a spiritual revolution or that it's just an interest in a '60s fad?

A. No, it's deeper than that. It's definitely not just the surface, it's much more the soulful stuff, because I see those kids, they're in the audience, and I talk to them, the 16-year-olds, the 18-year-olds, and they're the same people that we were then.

Q. Except with a loss of innocence.

A. Exactly. They know there's way more bullshit going on, but all that stuff is more visible, and so in a way it's easier for them to deal with it. We were dealing with that world and didn't quite understand what we were up against, although we suspected the worst, and now they're used to being in that kind of paranoid reality.

Q. So they have less deconditioning to do.

A. That might work for them, it might work against them, but the point is that they're game, they're good people, I know that about them. . . .

There is a powerful continuity spanning three decades of Grateful Dead events, from a benefit for the Black Panthers where everybody got frisked, to a concert where the entire audience was younger than the number of years the band had been together. Jerry Garcia remains as an icon representing the sense of community that has always accompanied the music of the Dead. Their concerts have served as healing ceremonies, as extended family reunions, as celebrations of a shared value system, as Martian conventions. That's the essential spirit of Garcia's legacy, and it will continue to transcend generations, even though the Zodiac Killer finally sneaked into his room and murdered him in his sleep, and then he was mysteriously transported to another plane by three elderly women.

On a radio call-in show, a teenage girl, who last year mourned the loss of Kurt Cobain, reassured listeners now mourning the loss of

Jerry Garcia, that "the pain never goes away, but it does fade." Another caller advised that "rehab is not for everybody." And somebody else suggested that "there will now be actual chunks of Jerry Garcia in Ben & Jerry's Cherry Garcia ice cream." Actually, though, Garcia was cremated. His ashes were mixed with high-grade marijuana, rolled into several joints and, at a private memorial, passed around and smoked by his family, a few close friends, members of the band, and one lucky Deadhead selected at random.

Kunstler Gone, Leary Next

In my autobiography, although I confessed to ingesting 300 micrograms of LSD in a restaurant before testifying at the Chicago Conspiracy Trial in January 1970, I restrained myself from mentioning the fact that, at the same lunch, attorney William Kunstler joined defendants Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin in eating hashish. I simply wrote that "while the others were passing around a chunk of hash, I took out a tab of LSD." But, now that Kunstler has arrived in Heaven just in time to defend Abbie and Jerry, who got busted for trying to organize the angels, I feel free to share that touch of gossip.

In 1976, I was invited to deliver a keynote speech at "The American Hero: Myths & Media," a 5-day symposium and deodorant pad held in Sun Valley, Idaho, a vacation resort that resembled the locale of a TV series, *The Prisoner*, where members of the intelligence community were let out to pasture on an inescapable island. It was the setting for an uncomfortable situation where two participants, both friends of mine, were at odds with each other.

Bill Kunstler smuggled in "a real-life hero," a native American woman who deliberately shot a white man, a known child molester who had raped a 7-year-old girl. Timothy Leary was also at this conference, and who knows what he smuggled in? But Kunstler refused to acknowledge Leary's greeting, referring to him as "a traitor" because he had supposedly told federal authorities how the Weather Underground had helped him escape from prison.

"I wouldn't be surprised," Kunstler whispered to me, "if somebody assassinated Leary."

And now, just turning 75, Tim Leary has announced — in a profile published by the *Los Angeles Times* and reprinted in the *Washington Post* — that he has inoperable prostate cancer. In a conversation I taped for *The Nation*, he told me that he has "from two to five years" to live, but he was enthusiastic about orchestrating a death that will serve as an appropriate conclusion to his adventurous life.

At one point, Leary said that the O.J. Simpson trial has revealed how "evil" lawyers are. I asked if he meant defense and prosecution — "Yes," he answered — but I refrained from challenging his generalization because I was in a journalistic mode, just like Laura Hart McKinny, who didn't object when Mark Fuhrman said the nigger-word over and over again.

Great Moments in Counter-Cultural History

In the course of attempting to get a marijuana-legalization initiative on the ballot, six times since 1972, Jack Herer and other activists have lived on the front lawn of the Federal Building in Westwood for a hundred days at a time. They would feed, clothe, and provide portable bathrooms for petitioners. On the flagpole, the pot-people's flag flew proudly underneath the American flag.

One morning in January 1981, President-elect Ronald Reagan came to Westwood. It was five days before his inauguration, and he needed a haircut from his favorite barber. With his entourage of Secret Service agents, Reagan visited the Federal Building.

"You're doing a fine job," he told the manager, "and I want you to know that you can bring any of your problems to us. Incidentally, why are those Canadians down on the lawn?"

"They're not Canadians. Those are marijuana protesters, and they live down there 24 hours a day."

Reagan had mistaken the five-pointed hemp leaf for the maple leaf that is featured on the Canadian flag.

"Well," he said, "I'll be on the job in a few days, and I'll see what I can do for you."

The above dialogue was reported by a supporter of the initiative — one of the secretaries in the manager's office. Indeed, she got high after work at night with the demonstrators, and let them take showers at her home.

A week later, only two days in office and amidst celebrating the return of hostages from Iran, Reagan reissued a World War II anti-sabotage act that had originally been passed in 1943 as a wartime measure to prohibit anyone, such as saboteurs, from being on federal property after regular business hours. So, Herer and five others were arrested for being on federal property, registering voters after dark — arrested, that is, for patriotism above and beyond the call of duty.

After trial, the five others accepted a year of unsupervised probation, but Herer refused. He also refused to pay the maximum fine of \$5. That was the original amount specified, but the law was re-enacted so hastily that federal authorities had neglected to adjust the fine for inflation.

In court, Federal Judge Malcolm Lucas — a Richard Nixon appointee, later named Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court by his former law partner, then-Governor George Deukmajian — asked Supervising Officer Franklin, "Now, what were these people doing there all night long?"

"Registering voters, listening to music."

"Oh? What kind of music?"

"Things like the Grateful Dead."

Whereupon the judge stood up and roared: "I threw my own son out of the house in 1975 for listening to them. As far as I'm concerned, the Grateful Dead would be better off appreciably deceased."

Herer was sentenced to 14 days behind bars.

He told the judge, "I can't think of a higher honor that I could ever have in my life than going to jail for registering voters after dark on federal property at the busiest intersection in the country. If I'm not willing to do that, how can I call myself an American?"

Nevertheless, he appealed his conviction all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, but they wouldn't hear the case, and in July 1983, he went to Terminal Island Federal Prison for two weeks.

"It was the best thing that ever happened to me," he now declares. "I had never been given the opportunity to write so clearly, and without interruption."

In that dreary cell, his comprehensive book about hemp was conceived. Based on ten years of intensive investigation, Herer wrote a complete outline for *The Emperor Wears No Clothes*. Self-published, without major distributors, wholesalers, advertising or reviews, it has become an underground bestseller — 375,000 copies — mostly on American campuses, with editions in Germany, France, Italy and, this year, Poland, Japan, Australia and possibly Spain.

Herer neglected, however, to dedicate his book to Ronald Reagan.

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Enclosed please find:

- \$12 for a 6-issue subscription to *The Realist*.
- \$23 for a 12-issue subscription to *The Realist*.
- \$14 for Paul Krassner's autobiography, *Confessions of a Raving, Unconfined Nut: Misadventures in the Counter-Culture*. Or \$25 for the hardcover edition.
- \$10 for *The (Almost) Unpublished Lenny Bruce* — a collection of the controversial comedian's articles, columns, stories, bits and pieces.

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REACTIONARY CHIC

(Continued from Cover)

then steered her to the ones that I'd dropped on the kitchen floor near the roach motel.

Next came the Rush-man himself, no stranger to *hors d'oeuvres*, along with his new bride, whom he met on the Internet, and whom he didn't introduce to anyone. I think her name is Marta. The big fella occupies a unique position in the Reactionary Chic firmament. He is free to say and do what he wants, fire away at him and all, a loose lipomorph who's rarely criticized, perhaps because he's just so — lame. Not that Lapeer Leonard wasn't having a conservative version of multiple orgasms as she hugged the great western face of Mt. Limbaugh.

Linda Chavez, former Treasury Secretary under Reagan and current mouthpiece for the Manhattan Institute, a conservative think tank, got tanked, and within 20 minutes was dancing buck naked on top of Bernie's Redwood desk — and this was *before* most of the guests arrived. She single-handedly changed my image of right-wing ideologues forever. The fun ended when Charlton Heston came in and gallantly draped his jacket around her and got her some coffee.

Bernie Leonard was interested in hearing how Bay Buchanan's bombastic brother was doing in the polls. "He's stuck at 4%," she admitted over a platter of giant panda paté. Bernie offered financial assistance. "I've got a textile factory in South Carolina — the union's gone, so I can hit the workers up for whatever it is they think it'll take to keep their jobs." I chimed in that I would be honored to contribute ten bucks. Bay was perfectly gracious, but "Mister Leonard," as I was told to refer to him, fixed me with a withering glare, as if he knew I was being facetious.

And then *they* arrived. "They" had been anticipated anxiously by the whole tony crowd for nearly an hour. "They" included:

- "Jeff" — a nervous twenty-something ex-Marine who was wanted in connection with a shoot-out in Idaho. Jeff never said a single word. Not one.

- "Mark" — not Mark Koerneke, the "Mark from Michigan" you may have heard of, but "Mark" of Florida, another first-name-only type and a talk-radio host who espouses the opinion that U.N. troops are training in the Everglades — as well as North Dakota and Alaska — and are poised to move in on all us "good, loyal, religious folks" (Nazi nuts) and take over the country. Mark never *stopped* talking.

- Norman Olson — Commander of the Michigan Militia, an actual celebrity in the world of extreme fascist crazies, having risen to where he can use his last name. He was addressing a small group that included loose-cannon Congressman Bob Dornan (our next president, the way things are going) with an endless diatribe against taxes, quotas, gun control, "Negroes," Jews, all foreigners, and the media. It didn't come up, but I'd bet he's against food stamps, too.

- Linda Thompson — an Indiana attorney and a leading proponent of the New World Order Scare Theory which has gained so much support from the unintelligensia lately. She's also a woman, a rarity in militant fringe groups. And she's a lawyer!

- A few other characters, so anonymous they didn't even use *first* names. One, a big, bearded, heavily-tattooed Santa Claus, passed along this little tidbit to G. Gordon Liddy and actor/former Nixon speechwriter Ben Stein while I held the dolphin sushi platter: It seems that Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bombing suspect (who was in custody and awaiting a hearing as this is being written), had connections to a "left-wing theater group" in New York City, a group that at one time included in its ranks a young actor named Robert DeNiro, and that DeNiro, on direct orders from the American Communist Party, had paid McVeigh one hundred thousand dollars to blow up a large federal office building in the nation's heartland and make it look like it was the work of the right. Ben Stein, never one to miss an opportunity to seem witty, said, "Gee, I wonder if DeNiro has cast the role of John Doe No. 2 yet?" Santa Claus didn't get it, but it drew a chuckle from Liddy, who was eating the sushi like

it was his last meal. (I was going to ask G. if he'd pass his hand through a flame for me — but MTV's Kennedy, another one-name wonder, and the only right-wing VJ in this galaxy, asked him first. He politely declined.)

Arianna Huffington, looking positively radioactive in a silver metallic gown, once again showed up fashionably late, once again without her million-dollar-a-vote hubby, and the rumor quickly spread that she was on the make for any young, athletic man who had bathed recently.

"She's the next Clare Booth Luce," I overheard Bernie (Mister, my ass) Leonard tell Roger Ailes, the head honcho of the America's Talking But Nobody's Listening cable network. "She's bright, she's beautiful, she's got money. If my wife wasn't such a good shot, I'd chase after her," Bernie cracked. Ailes chortled, and then looked at me.

"What's so funny?" he barked. I hadn't realized I was laughing.

The first dramatic moment of the evening, not counting Linda Chavez, came when we, the servers, were given new, specially prepared *hors d'oeuvres* platters, meant specifically for "Mark," "Jeff," et al. As one of my cohorts leaned in to offer a shaven-headed Aryan youth a tray filled with beef jerky, pork rinds and beer nuts, all chatter stopped. It was suddenly as quiet as Oklahoma City on a Wednesday morning, so quiet you could hear a grenade pin drop. Would these knee-jerk Nazis take offense at being served "white trash" food? Why were they being treated so differently? Were they being — patronized?

"Thanks," muttered the kid as he sampled a pork rind, and a relieved gathering went on with their Reactionary Chic small talk.

"I'm having difficulty liking these people," Lapeer Leonard confided to the supremely unlikable Leona Helmsley over deviled bald eagle eggs. "They're kind of scary," she whispered. The ex-con hotelier merely smiled, the irony apparently eluding her.

Another dramatic moment occurred when the penthouse's own private elevator doors opened and everyone's attention shifted to the elevator's occupant: an unsmiling African-American man in a dark blue suit. Lapeer Leonard shrieked as if she'd seen a mouse, or a Jew. One matronly woman, a longtime Republican fund-raiser, fainted.

"Well, holy shit," muttered "Mark" of Florida.

"Hi, everybody," said the black man who, as it turned out, was Alan Keyes, the ultra-conservative presidential candidate. (Too bad Godfrey Cambridge couldn't have lived another 30 years; he'd have been perfect as Keyes in the movie version of this article. One note: All the "servers" were white, apparently to avoid any awkward situations for the guests of honor.)

Later in the evening, I was asked to bring a plate of spotted owl quiche to Mr. Leonard, who had retired to the library. When I went in, I saw that the master of the house was not alone, and he was hardly retired. Both Norman Olson and Linda Thompson were with him, and all three were standing, facing the window, looking out at the awesome view, which included a panorama of midtown Manhattan — from the Empire State Building to the south, across to the Chrysler Building to the east, and further east to the — *U.N. Building!* I damn near dropped the tray of near-extinct canapés — and I really *did* drop it when I turned to see a mobile missile launcher mounted on a tripod, with a rocket aimed directly at . . . you know what. It's obviously ornamental, was my first thought, figuring Mrs. Leonard rented it to spruce up an otherwise stuffy decor.

"Just leave it, and go," Bernie stated to me sternly.

"Yes, sir," I groveled, not wanting to seem too uppity. But, before leaving, I took another look at the faux missile launcher and realized that it was, in fact, not faux, but *loaded* and, according to an LED readout on the barrel, in *Ready to Fire* mode! My heart pounding, I left immediately to look for a telephone.

Voice: "911."

Me: "Hello? 911?"

"This is 911. What's the problem?"

"I'm not sure how much time we have, operator, but there's a live, armed torpedo aimed at the United Nations Building, and it could be

launched at any moment."

"Where are you calling from, sir?"

"666 Park Avenue, Apartment 52-J. It's the penthouse apartment of financier Bernard Leonard."

"You say you're at Bernard Leonard's apartment? The Wall Street guy?"

"Yes. And there's a party going on."

"You're at Bernard Leonard's apartment, and there's a party, and there's what? A torpedo?"

"A torpedo, a missile, I don't know, operator, just send someone over here — *immediately*. And alert the Air Force. They might have some anti-missile installations still active out on Staten Island. *Something must be done, operator!*"

"Sir, calm down. Hold, please . . ."

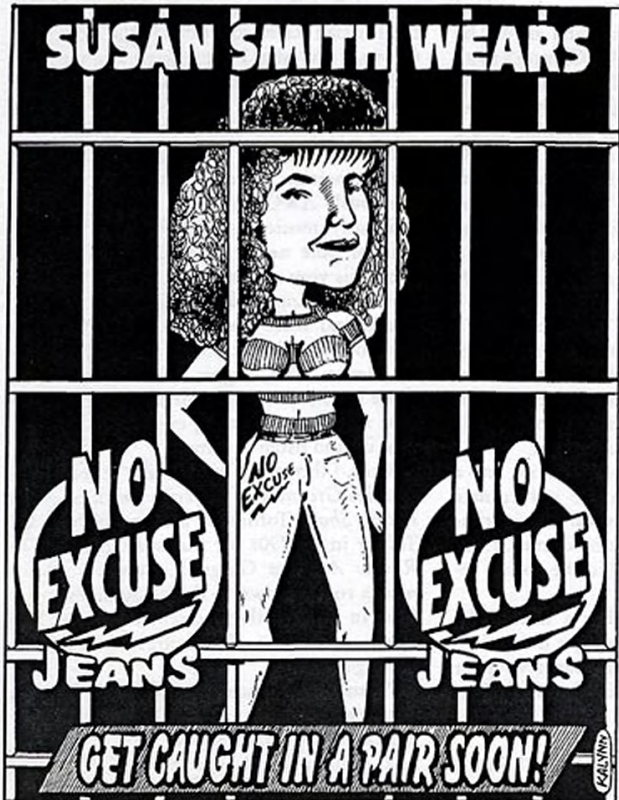
I hung up. This was no time to dawdle. The U.N. Building was about to go boom. I went into the kitchen and asked Yvonne, one of the catering people, if she would like to help a worthy cause.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Saving the world from certain chaos," I overstated, slightly.

"Will this take long?"

So the condor à la king would get soggy — Yvonne and I left it simmering in its juices as we sprinted out the "Help Entrance" and took the "Help Elevator" down to the lobby. I went immediately to the doorman, who looked a lot like Richard Nixon, which wasn't surprising since it turned out to be comedian (and former Nixon impersonator) David Frye, who'd been down on his luck recently. None of his old show business friends would throw him a bone, so he's a doorman. "It could be worse," he reasoned. I gave him what I had on me, about five bucks; he was grateful. In the meantime, Yvonne had flagged down a police car and was explaining the situation when all of a sudden there was this tremendous, incredibly loud *BOOM* that reverberated throughout the building. It sounded just like — *oh, no!* I thought — and with that I ran to the elevator and, along with Yvonne, two New York cops, and David Frye, ascended to the 52nd floor.



The elevator doors opened directly into the living room, but it was empty. Where *was* everyone? We fanned out — it's a big apartment. The cops went in the direction of the bedrooms, Yvonne and David Frye went into the kitchen, and I went to the library. Bingo. The library. That's where everybody had gone. Packed like sardines, all heads turned to the windows and a view of the — *fireworks*. Of course! July 4th! The Macy's fireworks display in the East River! I sighed a sigh of relief that comes from knowing the world has not yet dissolved into chaos, and I even tried one of the unicorn dogs. It wasn't bad.

In this, the season of Reactionary Chic, irony abounds. As the guests were leaving, I overheard one of the militia types ask a wealthy, and tipsy, old dowager if that indeed was Richard Nixon standing by the door, wishing everyone goodnight.

"I think it is," she said to him upon further inspection. "Although I believe he's dead."

The Execution of Jamar Phelps

by Fred Wickham

"I didn't do it!" These were Jamar Phelps' last words. Moments later, he was put to death in the gas chamber at Columbia, South Carolina. Finally, Susan and David Smith can get on with their lives. The agony began October 27, 1994, when Phelps, a criminal with a long record, including a previous carjacking conviction, ordered Susan Smith out of her car at gunpoint at a traffic light 20 miles outside of Columbia. The horror was that Susan's two sons, Alex and Michael, were strapped into their baby seats. For the next month, the nation listened to Susan's agonized pleas for their safe return.

On November 30th, Susan Smith's maroon Mazda Protege was discovered in John D. Long Lake, 25 miles outside of Columbia. Still strapped into their seats were the bodies of the two boys. Area teenagers had recognized Phelps from the police artist's composite. Although Phelps admitted he'd been fishing there on October 27th, he protested that he *knew* nothing about the carjacking. Numerous pieces of evidence tying Phelps to the crime were introduced, but one piece — a key fitting a Greyhound Bus Station locker, and found in the Mazda — was his undoing. It was a locker Jamar Phelps was known to have used in late October. Public Defender Wally Byrum argued that this evidence was circumstantial, but the jury found it sufficient to remove reasonable doubt.

The preceding is a *what if*. What if Susan Smith had been a better liar? What if a black guy had been seen in a car like hers? Around that lake. And he matched the description she gave. And he'd been nabbed before she broke down and told the truth. And he didn't have an alibi. If it had all played out like that and he'd been found guilty — as she was — would he have gotten the death sentence? Does a hobby horse have a hickory dick? This kind of thing happens year after year. When guilty people, or ambitious prosecutors, try to railroad innocent people, they succeed often enough. It's why we have to do away with the death penalty.

Capital Punishment in the News

- When guards at Oklahoma State Penitentiary found Robert Brecheen groggy from a drug overdose in his cell, they rushed him to a hospital and had his stomach pumped. Then they brought him back to prison, strapped him on a gurney and, two hours after he was scheduled for execution, his condition now stabilized, they gave him a lethal injection.
- The *Missoulian*, reporting on the first capital punishment in Montana in 52 years: "In the hours before midnight, McKenzie dined on a last meal of tenderloin steak, french fries, tossed salad, whole milk and a half-gallon of orange sherbet. McKenzie hadn't requested the tossed salad, but prison officials thought he should have a vegetable."

One Degree of Separation by Jack Boulware

Some writers toil for years in low-paying day jobs, scrambling a freelance life on the side to see their words in print. Some attend prestigious writing programs at Iowa or Columbia, convinced a proper education is the ticket to a successful career. Still others self-publish their work, hoping it will attract a readership on its own.

And other writers just fuck the future president of the United States.

Such is the case with Jennifer Flowers, currently on a worldwide tour, promoting her newest book *Passion and Betrayal*, a thin \$20 exercise in typing published by Emery Dalton Books in Del Mar, California.

The "book" reads like a Danielle Steele novel, each cliff-hanging chapter full of sordid detail, insisting that not only did the future Chief Executive frequently inhale, he used cocaine, and often compared his genitalia to a famous rat:

"Laughter was always a big part of our relationship, so we had fun creating pet names for our private parts as well. I called mine 'Precious,' and his penis was 'Willard.' 'Why Willard?' I asked him. 'Because I always liked that name,' he said. 'You know, Willard for Willy!' And you know, it kind of had a Willard-like personality."

Of course, there are no photos of Clinton at all, but the author does include shots of lingerie, with a typical caption like: "Bill bought this little black nightie for me. He liked me to model it for him, but it never stayed on long!" Her celebrity status is insured with photos of famous friends, from comedian Rip Taylor and Morton Downey, Jr. to Tammy Faye Bakker and a group shot of America's political peccadilloes — Flowers, Jessica Hahn and Rita Jenrette — who had appeared together on HBO's *Dream On*.

Today, Flowers is in San Francisco. Her Channel 2 interview went well earlier today, but another media appearance went not so well. During a live interview on the KPIX noon news, she removed her microphone on camera and walked off the set.

Consequently, the Borders bookstore phone rings off the hook throughout the day. More calls than Norman Mailer's appearance the previous afternoon?

"Oh, yeah," exclaims the manager.

Also received is a threatening call, along the lines of: "Her book is smut, and you're smut for having her there. You better have extra security." By 6 p.m., extra rent-a-cops are in the store, wandering the periodical section.

Flowers arrives and is ushered to a book-signing area, a table set up in front of the gay and lesbian section. Security guards, armed with riot club and pistol, flank her on either side, another stands about a book's throw away, giving everyone the once-over. The author is "in."

A line forms, a combination of genuinely

curious white trash, irony-soaked white trash, and a bunch of women who keep their distance and wear an expression of amazement, like they've just come upon a washed-out bridge. These fans of the written word wait patiently until it is their turn to meet our nation's newest literary phenomenon.

Her hair is pulled back in a sensible style. She wears a high-necked black dress and gold jewelry. Her bright purple/orange lipstick color is shared by her two female assistants, hovering behind her. Unlike the dust jacket — and every other photo in her book — the author's cleavage is not displayed tonight.

A red-faced man with a comb-over named Carl Weber is at the table. He is beaming with excitement, and can barely contain himself. "I saw you in Washington D.C.!" he bubbles, fiddling with his camera.

"Oh, did you?" smiles Jennifer. "That was fun."

Carl eagerly snaps her photo. The camera begins making a whining electronic sound. Automatic rewind! Shit! That was the last shot on the roll! Suddenly panicked, he scurries off to a corner, whips on a pair of reading glasses and fumbles with another roll.

The author looks up to the next person in line and smiles that smile.

"I saw you on one of the TV stations this morning," I mention.

"It's a shame I had to leave," says the author, neatly sidestepping the incident while inscribing the inside cover with a grand flourish. "I wish I could stay longer. I really like San Francisco." She hands back the prized collectible, her eyes sparkling and alive. The same eyes that gazed into Bill Clinton's soul, no doubt watching him huff and puff on top of her, his wobbly pale thighs barely keeping balance, his sweaty red face snuffing like a hog between her breasts for that last KFC extra crispy wing, his hands tied behind his back with a "Don't Blame Me, I Voted For George" bumpersticker, while outside in the parking lot, an Arkansas state trooper picks a nostril and turns the page of the *Democrat-Gazette* . . .

"Thank you very much," I mumble.

"It's my pleasure," she purrs. One degree of separation away from the White House! For a nanosecond, the mind races. What would it take? A nice dinner at a fancy hotel? A limousine ride? A shopping spree?

Even though she supposedly now has a boyfriend, some guy with the unfortunate name of Finis Shelnut, she's still an incorrigible flirt, and loves the attention of men. Even it's poor Carl Weber, still in the corner re-loading that damn camera.

Someone brings the author a Diet Coke and glass of ice. A store manager dunks in a straw and quickly whisks the paper wrapper away. A white-haired man in his 50s shuffles up and offers his book.

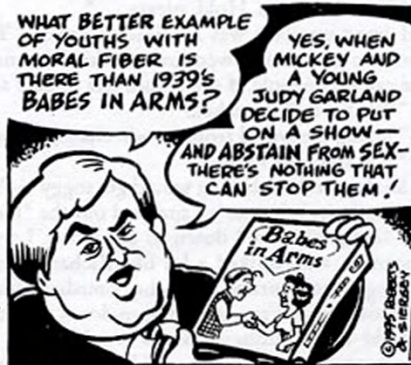
"Is it true?" he says.

"It's all true," says the writer. "Who do I make this to? Ross? Nice name."

Carl suddenly spins around, his red pate contrasting nicely with the blue denim shirt and smart corduroy slacks. Reloaded at last! He takes a few shots, then asks me to take one more picture of himself and the author.

"Come on back around here," says Jennifer. Carl hands me the camera and scampers around behind the table. He kneels down next to America's current queen of scandal, grinning like a fool. The author holds up her tell-all story, and gives the thumbs up. Carl offers up his thumb.

Double prints, please!



My Night with Guru Newt by Hank Rosenfeld

I was at the Rainbow Gathering near Mt. Shasta in northern California this summer, and after a couple of days, hitched back south toward San Francisco. In between rides by the Russian River, just outside the Bohemian Grove, I saw him. I recognized him immediately: the shining gold wedding ring, the Phil Donahue hair thing. The way he sat on a redwood stump like a king upon his throne.

Newt Gingrich: statesman, professor, mythemagician, novelist. And still in a dress. Obviously AWOL from the Grove.

Silently motioning me over, he spread a path of pine needles before him. I'd heard about his vow of silence. It was in all the papers. (Anything he did was in all the papers.) Every year there was something new at this infamous Republican conclave: 1995, the vow of silence; 1994, cigars. (Real trendsetters, those guys.) Newt had introduced this year's vow as a way of getting everybody there to shut up and listen to him.

Wow, I thought. This was like running into Charles Greening of America Reich or Alvin Future Shock Toffler up here in the '60s. Or Toffler in the '90s for that matter. Newt To Renew America Gingrich. People in Minnesota rose at dawn to drive 120 miles to see him. In Illinois, they bought his books two dozen at a time. Ten books a minute in Michigan!

"I sold 90 in ten minutes in Wisconsin last week," he said as if reading my mind, simultaneously breaking his vow of silence, and opening his Louis Vitton backpack. I wondered if he drove around in that dress.

Ignoring that thought, he pulled out a book. The front cover looked like one of those L. Ron Hubbard jobs, all fiery color with the author's name in raised, silvery letters — 1945 it said. The back cover had a picture of Newt Gingrich holding the front cover.

"Cool, huh?" he said. He opened the book for me, showing me how the words were printed in 16 pt. type so any Gingrichian could read it. Gingrichians had formed nationwide in the wake of his book tour. Mostly angry young white entertainment-nation corporate peer group people, they were reality hacking video-initiates who sat for his 18-hour training cassettes. Reagan Youth, really, resembling an adult version of the He-Man Woman-Hater's Club from the *Little Rascals*. Newt had them listening to audio books of World War II action novels, some dating back to the Civil War. This way, he said, he could teach history and ideas at the same time.

There were field trips to see the tree boas, rhinos and komodo dragons that Newt bought and donated to zoos. Eventually, he promised, there would be uncut footage from African safari films (his favorite films), and oral sex (his favorite sex). Opened up a little by the Rainbow Gathering, and depressed by the end of the Grateful Dead, I was ripe pickings for this new fan-club-cum-cult. But first, Newt insisted, read the book. What could I do? He offered to pay me to read it.

In his book, 1945, first thing I noticed was that Hitler is still alive. And here was a two-page map showing a bombing-run that Hitler planned for the "Clinton Engineer Works" in Knoxville.

"The name is merely a coincidence," Newt interjected, noticing I was still reading the inside flap.

"Hitler?"

"No, Clinton. But check it out, I've got an exotic Swedish mistress in the very first paragraph. A lot easier on the eyes than downloading porn into your pants — right, cyberguy?"

I don't know how he knew I was into computers. He just knew. I was just trying to take it all in before he interrupted me again. I read on. Sure enough, there was a big Swede sitting "athwart his chest." I'd have to look that word up later. Right now I wanted to know if there were any more of them, describing her bed and/or desk technique vis-à-vis the Chief of Staff character.

"I had to cut a lot," Newt said. "This is a family newspaper world. But don't worry, I saved the Nazi parts for Chapter One."

"Chapter One! Like an early warning?"

"Not a warning. A prophecy!"

A brief vow of silence while I packed my bags and prepared to push on.

"I'm kidding!" he reassured me. "I kid! I get frenetic and maniacally excited by everything I do. So I kid!"

He got up and did a little dance around the tree. This gave me the chance to flip ahead 300

pages in 1945. "To Be Continued . . ." said the bottom of the last page.

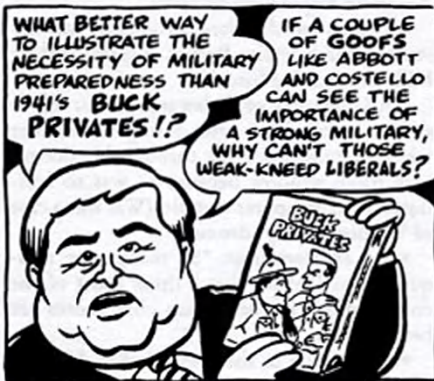
"Like *Batman*? I asked.

"*Batman* 1, 2, or 3?" Newt asked.

"*Batman* Wednesday, Thursday," I explained. "The TV show in the '60s. They always ended Wednesday's show with: 'To Be Continued . . .'"

Suddenly, his mood turned like the Dark Knight himself. He went into a rant about the '60s, shifting his shift, pouting and stamping his feet like the 4-year-old he always claimed to be in his heart. His high heels dug up red-wood mulch.

Oh, how he hated the counterculture and its contemptuous dismissal of middle class values! They were to blame! Horrible peer pressure in 1967 had forced him to marry his high school geometry teacher. The '50s were so much finer for him. Specifically, France in 1957. There, in that bathtub-down-the-hall, eating-off-a-Coleman-stove kind of rootless



military family milieu, caught between wanting to be a white Negro and a white mime, Newt first learned how successful leaders have to gamble everything.

"Like DeGaulle," he said.

"De who?" I asked.

"Never mind," he said.

In 1958 his family moved to Germany. Attending high school in Stuttgart, where "World War II History" was an elective course, Newt spent his summers as a gardener. Uprooting victory gardens one day, he made another discovery that changed his life forever.

"There was a song playing from across the garden, out of a hausfrau's haus. Schumann, or Schubert, somebody. Could have been Wagner, whatever, we were soon making love, and I decided to dedicate my life to the cause of freedom." For Newt, this meant moving back to the Georgia coast to work on the Nixon-Lodge campaign in 1960, learning how to stuff envelopes, ballots, and wild bikinis.

Now, from his stump, he pointed to the book again, excitedly.

"Rommel, Patton, MacArthur, Bull Donovan, Churchill, all the greats. They're all in there. You should read it."

"Which one of them is you?" I asked, knowing that characters are often the novelist camouflaged.

"Oh, they're all me," he said. "No longer will I be thought of as America's answer to Benny Hill."

He read me the 90-page battle scene that filled the middle of the book, his lipstick now parched as a Georgia peach in August. He underlined some other parts for me with his famous blue felt-tipped pen. On page 31, I read, "Personally he couldn't care less about the camps, but he wasn't about to admit that aloud to anybody . . ." And later something about "New York Jewish financiers, who are the true enemies."

He sure had a way of cutting to the race, I thought, repacking my bags.

"That one's actually lifted from Pat Robertson's book," he quickly admitted. "But he's no writer."

I guess amateurs spread the rumors, and professionals stamp them indelibly, but it was time for my jack-boot-heels to be wandering. I knew he had to return to the Grove anyway, to rehearse a silent mimed version of that Scottish play which he was writing/directing/starring. He told me to look up some Gingrichians when I got back to town. They met in the East Bay, skinheads who greeted each other with: "Sieg heil, dude." Newt was teaching them to read by paying them to shut up. Ever the optimist!

He pulled another book from the backpack before I left. I was wondering how a guy could write two books when nobody has time to read anything but e-mail anymore? Then he pulled out another \$24 book! This one was full of glossy photographs of him and the Revolution. Who was the bigger showman, Newt or his publisher Rupert Murdoch?

"I'm a shaman, not a showman," he said.

He pitched his now-famous bestselling prophecy in 25 words or less. (I had my thumb out by now, my sandals facing south.) More celestial than Celestine, a Contract to the Cosmos, no less. No breezy sonnets to the Armageddon from *this* guru. Something about "Space Tourism" and how by 2020, honeymooners in space will be the vogue. "Imagine weightlessness and its effects and you'll understand some of the attractions," he said, I believe quoting directly. Pretty sexy stuff. He was taking his dress off over his head, declaring: "Renewal or decay! This is the choice!" when I hit the road at last.

The guru had spoken. I remembered Ken Kesey once said that it was important to know which buttons to turn off, and then you stand back and watch it all crumble. Renewal and decay.

When I got back to the city, I looked for a copy of the books at Borders. Borders has free pretzels. The bookstore was sold out, but they did have a new parody there by Henry Beard and Chris Cerf called *The Renewing of America*, so I bought that.

MEDIA FREAK



Just In Case You Missed This One

From a Reuters dispatch:

"Former President George Bush nearly drowned earlier this month [July] when he fell into a peat bog during a fishing trip in Canada. Bush was taking a walk through the woods in Newfoundland when he sank up to his armpits in the bog. He was freed by Secret Service and Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers, who struggled for several minutes before they were able to pull him out."

The Masturbation Blues

The *National Catholic Reporter* has labeled a special vibrating machine a "major medical breakthrough" because it is the vehicle for a "moral alternative to masturbation." The Church considers masturbation to be a sin and therefore an inappropriate way to gather

sperm for medical use, but the Vatican has approved this vibrating machine. It attaches to the testicles in order to obtain the release of sperm which can then be caught in a receptacle. The University of the Sacred Heart in Rome surveyed 17 men on whom the machine had been used, and concluded: "Components that constitute the masturbation act would seem to be absent [such as] direct stimulation of the genital organ [and any] erotic feelings."

Filler Items

- Fallout from the Simpson trial: a fast-selling item on the streets of Tijuana is the Rosa Lopez brand condom.

- Attorneys for Philip Morris convinced American Express to give them access to ABC reporters' credit-card receipts in an attempt to track down confidential sources. To protest that unprecedented action, investigative journalists across the nation cut up their American Express credit cards.

- Theater trend: *Sylvia*, a romantic comedy starring Sarah Jessica Parker, is sponsored by Milk-Bone, a dog biscuit.

- A University of Delaware student fell 13 stories to his death after losing his balance when he punched a fist through his dormitory room window because he was so frustrated with computer trouble. (Was this a case of Windows 95 Syndrome?)

- An Internet user: "So many men masquerade as females that I think most of the conversations in the lesbian chat rooms are between men."

- Correction in the *New Yorker*: "A mistake made by a transcription service mangled a quotation from William Bennett in Michael Kelly's July 17th Letter from Washington. In

criticizing the political views of Patrick Buchanan, Mr. Bennett said 'it's a real us-and-them kind of thing,' not, as we reported, 'it's a real S&M kind of thing.'"

- Among the souvenirs on sale at the Christian Coalition conference: the Precious Feet Baby, a life-sized doll of a 12-week-old fetus, four for \$6.95 each or 100 for \$4.50 each.

- Gossip in the publishing industry: John F. Kennedy Jr. was talked out of an idea for the first cover of his new political magazine, *George* — a photo of Barbra Streisand with a dark smudge on her nose, accompanied by the headline, "Brown-Nosing in Washington."

- Jay Leno has written jokes for both Bill Clinton and Bob Dole.

- The Unabomber sent his 35,000-word treatise to the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, promising that if it was published he would stop mailing home-made bombs, but he proved to be a serial terrorist with high moral standards, declaring that if the less respectable *Penthouse* magazine published his manifesto, he reserved the right to make one more such killing.

- Claremont, California police have been harassing the owner of Hemp-Shak, charging copyright violation by a T-shirt that the store sells. On the chest, it says: "D.A.R.E. — I turned in my parents and all I got was this stupid T-shirt."

- That leg found in the ruins of the bombed Federal Building in Oklahoma City was first determined to have belonged to a white man — then, on further inspection, to a black woman. There is now rumored evidence that the leg was planted in the rubble by Detective Mark Fuhrman.



Feigning Innocence

In Hong Kong, the *South China Morning Post* dropped a popular daily comic strip by Larry Feign. The editor blamed budgetary reasons for the decision, but critics said that termination of the strip was politically motivated, and predicted self-censorship on the way to China's takeover from England in 1997. Hong Kong's confidence in its future under Chinese rule is weak, and local journalists have already been censoring themselves.

The announcement that the strip would be dropped came at the end of a week when Chinese officials were in Hong Kong to reassure residents that their economic and political freedoms would continue. The theme of the strip during that week dealt with allegations of Chinese organ transplants from executed political prisoners.

The owner of the *South China Morning Post*, Robert Kuok, a Malaysian tycoon with billions invested in the mainland and close

links to Beijing, bought the paper in 1993 from Rupert Murdoch, who admitted selling it to placate Beijing and protect his satellite TV interests in China.

The paper now has a profit margin of 52%. When the editor told Larry Feign that dropping his strip was a money-saving measure, the artist offered to take a pay cut. When he was turned down, he offered to finish out the month for free, but the editor refused again.

— Maggie Farley