

Chronicles 3 The Cosmic Cabdriver

A beeper message for personal cab customers

Like knights of old, the drivers of 267 charge through the valley in their shining yellow armor, rescuing weary travelers from de pain of de feet, and delighting the delicate derrierres of damsels with our soft sheepskin seats. Speak a message at the tone,

including name, address, and phone. We'll respond ASAP; if we're on a call, wait till we're free.

Thanks for beeping our beeper-- for you, our rates are cheaper.

(BEEP)

Curiously Yellow

Yellow cabs are not simply yellow. There is a little green and a little red pigment in the paint; it's a deeper, darker yellow. Even without the lettering and top-sign, it is recognizable as Yellow-Cab yellow.

Michael had worked inside Yellow Cab of Kansas City, learning a lot about the business, but actually driving one is a different experience entirely. Unlike in Kansas City, where about half the drivers were on commission, and the rest leased the cab, all the Phoenix drivers leased, considered independent contractors. The lease was for 12 or 24 hours. The driver made what was left over after paying lease and buying gas. It was possible to do well, break even, or lose money on a shift.

Taxicabs had been deregulated a few years before. Republican legislators like to do that. There was no limit on the number of cabs that could operate, so competition was at a maximum. Yellow, which also owned Checker, was the largest company, but smaller cheaper-rate companies like Ace, and independent owner-operators were in the mix.

Michael's knowledge of the metropolitan area was limited, but he soon found that the best way to learn it was to drive a cab, carrying a map and a street-guide, a booklet that lists the hundred-block number for every street.

When not actually picking up and dropping off, a driver often has to park and wait for the next call. It's a good opportunity to read a book. Michael also started drawing on his trip sheet, the blank paper used to write addresses, drop points, and keep track of fares collected. He had never been an artist, but with practice he learned to draw cartoons at the top of each sheet. Sometimes they were humorous, usually risque. Sometimes they just announced the date and cab number. Many of the are scanned and posted online at MyFriendlyUniverse.com/tsheet/tsheet.htm.

To begin with, Michael would go to Yellow Cab and lease one from the company, often a different car each shift, some better than others. There were also Yellow owner-operators, some of whom had several to lease to drivers. They were usually nicer and better maintained. Ed Weske was one of the owner operators, with an office in Glendale, on the west side of Phoenix. Soon after Michael started driving for him, he learned that Ed was a "graduate" of Brown

Schools, where Michael worked in Austin. Ed was easy to get along with, and the cars were nicer to drive. By November of 1983 he was driving 526, a full-sized Chrysler.

On November 15, 1984, Jill enlisted in the Army. This was devastating. It seemed a betrayal of everything both of them had believed in. She was trying to prove something to herself. It turned out badly.

A Cab Story

A cab driver (not 'cabbie', please) is often told things that a priest, analyst, or friend would never hear. Most of the time the information is isolated; connected to nothing else the driver might know...but not always.

A plump girl of exactly 29 (it was her birthday) got in my cab at the Motel 6.

“Nineteenth and Dunlap, please.”

I headed that way. *“Do you know where Frankie's is?”* she asked.

Of all the bars in Phoenix, I know where Frankie's is best; it's the bar I go to. But I'd never seen her there. She asked me if I'd ever been there; I said *“yes.”*

She asked if I knew Lee, the owner, and I said I did. It was he who she was going there to see. She knew him years before, but he kicked her out, she said. Now he'd taken her to bed again, so they were *back together*. She said, *“He asked me to put his penis in my mouth, but I wouldn't.”*

So I learned more than I ever wanted to know about the sex life of the owner of my favorite bar and a fat girl celebrating her birthday.

I dropped her in front of Frankie's and drove on, ready for my next trip.

[A few years later, Frankie's closed, and the building it was in disappeared. Where it once stood became a parking lot for the Taco Bell next door.

Wednesday, May 23, 1984

'I now lived within a fire of unsatisfied longing...I saw the beloved apparition of my dream...I called it my mother....I called it my beloved, and had a premonition of its ripe all-fulfilling kiss...'

-Herman Hesse, Abraxas

Michael wrote:

I did not realize until reading Hesse again how much I have sought the same ideal. I seek the unity of male and female, spiritual and sensual. I love a woman who is a lover to both woman and man, who is both angel and devil, both pure light and searing fire, both old and wise and childlike and foolish.

She is not the goddess, but she is its analogue, its fleshed symbol. And the unity of myself and her is more than that of an ordinary man and woman. We each are half a divinity and half a worshipper at the same time. United, we take part in the creation of a new universe each day.

May 31, 1984

The trip to L.A. was certainly a mixed bag, or a mixed blessing. A lot of good things and feelings came from it. Sleeping in Venice, walking on the beach together, seeing old friends...

And then, as could perhaps be expected, she pulled away. Lots of reasons, perhaps, for that: tattoo stress; fear of feeling too much...without discussion, I could tell that Jackie's invitation didn't go over well because it was to both of us, as a couple. So much for the dream of finding a truly bisexual woman we both could love. That would have been a wonderful opportunity for us, but Jill's jealousy, which went both ways, I'm sure, would not allow it.

Why does she consistently reject everything good and decent around her? Can't she see that there are true friends who want to help, who would be valuable to listen to, like Terry and Pat? When someone like that comes up with a criticism, the thing to do is ask questions, learn more about what may be wrong-- form a basis for understanding the opinion before rejecting and being defensive about it.

Tattoo artist: Cliff Raven 8418 Sunset Blvd. 650-6530

July, 1985

A Motorcycle Trip

Beginning odometer: 32444

Michael had to stop in Mesa to replace a manifold clamp: \$1 from Unauthorized Harley, plus 3 pennies to make it fit right. So far, so good. He thought, *"I can tell my ass will be the tiredest part of me, or else it'll get tough and I won't feel it."*

The bola-bags worked fine for water, except they didn't keep it cool. Perhaps wetting the outside would help.

Superior, AZ

Crossing the first mountains past the Highway 60-89 junction, ahead, sunlit from the west, was a rocky mountain that, from a distance, looked like a fantasy, set off beautifully among the surrounding hills. The highway ran almost to the mountain, then around it to the east, descending into a valley. Michael saw the rain ahead, smelled it, felt the humid gusts. He kept riding, down and into the valley of the rain, and the air grew darker, more restless. At the bottom of the valley, entering Superior, the rain hit. He looked for the nearest bar, and found it. It even had an overhanging roof to shelter the bike. A Mexican bar. People were friendly to the stranger stopping to get out of the rain.

Silly Mountain, which he passed a while back, made him smile. There must be a story behind it.

When the rain stopped, he rode on, but ran into sprinkles that made him cold enough to dig out his leather jacket. The droplets still smashed into his face at 50 mph, stinging. Soon the rain let up a little as he hit Miami and Globe, a pair of twin cities. Both owe their existence to copper mining. Half the businesses in them have 'Copper' in their names. The mountain scenery was pleasant.

He stopped at McDonald's in Globe for a burger and coffee as it began to sprinkle. The sprinkling continued, so he resolved to find a bar and drink to dry weather. A teenager outside McDonald's asked Michael to get him a 6-pack, so they met at circle-K where he procured some Michelob Dark for the boy and his 2 friends.

Then he went to a bar called Bronco's, tended by the friendly owner, but frequented by almost nobody. Michael asked when the people came in; after all, it was Saturday night. He said it would be packed by 9:00. It wasn't. An old trucker named Cowboy bought Michael a beer and said "Don't be a trucker. There's no future in it.." Would he do it again if he had it to do over again? He said, "Definitely. I love it. There's good money in it, but no future."

Michael tried the Drift Inn, which was supposed to be the biker bar of Globe. No bikers were there. There was a blonde. When Michael asked her how she was, she replied, 'Fucked up.' She probably was. There was a cute curly brunette, but she left. By this time, though the rain had stopped, it was dark. Michael thought he might allow himself to be seduced by some local lovely lass, who, he hoped, would have her own place. He tried the Shamrock, where, it was said, everyone was. Again he met the curly one, talked a bit, and just when things seemed promising, she said "Be right back", and she wasn't. So at closing time, he headed on up the road. Alas and alack, the lack of a lass...and a bed. But there was a sleeping spot, behind a tree just off the road.

6:00 am

Show Low, Arizona. Odometer 32,660. 3.4 gallons. 63 mpg.

Almost as soon as he started out, it started raining again. Cold and wet; he made it to Show Low, and put on dry jeans and moccasins at the first coffee shop. He was still shivering half an hour later after several cups of coffee. The sun came out, and his boots, jacket, and bandanas were drying in the sun. Soon he got back on the road.

It was a clear run from Show Low to Springersville, though a few drops hit at the Springersville city limits. He stopped at a coffee shop for coffee and food, where the waitress had beautiful eyes. He wanted to tell her so, but somehow couldn't work it in. Sometimes we think about much more than we say or do, and regret it later. She wore a wedding ring, but he could have told her anyway. She had asked, "Is there only one of you?" That was an interesting question.

Michael bought some new vinyl gloves to replace his leaky wet ones, and stopped at a laundromat to dry his wet clothes. The rain wasn't too serious, so he rode on, past majestic rocky peaks and breathtaking canyon views. He would have enjoyed Salt River Canyon a lot more without the rain.

An Apache ranger said the landscape changes colors as the sun moves. The rangers were looking for a family believed lost while hiking on the White Mountain Apache reservation.

The Landscape Turns Female

East of Springerville are some green rolling hills and smooth grassy mountains. They are the Earth at its most female. Their curves are feminine, sensuous; almost erotic. Riding amid such landscape is almost like letting one's fingers search the lush curves of a woman's body. He crossed into New Mexico and the Continental Divide; there were a few brief splashes of rain, but not enough to get him soaked.

Pie Town, New Mexico

There's a cafe there that specializes in home made pies. It's owned and run by an oriental lady, very cheerful and chirpy. He ordered coffee and peach cream pie. He asked her if the pies were the ones that Pie Town was named after. She said, 'No, those pies were eaten 80 years ago--these pies are fresh!'

It was delicious, and there was a great view of the sunset and western landscape out the window. The lady gave him two apples and a couple of plastic garbage bags in case he had to sleep in the rain. It was getting dark and cold, so he hoped the next town, Datil (pronounced as in 'Dat'll be 98 cents plus tax'), would have a motel. Sleeping in the possible rain didn't appeal.

He entered Datil about 9:00 pm and almost missed the town--everything was dark. There was one dark building that said 'motel', but it was closed, and it was the only place in town. On to Magdalena.

June 29

Michael stopped under a tree on US 54 east of Vaughn New Mexico to see if it's going to rain or not. These trees afford some protection, and he could camp there if it didn't stop sprinkling. He stood back and looked at his bike parked between the trees, and thought "*I'm just as picturesque as the rest of my travel environment. I look at the quaint little villages I pass through, and the quaint villagers look at me passing.*"

He imagined himself sitting still on the Ratster, while the Earth turned beneath him, bringing the land ahead closer as the road passed beneath his wheels. He knew the real Earth didn't turn that direction, but the imaginary one did.

Magdalena should be ahead, and it was time to move on. He stopped to adjust the chain just outside Mesa, New Mexico, and discovered he wasn't on US 54 at all, but US 285, heading toward Roswell. He'd taken the wrong turn in Vaughn, and there had been no highway signs the whole way. He took state highway 20 north. He was running low on gas, but made it to Ft. Sumner on reserve.

Ft. Sumner. Odometer 33,126 miles. \$5.00 gas at \$1.20. 4.2 gallons 66 mpg.

June 30

Taking US 60 east, Michael arrived in Clovis, New Mexico that evening, and decided to try a local bar. He stopped outside the Copper Penny, a C&W dance joint. A police car pulled up next to him. The cop said, "Just thought we'd warn ya-- you're fixin' to go in a redneck place." Michael asked him if this was a violent town. He said, "No, but...stereotypes, you know." He wasn't sure what stereotype he appeared to be, but he decided to take the hint. The cop suggested a place called Boot Hill, It was also a country dance place, frequented by old couples, mainly. He had a beer and left.

The cop had also asked, "How many times you been run?" Michael looked at him questioningly.

"You know-- NCIC." (National Criminal Information Center).

"None in New Mexico."

"You're not going to Missouri, are you?"

'Why?'

He said he'd heard there was a big 'meet' there. The stereotype was revealed. There was no point trying to explain that not all Harley riders with long hair and a leather jacket belonged to outlaw motorcycle clubs, nor that this particular one was a hippy who liked bikes. He just said, "No, I'm going to Kansas."

Michael camped at a rest stop just west of Bovina, Texas. It wasn't bad, except for the damp canvas sleeping bag. He woke up to a warm sunny morning. He had breakfast at Billy-Bob's Drive-in in Bovina, They serve great french fries--leave the skins on, too. Delicious.

Alarming noises

Strange grinding, clattering noises. He pulled over. It was the generator trying to fall out. One of the bolts was too short. The other one, and some wire to support the weight, seemed to hold it, once it was re-tightened. He made a note to stop at the Harley dealer in Amarillo, to replace the bolt, and get some Harley oil. Good oil is hard to find. Some AMA group ought to look into ways of distributing Kendall 70-weight at 7-11's.

Lunch at the Grand Burger, which consisted of some crumbly hamburger on top of a layer of salad on a bun. Not grand at all. Now to find I-35 north out of Amarillo and see a lake.

Amarillo, Texas. Odometer 33,311.4 miles. 2.4 gallons

Heading north toward Kansas, there was supposed to be a big lake, but it wasn't visible from the road..

Liberal, Kansas

Ask most young people in a small town how they like it, and they'll say 'boring'. There ought to be a way to make life more interesting anywhere.

On the Oklahoma side, just before Liberal, there's an establishment called the B and D Social Club. Kinda makes you wonder.

A girl in Liberal said Liberal isn't very liberal. It's conservative. You'd think the name would do something. Maybe it makes them react the opposite. A sign says this is the 'Land of Aahs', with a picture of Dorothy and her dog tripping down the yellow brick road. In Liberal you can visit the Wizard of Oz museum and tour Dorothy's house. Probably not during a tornado warning, though.

Plains, Kansas. Odometer 33,519 miles. 2.9 gallons.

No More Rain

After getting soaked in Arizona, he missed major rain with uncanny accuracy. People would say you just missed a downpour or a storm. He woke up just east of Greensburg, Kansas, in a nice little rest stop. A sign pointed to Roxbury.

Breakfast in Haviland. Seems that some small-town cafes are becoming conscious of their own country image. Mason jars for water glasses-- now, a real country attitude would be to buy glasses, which are cheaper, and use the Mason jars for their intended purpose. Breakfast was good in form, but lacked substance. The biscuits were big and fluffy-looking, but were too light and crumbly. They needed more shortening or something. At least the waitress, a cute, well-fed country girl, believed in keeping coffee cups full.

Found Kendall 70 weight for the first time in Pratt, Kansas

Hutchinson, Kansas. Odometer 33696 miles 2.5 gallons 1252 miles so far

Hutchinson was the home of Gypsy Claar. Michael was stopping for a few days to spend some time with her.

August 6, 1985

On the road again. Council Groves, Kansas. Odometer: 34,136. Rainy weather, but not heavy. Cheese and bananas at the IGA, paid for with food stamps from Gypsy. Food on the road had been on a budget, and perhaps not too nutritious.

As he rode eastward, he thought about the visit, and about Gypsy. At his next stop, he wrote, "I should have waited till morning to leave, but somehow I felt it was the time not to stretch the goodbye out any farther...I don't know how long this goodbye will be for...I have a lot to think about concerning you and other parts of my life. I feel somewhat at loose ends. Neither person nor place ties me tightly. I am aware of being tempted to make an alliance with you. We would, after all, be of great help to one another. We have similar approaches to lifestyle. We're very compatible in lots of ways. Yet I am not sure that is enough. Perhaps because I am more guarded in my feelings than I used to be, perhaps because I am not yet sure who I am to be, I am not sure if I could return your love as freely as it is given. It will take time for me to figure that out. I know at least that you're a remarkable woman, and that I will always count you as a very good friend."

It might have been more practical to be traveling in a pickup truck instead of a motorcycle. When it rained. He got wet, and he couldn't carry anything extra. There were things in Hannibal and Austin that he'd like to collect. But that would have to be another time. This was an adventure; an experience; an impractical journey; a way to get in touch with people, not things; a way to learn about himself and others, not pick up scattered possessions. Perhaps he was testing himself. Was he as resourceful and independent as he thought? All things considered, he was glad he'd done it this way.

Just before Burlingame, Kansas, the wind started to blow so severely that he needed to seek shelter. Fortunately there was a tavern in the town, called the Swamp, frequented by pleasant, friendly types. If the town had any bikers, they might go there.

The storm was replete with sound and fury, so he sipped 3.2% beer until it abated. The road was wet and the air cool, but it was tolerable, and he made good time to Olathe, and a Denny's, there to plan his next move. Olathe is

20 miles from Kansas City, Kansas, and it was 1:45 am. Should he look for a motel, or keep drinking coffee at Denny's till early in the morning? He chose the coffee, so as to catch Kay before work in the morning.

Lee's Summit, Missouri

August 7, 1985. Odometer 34136

He was there to visit his son, Geoff. They played computer games, catch, and later went out to eat and see a movie. Geoff seemed very aware and understanding of the situation. It felt good to get to know him.

Independence, Missouri. Odometer 34323 miles. 1 gallon, August 8, 1985

Michael and his son rode the 200 miles from Lee's Summit to Hannibal. Geoff didn't complain, though His rear and legs were getting tired and sore, He didn't mention it until he was asked. They stopped every 50 miles or so, once to eat in Moberly. Geoff reminded Michael of himself at his age.

He wasn't sure how to entertain an estranged son, but decided he didn't need entertaining, or impressing, or teaching. He should just be himself.

Michael hadn't seen his old neighbors, Donnie and Mervin Sharkey for years. Mervin hadn't changed a bit--same mannerisms, same posed, superior-intellectual look, which, compared to his brother seemed almost effeminate, but which was offset by his robust farmer side. He had become a counselor at Hannibal Junior High. Donnie had grown a beard and grey hair, but he looked good, healthy and happy.

They aid Sandra Bush and Deborah Reigel had both been divorced 3 or so times each. Michael thought "Too bad they missed out on me." He thought of Carolyn, Phyllis, Yolanda, and Christine, and wondered what had happened to them.

Phyllis Cross was a year older; they had met in chemistry. Then came Carolyn Lugering, a pretty blonde with a dazzling smile. They dated for quite some time, followed by Yolanda and Christine.

Michael imagined a fantasy:

The throbbing Sportster stopped outside BJ's Bar in downtown Hannibal. The mysterious rider backed it to the curb and cut the engine. Hanging his goggles on the mirror, he entered, walked to the bar, and ordered a beer. Peering about the dim smoky barroom, he spotted her, at a table alone in the corner. In his smiling gaze, her eyes widened, her mouth opened in astonishment, and then that familiar dazzling smile lit up her face. He walked over and said, 'Hi, Carolyn.'

'Michael', she sighed, 'I could never forget your eyes.' He grinned. His eyes lowered to the gold chain that disappeared between the tops of her milky white breasts, then to her hands pressed upon her lap. Only the right one bore a ring. She whispered, 'Oh, Michael...I've missed you all these years.'

He took her hand and squeezed it tenderly, looking into her sky-blue eyes. 'Don't worry, beautiful. I'm here now.'

'Can you ever forgive me?' she whimpered, her wide eyes and moist lips telling him silently that she'd earn that forgiveness, and then some. Smiling again, like a woman imagining ecstasy, she purred, 'Please come home with me. I want you.'

The Step Mother

Michael's stepmother, Sue, did not seem happy about his visit, though he tried to make it a pleasant one. He sensed some hostility, perhaps from not being able to control him. She ordered Geoff around, too, not grandmotherly at all. Maybe she has a general feeling that life has given her a rotten deal. She'd always been a bit of a martyr, taking care of her mother till she was nearly 40; then, when she finally married my father, he died about a year later, leaving her with Michael and a pregnancy. That was bad luck indeed, but one can't use the status of a tragic heroine indefinitely That does not buy happiness nor does it buy control of others.

You can't pin your own happiness on your ability to control other people. She hadn't realized that. It isn't easy to learn that the behavior of those close to you might not follow your plan, and that should not be taken as a personal affront. We must learn that, and sometimes relearn it, or live in constant frustration and resentment. The Hannibal sojourn had gone on long enough.

August 14, 1985

Sue's behavior was unexpected. Michael felt unappreciated. He traveled hundreds of extra miles to spend a week visiting her. She accused him of not caring about her.

She was judging by appearance, it seemed. His hair is long, and he rides a motorcycle. That was enough.

She told at length the little story about how his sister Pat was so hurt because Brian, who had been like a grandfather to her, had promised her his ring, and just before he died he changed his mind and gave it to his niece. Not the monetary value, but the broken promise was the hurtful thing.

After 30 years of promising, "I've divided everything equally between you two kids, because I love you both the same," she had changed her mind about that. Michael didn't begrudge Pat anything. After all, she was her natural child, and he was the adopted orphan that came as a package deal with his father. But she was the only mother he had known. He had respected her for her better qualities. Now, he thought, he would have to respect the memory of them instead.

No child asks for his situation. He or she must just do as well as possible with the reality of it. Michael had to accept a lot that he didn't like for 18 years, and tried, usually successfully, to believe the intent was loving and kind.

He thought, "*When I live my own life, and build my own values, to find love and spirituality in my own way, then I am not accepted by my own parental figure. Well, who says life is fair?*"

He had planned, after returning to Phoenix, to save about \$100 and send it to her so she could have something extra she wanted, and to have a nice 8 x 10 picture done of himself, framed to hang on her wall. But after this, she'd probably misinterpret the money, and she probably wouldn't hang the picture.

On to Austin

It was obviously time to leave Hannibal. He felt restless; anxious to get on to the next part: Austin. . What could happen there? Can something be put back together there that couldn't elsewhere? He was thinking of Jill.

When you've painted yourself into a corner, the only thing holding you there is your unwillingness to get footprints on the floor and paint on your shoes.

Jill had asked for his help, and he was willing to try, knowing not to have any expectations. In the past, he had expected too much, making one woman all women. Making her a goddess. When love becomes too serious, fun suffers.

August 15, 1985

Monroe City, Missouri. Odometer 34551. 3.8 gallons

August 16

Lewisburg, Kansas. Odometer 34795. 3.8 gallons

Miami, Oklahoma. Odometer 34942. 2.0 gallons

He stopped to sleep at Rocky Point, north of Muskogee, Oklahoma. It cost \$6.00 to get in the park, but the light show, the sky full of stars, was free.

The day was going slowly; he didn't get started till 1:00 pm, and didn't feel too well in the heat, perhaps from not eating enough. The bike seemed tired, too, but it kept going.

August 17, 1985

McAllister, Oklahoma. Odometer 35125. 2.7 gallons

The bike stopped with a series of backfires in the middle of Nowhere, Oklahoma. The battery was dead, too. He thought he had found the charging problem, but still couldn't get it push-started. Night fell, so he slept just off the side of the road in a little clearing. He woke, cleaned the plugs, and started holding up a sign that said 'Need Jump'.

A couple of people stopped who didn't have cables. Finally a cowboy in a pickup truck stopped and tried to jump it. It turned over, but wouldn't run. With considerable work, they got it in the back of his truck and took it to Atoka, about 15 miles down the road, to a truck stop. He ate there, and investigated further on the bike, opening the ignition module cover and found the electronic distributor had been trying to grind itself up. Broken bolt, shear pin, and springs. No Harley shop in Atoka. No auto parts store open on Sunday. Pizza Inn sold no beer on Sunday. He started walking. It was hot and humid. At a store along the way, he was told the bars weren't open either on Sunday. He was, considering a motel; the clerk, with a worried look, said \$18.00. Money was tight. He walked on..

Then he was rescued by a woman who drove by. She said he could crash at her place. She liked Harleys, and didn't like to see anyone stranded in Atoka. Just a nice person, and more trusting than is probably good for her. Fixed him steak for dinner. Sometimes, it IS a friendly universe, When he leaned over the bike in the sun, his crystal pendant projected the rainbow on the tank. There are good people in all places, usually when you least expect them. Thank you, Vivian Layton.

August 19, 1985

On the Road Again? Off the road again.

Just outside Atoka his carefully improvised repair took a dump. He was sorting out the pieces, and an old pickup with a Harley sticker pulled up. Terry, a Harley rider from Durant, had the parts he needed. However, he had to wait while Terry fixed a couple of refrigerators, his line of work. Actually, he does anything that will make a buck, He charged \$25 for the part, which was a fair price. By flashing the generator, they even got that to charge

It only made it 50 miles and quit again, this time for unknown reasons. No more charge, either. He got a jump from a guy who'd also jumped him in Atoka on the way out. He followed into Dennison, the bike running on one cylinder. At American Cycles in Sherman, they found it was only an oil-fouled plug that refused to start firing. Replaced by a new one, it ran fine. The generator stopped charging again. A new regulator is too expensive, so he got full charge and pressed on. The proprietor of American Cycles, like most Harley people, had been helpful and fair.

Across the street there was a venitian blind shop called Blind Alley.

Sherman, Texas. Odometer 35230. 2.5 gallons.

Waco, Texas. Odometer 35378. 1.6 gallons.

August 20, 1985

Finally, Austin. And Jill was waiting at Glenda's like she did 6 years ago when she had come to Austin for the same reason. This time it's more serious, though, and more vital that she come here to stay for a while.

Bob Wayman was still a friend, and a helpful one. He had left some things, most importantly old notebooks he had written in. He thought he'd like to get a truck, gather his belongings, and end up in Austin.

Things seemed to have improved for Bob, too. Julie, was far better for him than Robin, and the complication of his custody struggle over his daughter was resolved. He seemed more relaxed, more cheerful; more free. It was a pleasurable visit, seeing old friends--Bruce, David, Kelly, and Sue... Time to head for Phoenix. Back to work.

August 27, 1985

Austin, Texas. Odometer 35673. 3.7 gallons.

Sonora, Texas. Odometer 35878. 2.9 gallons.

Was this trip worth it? For all its troubles there were some real good times, some learning, and experiences not to forget.

Someone in a bar in Sonora offered to let him crash in a trailer later, if he wanted to stick around and have a few beers. It was too early, though. He continued to a rest stop just east of Fort Stockton, Texas, where he slept.

Ft. Stockton, Texas. Odometer 36035. 2.7 gallons.

He was questioned by a cashier on the food stamps, asking for an ID, and refused to accept his \$10 stamp. He said "Well, I guess I can't afford to eat, then." The cashier GAVE him the food.

El Paso, Texas. Odometer 36283. 3.7 gallons. 66 mpg

August 28, 1985

Evening at the Texas-New Mexico border. Odometer 36312 miles. Nice view from this rest stop, up the side of a hill. You can probably see Mexico from there, as well as Texas and New Mexico. El Paso was like Phoenix, except more Mexican. Outside a Safeway two young girls were taking a picture of the bike. They asked Michael if it was his; they wanted to take his picture beside the bike.

He asked them how El Paso was. They said 'Slow'. Too bad they were too young. He got the battery charged at a small Mexican garage. No charge for the charge-- that was nice.

August 29, 1985

Wilcox, Arizona. Odometer 36548. 3.6 gallons.

The last day's travel was about 460 miles. It's 1094 miles from Austin to Phoenix. From Phoenix to Hutchinson, Kansas is 1253 miles. In 15 days actually on the road, he had averaged 288.2 miles per day, a total of 4323 miles altogether. He arrived home about 8:00 pm on August 29.

Michael wrote: *"This entire chronicle was written in a tiny notebook that fit in the pocket of my leather jacket, while I was traveling. As I re-read it and transcribe it 19 years later, I am keenly aware of how much I needed that trip then. I like to think the universe needed me to take it, too."*

Riding a motorcycle is like living, only more so.

It doesn't matter whether it rains, whether you have breakdowns, where you go, or why you're going there. It's what you do with the experience that counts. And that comes from inside you.

October 30, 2005:

Twenty years later, Vivian of Atoka OK saw this story and emailed. Coincidences happen, it would seem.

~~captain rat.

LIKE A VIRGIN

This author has concluded, while reading 'Dhalgren' by Samuel Delaney, and a book about Salvador Dali, that his concern with conventional form in writing and his doubts about the value of his work are counterproductive. Most people will be delighted with my writing. My fear of making my maiden offering to the literary gods is unfounded.

That allusion, by the way, explains why, in the old religions, virgins were often sacrificed. It was not because they were pure, it was because something needed to be done to help the inexperienced overcome their inertia; the threat of sacrifice provided the incentive to risk the unknown. It was surely effective, and those who would condemn the practice as barbaric should remember that any young woman who could not get herself inoculated against ceremonial early death would be unusually stupid or seriously maladjusted.

I, as a male, never feared the experience of sex, but as a writer, I can relate to fearing the act of exposing my creative organ to the prodding of the public mind. Yet, as I would have women impale themselves on my waiting erection, I must set the example by opening my literary legs to air the moist intricate folds between.

--cosmicrat

October 24, 1986

WINSOME, LOSE SOME

A True Cabdriver's Tale

She was pretty, but what I noticed most was her smile as she got in my cab at the bingo parlor. It was not that her smile was dazzling, almost luminous, although it was, but that it seemed permanent and real, not just a smile flashed at will for its effect on others.

She gave me her address, and we crept forward through the post-bingo traffic. She smiled on.

'Did you win tonight?' I asked. 'Oh, I won a little.' 'I figured you didn't lose, the way you're smiling.' We pulled into her driveway, and, still smiling broadly, she handed me a ten for a \$3.00 fare. 'Keep this', she said. 'I won \$600 tonight.'

My next fare was at a bar, a father and son, both happily drunk. Pops, as he called himself, was a rugged-looking feisty old fellow with long white hair and a beard.

We stopped at a store for a 6-pack. When the son went in for the beer, Pops opened his shirt and showed me a scar on

his belly.

'They cut me open', he said. 'They say I've got cancer, and I'm gonna die before Christmas. Do you know how it feels to know when you're gonna die?'

I shook my head.

'Everybody knows they're gonna die...but to know it's coming that soon-- that's like being sentenced to the electric chair. I love livin'. I WANT TO KEEP LIVIN'...but they tell me I can't.' There was no sob nor whine in the old man's voice. There was strength and courage along with sorrow.

His son came back with the beer. As he got in, he asked, 'Did he tell you he was dyin'? My old man ain't never gonna die! Not as long as he keeps partyin' with me!'

SWING SHOW

I drove Misty to and from work frequently for several years. She was one of the least maladjusted topless dancers I ever met. She was still amused and delighted that men would spend money to watch her take off her clothes. She lacked the jaded disdain for her patrons that some dancers develop. Misty once recalled noticing that the boys in the playground would stand in front of the swings, hoping for a peek at prepubescent panties when her skirt blew in the breeze. A reasonable girl even then, she would oblige them. Strip tease shows, in their various forms, are only adult versions of that eternal childhood pastime.

IT'S THE SMALL TALES

We in public service, cabdrivers, waitpersons, dancers, and escorts among others, all occasionally get unique moments of insight into the mind and society. It is often these, not stories of extreme drama, that we remember and sometimes retell.

This one was told to me by an out-call escort as I drove her home from an assignment.

'Shhh...we don't want to wake Mother.' The speaker might have been a grandfather himself, if he'd ever impregnated a woman. He wore thick glasses that made his eyes inhumanly large. Random wisps of wild hair sprouted from his otherwise bald head.

As he led her silently to his study, she could hear 'mother' snoring loudly behind a closed bedroom door.

He handed the pretty call-girl a hundred dollars. She counted

the crisp twenties and put them away. 'You're not promiscuous, are you?' he asked earnestly.

RHYME AND REASON

Some words are easier to rhyme than others. My second ex-wife Jill once challenged me to rhyme the word 'diaphragm'. The result follows:

*The singing coach said, 'Higher, Fran;
You need to sing from your diaphragm!'
So Fran took this advice to heart,
And released a melodious pussy fart.*

A NEW LISA ON LIFE

'My name's Lisa Anne', announced the pretty blonde with the low-cut halter-top and the fur jacket. 'Sleazeanne?' That's what I thought she said. She blushed and giggled. 'Great,' I thought, 'A call-girl with a sense of humor.' I liked her immediately. I started my cab. 'Where to?' She told me. She also told me she was an escort, but I'd already guessed that. She's from Hollywood, and she has a Hollywood concept of how a call-girl looks. She has a mischievous, sexy grin that shows she enjoys the theater of it all. She'll flash her tits at convenience store clerks. We stopped at a hotel to try to change a hundred. 'Drive past these guards', she said. 'I want to flash them some tit.' 'No, you'll get me in trouble.' She pulled down the halter-top as I drove. 'Now, would that get anyone in trouble?'

I was looking at truly beautiful breasts. She had tweaked her nipples, and they were magnificently erect. Indeed, they could get someone in trouble very easily under some circumstances-- the sort of trouble Helen of Troy or Cleopatra might cause. I would have risked that for some time to caress them, and explore the rest of her.

But Lisa Anne is not all glitter and tease. She's a vulnerable woman who loves and needs and gets sad when she loses at love. As much as it may delight her to be worth \$110 an hour, she does not mistake this for true respect and affection. Perhaps those who are quick to stereotype would not see this, and would admit no feeling beyond lust. As usual, such people miss a lot.

A LOVE POEM

*Soft mountainous breasts
Dark pink proud nipples
Begging to be sucked
Creamy inner thighs
Yearn for tender kiss
Tongue tease behind knees
Fingers grasp her round
Behind; squeeze, massage.
Pause to nibble at
The shallow hollow
Where thigh meets pelvis
Then nose explores soft
Fragrant down. Tongue seeks
The sweet secret source
Tasting gods' nectar.
Thighs part; reveal pink
Petals, lovely; moist.
Sip from the fountain
Of youth; give squirming
Timeless ecstasy.
At last, we kiss; tastes
Herself as hardness
And softness unite.
--cosmic rat -1984*

MAN AND MOUNT

*The rapport we have with our machines is often such that,
when our vehicle's engine is straining under a heavy load, we
feel that strain, project our strength into it and feel weary from
the effort.
A good smooth power in our motors makes us feel personally
strong, athletic; muscular. That a man and his mount might
seem to read one another's mind might be easily imagined.
Riders of machines seem to share emotions with them; to
trade egos.*

*Wisdom consists of avoiding stupidity most of the time.
-----unknown*

TRIADS

It is the nature of the human spirit not to merely accept things as they are, but to improve them. It is this spirit that is at the heart of technological, scientific, and social progress. Amazing improvements have been made in many areas.

Some advances, especially in the social field, are more difficult to make. They require more than ideas, thought, and planning: they need numbers of people with open minds, not just the genius and imagination of those who propose them, but openness of mind and courage of a significant number of people who must risk social disapproval to enjoy their benefits and pave the way for others.

The popularization of one particular socio-sexual practice would add as much the enjoyment of domestic life and to the social and economic efficiency as electrical power has to entertainment.

This practice is the menage a trois, a three-way sexual and marital union. This is not a new concept, but it is still thought of as a kinky and perhaps decadent special situation. Yet its advantages are such that it should be the norm, or at least a major alternative.

One of the problems with couples is often the lack of variety. Over time, this can take the edge off of the excitement and lead to marital problems.

Consider the sexual mathematics: A=Adam B=Beth C=Cecilia. The possibilities with a couple are limited to AB. But simply adding one to the equation results in the possibilities of AB AC BC ABC ACB BAC; not twice but 6 times the variety.

Besides greatly alleviating sexual boredom, this system would provide significant economic advantages. With three incomes, the triad could enjoy greater prosperity than a couple. If they have children, they could still have two incomes, leaving the third to full-time parenting. This would prevent the lack of supervision that often results in behavioral and emotional problems in children of working parents.

Once adjustments are made to embrace the cooperative attitude needed, triads would be much more stable. Just as the triangle adds stability to physical structures, the triad can better withstand physical or emotional problems of any one of its members.

Because there is a natural bisexuality in most women, although it may not be realized until inhibitions are lowered, it is likely that more triads will be one man and two women. Bisexual men may prefer the reverse, and those who are

exclusively homosexual could have all three the same sex. Since there is a higher risk to casual sex at the present time, the triad would provide a higher degree of variety without the chance of disease from an unknown partner. At present, the man who desires a triad is perceived by some as wanting more than his just desserts. This attitude comes from the 'women as property' viewpoint. When monogamy was declared to be the legal norm, it was in fact a authoritarian edict, just as it would be if it were ordered that all citizens could only own 40 acres and one house. It ignores the fact that three people can relate to one another as sexual and social equals, and that the man does not 'own' the women. It is to our advantage as a viable civilization that our social systems be flexible and adaptable to economic conditions and human needs.

Crickett

*A rare warm wind
From Colorado blew in;
Took my tower like a storm
Weather she comes and
Whither she goes
She's sure done me no harm
Mounting peaks
For weeks and weeks
Make a sensuous climate
And I would continue
Along this venue
If I could only rhyme it.
-- June 1987*

The first thing I noticed about Crickett was her legs: long, lush, smooth and brown below short cutoffs. She was sitting quietly at the corner of the bar, and I didn't talk to her that time. The next time, when I did, it was an easy conversation, the kind you fall into when no one is trying to impress anyone. She had silky long black hair, brown eyes, and an incredibly creamy complexion slightly tanner than mine. It didn't occur to me at first that she was a Native American, but her features were classically that, with a slightly oriental flavor to her eyes. She was tall, with a strong healthy body. She told me stories of Colorado, of Breckenridge and Telluride, of growing up adopted, of a mate a child, money and bad habits she'd had and lost, and the stories and their telling showed her to be sensitive and caring, strong and resilient in spirit as she was in her body. There was something about her that made me want to be her friend as well as her lover. She had a good soul. She told me when I met her she was headed on to California

soon, so I was not surprised when she told me she was flying away June 25th. I could have kept her with me a lot longer if she'd not gone, but I didn't complain. She needed to go and find out what waited there. Maybe she'll be back.

*And every day at 4:05
My wristwatch comes alive.
Peep-peep; peep-peep until
I stifle its electronic bell.
Time to pick up Crickett again
Though she's been gone the last of June.*

Monday, July 20, 1987

I had been wanting to see Grace again for a while, but there was Crickett, and then Gypsy's long visit. Finally I called her, and we went out to eat, then back to her place.

Grace is a lady with a lot of class. She has every reason to be depressed, angry at the world, or simply to whine and complain...and she doesn't. She has health problems that cause pain much of the time. On top of that she has an old man who beats her up. Any man who hits a woman is a detestable coward; a poor excuse for a human being, but to beat on a woman like Grace is beyond my imagination of the depths of depravity. Yet she can smile, laugh, have a good time; be a sensuous lover. She has accepted her health problems. She does no drugs except pot, and hardly drinks at all. I admire her strength of character, and I consider myself privileged to know her; to have spent a wonderful night with her. I hope I shall again.

Tuesday, July 21

I met Jill and John at the Crazy Horse for some beers. Though I still love Jill, I've accepted that it's over, and I want her to be happy. John seems a decent guy, and seems to be protective and perhaps good for her.

Later at Frankie's, I got seduced by Renee', who knew me because she used to dance at Grand Central Station with Jill. I'm just filling in for the frustrated lady's old man, who is in jail. I think I did a good job. Never could resist a damsel in distress.

With all this, I almost didn't want to leave Phoenix...but only

almost. This vacation is a year overdue.

A ROAD TRIP

It was time to travel again, this time not on the Ratster, but on 4 wheels in a Mazda GLC, an economical little 4-cylinder 5-speed hatchback given to me by Jill.

The Journey Begins

July 22, 1987 14:47: odometer 74509

I filled up at the Exxon at I-17 and Dunlap and headed south on I-17 to I-10 east toward Tucson

This could get monotonous. Do I really want to take I-10 all the way to almost San Antonio? It's the most logical route, but rather dull. However, it's unfair to compare a trip like this to the motorcycle trip of 2 years ago. This is a good deal more comfortable, if somewhat lacking in style and the sheer pleasure of riding. So far the Mazda is performing well. On to El Paso.

Sign: DEFACING ROCKS UNLAWFUL

July 22, 20:30

Lordsburg, New Mexico mile 74793 8 gallons, \$8.20, 35.3 mpg
I called my friend Bob in Austin. Julie answered, and assured me they would be there when I got to Austin.

By 20:50 I was in Las Cruces, NM: odometer 74912, having coffee and cookies at a Shell gas convenience store, passed through a teller bin from behind thick glass. They're taking no chances here.

Las Cruces is beautiful when approached from the west at night. One descends on it, and its lights look like interlaced strands of silver and gold.

I think I'll try for the rest stop at the Texas-New Mexico border where I stopped to sleep once before.

July 23, 07:00

I'm just inside Texas at the rest stop. The eastbound stop is on the Texas side; the westbound was in New Mexico. This one's more modest, but adequate, and there's still a nice long view to the

southwest, now clouded by a morning fog. I can't sit on the ground; the little ants are active.

sign: TEJAS MEANS 'FRIENDS'

The French conquest under Maximilian would be interesting to read up on. There are seat belt laws in New Mexico and Texas both. They may not be fought because those who don't use belts are seldom caught. It's an invasion of privacy. Too bad there wasn't an amendment in the Bill of Rights that said: *Congress, nor any State, shall make no law, the breaking of which is likely to harm no one but the breaker.*

Billboard for radio station KFOX in El Paso: *I FOX AROUND!*

Van Horn, Texas, 10:23. mile 75079. 7.5 gallons; \$8. 38.1 mpg

Those who think Texas is flat have probably experienced only the north part where US 66 goes through. From the west it is full of small mountains and valleys, then hills that look sculptured with a smooth regularity that makes one think of the ancient pyramids. The interstate highway slices through the hills with a Texas-style refusal to let nature inconvenience people too much. The road does rise and fall with the land, but the steeper hills, though they could have been merely crossed, are sliced cleanly and neatly, leaving straight sides of naked earth on either side of the road.

The *Hill Country* itself is a tree-filled countryside, no longer rocky but lush and green rolling hills. Small towns tend to look picturesque without working too hard at it. Of course, one never knows to what extent a small town is self-conscious about its small-town look. If it didn't know it was supposed to look like that, would it look like that anyway?

Suddenly I was confronted with a village whose name a sign proclaimed to be *HYE*. I waved at the sign and said 'HI' back. A second later, at 55 mph, it was time to say 'BYE'.

July 23, 19:14 MST

odometer 75540. Austin, Texas
It took 28 hours, including sleep, to cover the 1031 miles from

Phoenix. I switched to central daylight time, which cost 2 hours. Still, at 23:00 I'm waiting outside at Bob's house for him and Julie to get home from work.

Friday, July 24

I awoke after 14:00. Bob and Julie are at work, so I've been watching movies

Saturday, July 25

Bob and I went to see the Austin Lounge Lizards at the Waterloo Icehouse. They're a very musically adept bluegrass band with well-written humorous songs.

Sunday, July 26

We visited the Back Door off Riverside Drive, a big place with a game room side and a rock-band side. I was there before with Jan Horne, the cute redhead that used to work at Brown School, who I had an affair with after Jill left for L.A., until I left for L.A. I hope she recovered from that accident I heard about last time I was here. She's probably back in Arkansas now.

Anyway, the place has gotten bigger since then. We checked out 6th Street, which seems to be the happening area. Maggie May's had folk-type music-- a Joni Mitchell soundalike. Draft Guinness for \$3 a pint. Joe's Generic Bar had blues and beer for \$2 a bottle.

Monday, July 27

Went to work with Bob. It's a nice setup, way out in the country. The residents seem feisty enough to be interesting, but manageable.

Tuesday, July 28

I checked out the Black Cat Saloon by myself while Bob was working. Quite a scene, when you can buy a beer and stand on the sidewalk or sit on your bike and watch the women go by. The bar itself, like several of the 6th Street bars, is long and narrow, a divided section of the old buildings already there. Many of the Austin bars, like the Doll House (a topless bar), the Outhouse, and others have dress-code attitudes about Harley T-shirts, etc. The Hole in the Wall doesn't, nor do the 6th Street bars. Phoenix has some of the same situation, yet one expects it less here. Austin should have a more enlightened attitude.

Also, it seems that belt knives, even folding, are not allowed in bars. This, of course, only leads to concealment, which is, of course, more dangerous. A concealed weapon could be anything, including a gun.

*He's a widower
Widower than what?*

Constipation is nothing to sneeze at.

August 4, 1987 09:00

Austin. odometer: 75621. 7 gallons, \$6.50. 31.43 mpg
Leaving for Lee's Summit. Awake and alert for the road, I hummed the 200 miles to Dallas, arriving around noon. It managed to have midday stop-and-go traffic. I missed 69 because I was supposed to look for 75, which leads to 69, but 380 will take me from Denton east to the one I want.

Pet store: *FISH N' CHIRPS*

The 380 route was a nice drive through some green wooded countryside north of Dallas and Denton.

Sherman, Texas 15:45, mile 75945 8.9 gallons \$8.50. 36.4 mpg
I stopped in Sherman to find American V-twin, the shop that was so helpful last time I came through on my bike. It had moved, and was a bit hard to find. It took about an hour. I was glad I did, though, just to tell the owner I appreciated his being there when I needed him. He's had his hassles with the Establishment in the interim. He actually got arrested IN his shop for wearing a *FUCK JAP MOTORCYCLES* T-shirt. When they want to hassle you, they'll do anything. Too bad he didn't have any T-shirts. I wanted to buy one.

In Oklahoma one crosses the Clear Boggy River, then the Muddy Boggy, and finally the North Boggy, which is presumably neither clear nor muddy, but still boggy. Then there's a town called Tushka. A good place to sit for a spell?

19:30.

Muscogee Oklahoma odometer 76116.

Everywhere is halfway to somewhere.
I used to keep quarters under my hat, but then I changed my mind.

22:25

Joplin, Missouri. odometer: 76253. 7.6 gallons; \$7.00 40.53 mpg
I arrived in Lee's Summit at 01:15 August 5. It took a few minutes to pinpoint the house in the dark. Few addresses are visibly

displayed. Since everyone was evidently asleep, I parked and went to sleep myself. I awoke about 06:00 with the feeling I had a ringside seat at the Indy 500. It seems Douglas is quite a thoroughfare for those in a hurry to work.

I picked up my son Geoff in Lee's Summit, went to Hannibal for 3 days, which was plenty long enough there. The next stop was Hutchinson, Kansas to see Gypsy. I only stayed one night, mainly because I wanted Geoff to enjoy himself, and there was little for him to do there. I'd spent enough time with Gypsy before the trip when she came to Phoenix though, so that wasn't so bad, although the stop in Hutchinson was the only time I got laid on the whole trip.

Loaded up as it was, we found the car a bit uncomfortable to sleep in. We stopped once at a rest stop in Colorado.

GRAND CANYON

Signs on the canyon trail warned about the strenuous climb and the heat, suggesting plenty of water be carried. As it was, the water was supplied by God, as the sunny day turned to downpour from sudden rumbling clouds echoing thunder off the sheer rock walls.

Although the rain dampened the hike, it did give me a chance to meet and talk to Pnina under a sheltering rock overhang. I had already spoken briefly to her, seen her open, friendly smile and her dark brown curls, almost Rastafarian in their tight zig-zag pattern, sun-lightened on top. She had shapely, firmly muscled short legs, and hiked as if she walked a lot. Hers was a strong healthy body, neither fat nor thin, and her face, most especially when she smiled, had the kind of clean beauty that required no makeup, nor could I imagine her wearing any. She bore the attitude of an environment where fear and fakery are not social requirements. I suspect that because of the fearless honesty she projected, she engendered like treatment from anyone she befriended. It was clear that she liked me from the way she continued to hike near me after the rain let up, to continue our conversation, and she seemed to hope that Geoff and I were hiking all the way to the bottom, as she was, where she had a room reserved. She was not so much flirtatious as she was openly reaching out to a kindred spirit with full confidence that the feeling

was mutual.

She told me that she was an Israeli Jew, though she was not religious. She noticed my star. I briefly told her that I look at Judaism in a similar way, as a culture, an identity; a way of relating to the universe, rather than a theology. I would have enjoyed a longer discussion, but the trail was not the place. Her English was accented but excellent. She remarked on the bigness of America, which was analogous to the bigness of Grand Canyon. Israel, too, has its beautiful scenery, she said, but its beauty was on a smaller scale. You can travel through all of Israel in one day.

I am sure, though, that one day would not be enough to adequately take it all in. Nor was less than an hour nearly enough time to get to know Pnina, though more than enough time to discover that I wanted to. I gave her my address, telling her if she ever made it to Phoenix I would like to see her. She likes to ride on motorcycles, and I told her I'd give her a ride on mine. Seldom have I been so enchanted by a woman in so short a time, and although I can't count on her visit, I do hope for it.

My son Geoffrey reminds me of me at times. He tends to be quiet, understating his reactions. One gets the impression he is reflecting on things to himself rather than conveying them to the outside world. He may venture an opinion much later, when he has thought about it.

I should tell Geoff some of my story. Until recently he didn't know I remarried. He doesn't ask a lot of questions, and it doesn't always occur to him what he would want to know. His mother and grandmother don't know everything.

Back in Phoenix, after 3876 miles, \$104.95 in gasoline, averaging 36.45 mpg. Not bad.

Sunday, September 6, 1987

RESCUE OPERATION

Having found out that Crickett was being abused in Newbury Park, a Ventura County suburb of Los Angeles, I told her about 07:00 when she beeped me that I would come pick her up in about 24 hours. I got off my shift

around 16:30 and headed west by 20:00. I decided to check on Terry in Santa Monica, but he was not home at 02:00, so I went to Newbury Park and parked to sleep on Ventu Park Road near Pepper. I woke up around 07:45 and found the house. The abuser wasn't there, so no confrontation was needed.

September 16, 1987

So I suddenly found myself living with a woman after having gone without even a one-nighter for weeks...and a GOOD woman at that. Crickett has a pleasing, easygoing personality, likes sex, and seems to be very sexually compatible with me. I feel like the proverbial kid in the candy store with a credit card.

I feel the need to restrain myself from coming on too strong and scaring her away, and also to avoid caring too much if she is not going to stay. It would be easy to care a lot. She looks and feels extremely good to me. She is fun, intelligent, sensual, and willing to contribute her share to the household. She has wonderfully soft, smooth skin of a beautiful golden tone, a firm, strong feminine body, long black hair, and the prettiest pubes I have ever seen, with the overall effect of serene natural beauty, not unlike a clear mountain stream shaded by green trees, where one yearns to lie down on its grassy bank and drink deeply while breathing the fragrant air.

Perhaps I already care for her more than I might admit. I walk the thin line between telling her too much and not enough of my affection.

ON TIME TRAVEL

One logical problem plagues the concept of time travel into the past: that being, if it can be done, given enough time for research and technical advance, why haven't future time travelers come back to our present?

Surely, if it can be done, mankind will do it and use it, unless we are destroyed first. If future destruction is the case, can we change that fact by supposing it and taking countermeasures? Such a supposition would be little to go on. We don't know if such destruction (or loss of our techno-civilization) would be a man-made or natural disaster.

Aside from the destruction hypothesis, perhaps interactive past time travel is somehow impossible. Maybe one could go into the past and view it, but not

interact, being separated by a time-fold.

This problem might not apply to future time-travel. It would be more interesting, anyway, since nothing is known about the future, while the past has already been done. (Actually, we probably think we know more about the past than we actually do.) But if we can travel to the future (faster than we already naturally do) and not to the past, it would be a one-way trip, since we could not return to the present.

Travel into the past would be most interesting to discover whether and how the paradoxes actually work. Could one actually meet oneself? If you seduce your mother before she meets your father, could you become your own father, or would you cease to exist? Would this happen instantly, or when you return to the present? Preplanned messages from the past would be easy enough, so time travelers could usually communicate what went wrong even if they were unable to return to their present.

Some UFO's could indeed be time machines, and the reason they are so elusive could be the need to avoid interaction. Time travel, of course, also requires space travel, since nothing stays in the same place for long. .If you could not compute where you need to be at the time you want to be, and if you cannot accurately travel to the right place, then you would have to be extremely lucky to survive. You could end up in space far from Earth, or embedded in solid matter, either of which could be quite uncomfortable.

To A Sleeping Beauty

Yes, I love to watch you move,
and to feel you move next to me;
beneath me as we express our passion,
your smooth skin under my caressing fingertips.
But, as for a moment I watched you sleep tonight,
your silver necklace gleaming in the soft red light,
and you lay still, unaware of my gaze,
I enjoyed the natural quiet beauty of you.

10/12/1987

October 20, 1987

Do you see the beauty in life?
If you look for it, you will.
Look at yourself
Not just the outside,
which happens to be beautiful to others,
but inside, where every vein,
every bone, every organ plays
in the orchestra of you, plays
the symphony of life

She Dreams of Nuclear Wars

She dreams of nuclear wars, and she's a survivor. The bombs made the world go away; now she's on her own, strong and ready because she planned for this-- she knew it was coming, always traveled light, learned to be alone; loved the quiet land. Now it's all quiet land. The echos of the bombs have faded away. The echos of other voices have faded too; the millions of other faces have gone with the nuclear wind, and she faces her future with no one else.

Dreams may be our fears or our fantasies. Our fears may be our fantasies. Turn over the dragon-headed coin and you've got dragon tails. Use it to buy a ticket to fly and you've got dragon wings.

We may all face the nuclear winter. I want to survive. Some don't. But I'm betting on a level of sanity of those in control just high enough to stop short of bringing it on. If I really expected it I'd find a way to live in the wilderness out of the target zones.

Yet there is an appeal to the fantasy of being a survivor when civilization is gone-- no longer doing city jobs for paper pay to buy market food and shelter made by others, but to grab and hold the real: building by hand, killing my own food, living from day to day, ready for anything; feeling satisfied with only the basic needs. We are not so far from our age of stone that, however much we dream of luxury and ease, we don't dream of this also: the simpler times.

But the world won't go away; it will change some but not much all at once, and we need to deal with it, as it deals

with us. This is a kind of survival too, a bit more complex and subtle, but as necessary to our age as hunting skills were once.

I think her dream scenario may be because she is a Native American, and though she doesn't express it, she has an unconscious natural desire to see civilization pay for the destruction of her people, a people who may still be better equipped to survive a nuclear war than anyone else; who may once again flourish, given the space and freedom to do so.

Though she speaks little about it, I believe she suffers for her people, none the less so because she was partly robbed of her heritage by adoption, which was only another symbol of the oppression.

She responds with scorn to the white songwriter's attempt to sing of injustice to Indians. She thinks they don't care-- perhaps that they only do it for the money. I think some of them care, but she has a point, and it is this:

America, self-righteous *democratic* nation that it is, committed genocide on the Native Americans. It was done on a larger scale, over a longer period of time than the German genocide on the Jews and other minorities.

The Germans, by circumstances of war, were defeated and punished, and they are still being punished-- not just the Nazis who actually committed the crimes, but all Germans, by association. Germany is a nation living in guilt for the sins of its fathers. Germans who were not even alive then are still apologizing, or at least doing much to show the world that they are no longer a nation of murderers.

America has never been punished for its crime. Indeed, as a whole, it has never even apologized. Attempts at reparations have been pathetic and completely inadequate; the effect has been a continuation of genocide under the guise of benevolent paternalism.

America even misnamed its natives and never bothered to correct it. We have known for over 400 years that they were not Indians. Even *Native Americans* is wrong; there was no *America* until the land was stolen by the European invaders.

At least the Jews and the Gypsies were still called by their names when they were being starved and shot and gassed to death. And at least the Jews, partly through

their own effort and with the help of other nations, finally achieved a homeland, though they have had to fight long and hard to keep it.

Where is the Native Americans' homeland? The reservations: tiny scraps of a vast continent--land that no one else wanted, scattered and surrounded, almost like concentration camps, an insult to the once-proud tribes who roamed all the land, using it rightly?

The tribes are said to be sovereign nations, which sounds good on paper, but they have little if any more power than any landowner. If any positive change is to come from the revelations of BIA corruption, it should be that of a long-overdue restoration of land and real sovereignty to the tribes on a scale that will insure economic self-sufficiency. Land must be added to present reservation land of a type that can be used agriculturally or otherwise productively, not the water-poor wasteland that is often the case. Native land should no longer be called *reservations*, but should be considered in every way the national land of the tribes occupying it. Thereafter the tribes must be dealt with as foreign powers, as we would deal with Canada or Mexico

We can never undo the great wrongs done by our ancestors to their ancestors, but we could try much harder to set things right in the present. And we must stop whitewashing our history to ignore past crimes. It is easier to avoid mistakes in the future if we fully recognize the mistakes of our past.

PHOENIX 1987--1988

EVOLUTION #9

We were discussing the meaning of colors. *Purple is a sexual color*, she said.

I replied, *Some of the color meanings are arbitrary, but I think red is the most sexual color on a woman. On men, though, especially in pants, it merely looks ridiculous. My theory is that this comes from our distant ancestors among the primates, to whom a red ass on a female signals sexual excitement to the male.*

She thought that was amusing, but then she suddenly said, *I don't believe in evolution, so let's not talk about it.*

I asked if she believed in creation as literally described in Genesis. She said *No*. I asked where she thought we came from. She said, in all seriousness, *Out of the mud.*

But she didn't really want to talk about it, and wouldn't say anything more. She is intelligent, and must know there is no logic in her answer. She has mentioned before that she doesn't believe in God, so

surely it isn't a religious opinion. What, then, could be her reason? Is it merely an aesthetic objection to having non-human ancestors? Does she think it somehow demeans humanity to have risen from lesser organisms?

Once I said, half in jest, that men don't expect logic from women. Actually, I do expect, or at least hope, that women will be logical. But, they so often use baffling illogic against men to get their way, a tactic that is unfair, but tolerated by condescending men as endearingly childlike. Less perceptive men may believe it is unintentional, or that women's thinking really is radically different, but it is no more than a ploy, like the looks, winks, wiggles, and snuggles they begin using around age 4. It works whether we can see through it or not, because we men adore them. And because we do, the human race is a social, and therefore successful, animal.

It's too late to make spaghetti. If we did, it would be pasta time.

An announcer, during the 1987 World Series, said, *You could see daylight between them...or in this case, night light*

8807.09

A beeper greeting: The friendly drivers of luxurious Yellow Cab 267 remind you that it is too hot to walk, but it's cool to roll. If you need a ride, and we think you do, say your name, location, and phone at the tone. Tell us when you need the ride-- call ahead if you can, in case we have to finish another trip first. Michael or Pat will call or come as soon as we can. We deeply appreciate your patronage.

Waste not, want knot.

Vase not, whatnot.

Waist knot, wan not.

Base not, quantum not.

Lace not, knot naught.

Space not, warp not.

Trace not, draught not.

Grace not, sought not.

8807.20

Barb

Time to pull out the superlatives to write about this one. Since she decided one night at Frankie's that I turned her on, I've wanted her, despite the fact that she was officially Trader Steve's ol' lady. I knew she'd be worth the risk. For awhile this never went beyond surreptitious smiles and winks across the bar and an occasional few words when proximity permitted. Then, one evening she announced she was moving to Utah. Life with a dealer was getting too hectic for her and her son.

I asked her to call me before she left, but I didn't hear from her or see her again for awhile, so I guessed she'd gone. A few weeks later she showed up at Frankie's without Trader. He was out of town, she was leaving him anyway, and she gave me her number. She said "Call me", so next day I did. After a stop at Chester's Bar, we rode to my place. There were no coy games about it-- we wanted one another. I already knew she was a natural beauty, but when she was unclothed I was still amazed by her flawless body, small and slim but perfectly shaped. To speak of her loveliness does not explain the electric passion we experienced, the natural harmony of our lovemaking. Of course, our mutual physical attraction inspired us. The monsoon heat did not deter us. We reveled in sweat; our movements removed the fitted sheet from the mattress and denuded a pillow of its case. Heedless, we sought only one another's pleasure, stopping for nothing, every nibble, caress, and thrust sending us to new heights.

8807.30

I shall be saddened if I don't see her again. It has been awhile since a woman so touched my soul as well as delighting my senses. And, I believe it was more than a little mutual. Our chance had come when Trader the dealer was out of town, reportedly aiding a club snitch to escape from Phoenix. If this report is true, Trader has some serious problems of his own.

Trader returned, and though it was her intention to leave him, I don't know what actually happened, and have no way of finding out unless she calls me.

8808.20

I suppose happy endings are for fairy tales. I saw Barb just before she was to be married to Trader. She did not seem to be overjoyed at the prospect, and said it was for practical reasons-- concern for her son. I'm sure that was a factor, but were drugs, or fear, a factor too? The real tragedy is that I think she really did care for me, that there was something between us besides intense lust. After all, lust and love are not separate, but only semantically divided parts of the same emotion. Conventional thinking, influenced by the dark age twists in Christianity, tries to divide the whole.

At any rate, she promised to one day come knocking at my window, and maybe she will. I told her the story is not over yet, and maybe it isn't. Perhaps lost loves were put into my life by the Spirit of the Universe to stimulate my writing. I, of course, contrary and stubborn as I am, insist on waiting until I have a woman to live and love with before writing. Otherwise, I cannot spare the time I need to look for her.

Another strange loop: On the computer you cannot put quotation marks inside a string, because the string itself must be in quotes, and the second quote it comes to fools it into thinking the string has ended. Perhaps this will be resolved by the creation of a more complex string theory in time.

8809

She called herself Kitty

And she had some nice titties,

But everyone knew her as Nancy

Nancy Alvarez, originally from Douglas, Arizona, was a dancer at Peekers under the stage name Kitty. I met her at Frankie's one night and danced with her twice, then saw her later at a party, but only briefly. Then one day, weeks later, I was getting tattooed by Jill at Peekers, and there she was. It seemed she liked me, so Jill endeavored to play matchmaker; eventually, I took Nancy out. Though she seemed to enjoy "heavy petting" she declined at first to go to bed with me.

In October, Nancy finally came through; after a short date, a couple of beers at Frankie's, we mad it in her small car in the parking lot of my apartment. It was spontaneous and satisfying. I thought perhaps this would be the start of a real relationship. She had given me the impression she wanted something more than a quickie, and with her physical attractiveness-- very pretty, lushly exotic, her appealing personality and intelligence, she could have all of me she cared to take, if she meant it. But the next time I talked to her on the phone, she said she needs to spend more time with school, and wouldn't have much time for play. Time will tell.

One night in December she dropped into Frankie's with Shawn, who had an affair with me some time ago when she was breaking up with her ex. It seems Shawn is living in Wisconsin and was here visiting. Nancy had called me, but I wasn't home at the time. We talked for a bit, and I asked her if she wanted to go for a little ride. I took her home and made love to her, which she seemed to want as much as I did. But, she is planning to move to Ohio to go to school, and she still seems resistant to a frequent relationship.

Jody

The best of them seem to happen spontaneously. On a quiet Tuesday night at Frankie's, she walked in, announced she was waiting for someone, and asked for a glass of water. She was freckled, cute, nicely shaped, and lots of fun in bed. It seems she's traveled a bit, originally from New York, spent time in Southern California, Houston, and here. She has a 6-year-old kid, but is staying with her mother who imposes curfews. She was supposed to be home by 2:00; we got her there around 3:00.

In time I learned the rest of the story. Her real name is Cindy; she dances as Jody. I went to the Velvet Touch to watch her dance and take her home afterward. We stopped at TJ's and she decided to get another ride home. She told me she has an old man, due to get out of jail soon. So much for extended romance. After she left, I got a chance to talk to Hunnie.

Is a sarcastic telegram a barbed wire?

* * *

A letter to Gypsy of Kansas, 8812.01

Glad to see you're getting along with computers so well. I've grown rather fond of them myself. This is done on the Atariwriter program with a dot-matrix printer. It's not as crisp-looking as yours, but it's useful. It's unfortunate that all computers and peripherals aren't compatible. For that matter, it's too bad all people aren't compatible.

At least "yuppies" serve one purpose-- they're a perfect negative example of what to avoid in our own lives, just in case we need reminding. Sometimes people say "I used to have hair as long as yours." That seems sadder to

me than the younger people who have never done anything but conform. I want to ask, "Didn't it mean something to you then? If so, what happened to your values?" But I usually don't ask. Perhaps that's not as bad as those who pretend to be into freedom and brotherhood, but are as selfish and greedy as the yuppies.

I have a Hannibal High School reunion in June. The Mazda quit on me a couple of months ago. A little module in the electronic ignition distributor seems to be the problem. This tiny part goes for \$164. I'm trying to find a way to convert it to regular points, but no one has been very helpful. I'll try to sell it, and buy a good old pickup truck.

Anita

Say, there, Anita

Can't you see I need a

Little warm affection?

You're like a sweet confection

To a hungry man like me.

A synchronistic fact

Hadrons are subatomic particles that exist in an excited state. Inverting one pair of letters results in "hardons" which also exist in an excited state.

Snow Wander

It was 3:00 AM in Phoenix on Xmas night, 1988. Some people celebrate it as a holiday. Some don't. Some people give presents. The man I picked up in my cab was giving his wife a divorce. He wanted to go to Flagstaff to catch a train. I took him.

It was dark at night, as it often is, and the foothills were socked in a dense white mist. We drove onward through the fog. About 30 miles from Flagstaff I began to notice a strange white crystalline substance covering the ground and highway. I felt I had seen it before, long ago. I searched my memory banks-- my mind drifted back into the cold and distant past. Flurries of images flaked by like a video collage, no two alike, but the picture wasn't clear, like a TV screen with snow. Snow! That was it. I used to play in it as a child, but then, children will play in anything.

The radio was announcing zero degrees, and they didn't mean college diplomas. Zero is only a number, or a lack of one, but when I got out of the cab to refuel, I was aghast at the chill. They say women forget labor pains after childbirth (except perhaps in "right-to-work" states), because otherwise they wouldn't conceivably bear twice, so perhaps my mind mercifully suppressed memories of Missouri winter misery.

My passenger bought me breakfast at Denny's while we waited for the railroad station to open. Perhaps the close at night due to a shortage of trained personnel. As I munched my pancakes and sunnyside-up eggs, it dawned on me that it was getting light out. It would be a good time to light out for Phoenix, with the traffic still light and the scenery lit. I had to admit that the snowy slopes looked pretty in the rising sun, seen from within my cozy cab.

If I had to endure this snowman's land for long, I might catch cold, complete with a hacking cough. So, I went hacking off into the sunrise, taxiing down the peaks, peeking out of my taxi. Overall, on the edge of night I'd

had a brighter day as the world turned. Washing the cab afterward would be a real soap operation, but if you're going to get the grime, you have to take the time. I took a last look in my rearview mirror, and I could see by the dawn's early light that Flagstaff was there.

Janine

I will almost surely not see her again, though it is unusual for me not to seek a second encounter with one I knew intimately on the first. She was in Frankie's one slow weekday night toward the end of January, 1989. Though she was reasonably attractive, I had not decided to approach her, horny though I was, but I overheard her say that she needed a ride home. I had my cab with me-- I had been working extra shifts while Pat was on vacation, so I offered her one. Though there were no strings attached, as we conversed she suddenly began kissing me, right in the bar. I was not averse to this affection; I put her in my cab and proceeded to drive toward where she said she lived. She continued to kiss me, and I responded. I matched her kisses and raised her an erection.

In the parking lot of her apartment complex we engaged in heavy petting, seeming to be heading toward consummation. Eventually she invited me into her apartment. She seemed to enjoy alternating between hot and cold, yes and no, which was a little annoying. Finally, we made love, which was quite pleasant. Her body was pretty and well-formed. But, I was not feeling the affection that usually comes with physical satisfaction. There was a subtle impression that she was granting me a favor rather than seeking mutual pleasure. We were conversing about my tattoos afterward; I had gotten the outline of my iguana about a week before. For some reason she accused me of lying about how recent it was. It didn't make sense. I had no reason to lie, nor did she have reason to call me a liar. It pissed me off. Shortly I told Janine I had to go back to work, and got dressed to leave. She asked me to stay longer and fuck her again. Normally I would, but I was no longer interested.

1989

To Janet

Just in case I don't see you for a while
(Perhaps you'll think of me and smile)
Or just in case you'd like to know
(If, by chance, it doesn't show)
I think you're special, and not just slightly.
(Which is not a thing that I say lightly)
I've come to like you for your mind
(Not just your breasts or your behind)

But perhaps I shouldn't fail to mention
That your body does get my attention.
To give you pleasure rings my bell
You give it back so very well.
I've learned I shouldn't care too much
Too soon, for love can be a crutch
And then I fall; it spoils my day

When the crutch is yanked away

But it's right and good a friend to be
(Another thing I've learned, you see)
'Cause friends can last a long long while
Being happy just to see you smile
No matter with whom else we stick
Let's be friends through thin and thick
And whenever it's the thing to do
I'll gladly be your lover too
--captain rat

February 1989

I have known Janet, though only casually, since my early days in Phoenix at the Oregon Pines trailer park. Then she was married to Peacock, the park's manager, the same man who insisted that Jill and I sleep on a sofa-bed he brought to the small cabin apartment we had, instead of a regular bed. His attitude about that seemed nonsensical, merely trying to prove he could get his way, even if there was no purpose in it.

Jill and I moved to another apartment at 24th Street and Monroe over that issue. Who knows what series of events Peacock set in motion with that action? Who would have guessed that, years later, I would end up in bed with his ex-wife. That aspect makes me smile-- an example of synchronicity, and as kind of a subtle repayment of an old debt. It doesn't matter that he doesn't know. I know.

But that is only a quirky bonus, because the true prize is Janet herself. She is tall and slim, with perfect sized perky tits. She's nice all over, and she loves to fuck. Even better, she loves to fuck ME, and has proved it on two occasions, literally all night on the first and quite a while on the second. It has been a long time since I had that much fun. All this would be quite enough for a start, but in addition I've learned that Janet is a very together woman, worthy of respect as well as lust. She rides and works on her own Harley, has built VW trikes, worked construction as well as dancing, and she's a licensed and experienced truck driver. She takes care of herself and her 9-year old daughter. Not a helpless female, yet she is robustly feminine and sensuous.

It is too soon to tell whether this is a passing relationship or I will be seeing her for a while. She seems to want to maintain independence, but acts quite attracted to me. I can appreciate that. In another little twist of synchronicity, Janet and I were at the same concert featuring Foghat in 1977 in Kansas City. She was in the 8th grade then. She nicknamed herself "Tigger" (with a short I, from a cartoon character) is a remarkable woman, now 25. She was evidently quite a female "outlaw" from an early age.

"Don't play with your words", the mother said. "Just eat them."

"But, words are pun to flay with."

"I say you can't, so don't."

"You're going into contractions again. They're close together, too."

"There you go again. You're becoming a punster. Your palms will grow hair."

He looked out the window at the palm tree he had planted. It did look a little hairy.

Group Gripes

Of the myriad things that a human being can overdo or underdo, one of the most crucial is the estimation of one's own importance. Some may think that most of us overestimate our importance; that excessive ego or lack of humility is the affliction of most. Historically, human groups have often had an inflated idea of their significance, whether they be tribes, nations, or the human race as a whole. The negative reaction to the finding that Earth is not the center of the universe is a classic example. Certainly some of the major leaders throughout history have had colossal egos. Their downfall was usually the eventual result.

But the vast majority of individuals are too humble. They underestimate their importance almost completely. They believe themselves powerless to achieve anything more than personal survival and some comfort for themselves and a family. This is a belief that fulfills itself, of course. Does the opposing belief, that the individual DOES have power, also fulfill itself? If not, then humility is only a device enabling one to be satisfied with less.

Obviously, the answer is that it takes more than belief; it takes ability and purpose. Otherwise, one is better off avoiding frustration and limiting the scope of desires. Those with ability alone often waste it by achieving only personal material success, sometimes to extremes. It is common to see such a person continue to strive for more wealth than could be used in a lifetime. They may believe that money is power, but most use little of the power it could bring if adeptly used, and seldom for any worthwhile purpose.

It is almost a cliché that the rich do not care about humanity as a whole as long as they have theirs. The pursuit of wealth, and the effort of keeping it tends to diminish the impulse of generosity and concern for others. There have been notable exceptions, but they are not the rule.

Most human beings do have ideals. The problem is that early in life they become convinced that their ideals are unachievable, so they suppress their idealism, and it remains suppressed even if wealth brings them power and influence. Lacking a higher purpose, they make wealth itself an ideal, and if they use their power at all, it is to maintain the status-quo that brought them wealth.

The sense of powerlessness to make a real difference in the human condition is partly a result of humanity's social structure, evolved from our primate ancestors. Survival depended on cooperating with the group, and obedience to the leader. The group is seen as a power greater than the sum of its parts. This attitude served its purpose when the enemies of man were other creatures and the forces of nature. It has, indeed brought us to a state where the primary enemy of man is man itself.

While this is no small achievement, it is a situation that requires a new approach. Now, any group smaller than the entire human race tends to increase conflict between humans, having a negative impact on survival. There may come a time when even humanity is too small a group. Conflicts between individuals are often fomented by their exaggerating the importance of their group identity.

Groups will naturally exist, whether formed for a specific task, or from religious beliefs, cultures, or physical characteristics. It is the self-image of individuals as being primarily a group member, and needing to be one in good standing that often causes both conflict and suppression of individual potential.

It is widely recognized that grouping by “race”, national origin, and even sex is unnecessary and divisive. That is beginning to be realized about religion and sexual preference, divisions that also cause much violence and hardship. It is realized by some that political states and nations have outlived their usefulness in an age when instant communication would allow for an effective world government. In order to achieve this unification we will have to change our concept of government itself.

Opposition to world government comes from the fear that freedom will be lost, and our lives would be altered by a government that would try to mold all political, cultural, and economic systems into one. Any world unification of lifestyle must be a slow natural process. No world government could exercise the control over individuals that even the most free of nations now does, nor would it need to. Most of the control that national governments deem necessary is for the sake of control itself. Laws against victimless crimes are based on a perceived need for discipline and uniformity, which in turn derive from the concept that the nation-group must act in concert against possible threats from other nation-groups.

Restrictions on individuals based directly on “national security”-- military service, restricted information, etc., would also be irrelevant. What is left are laws we all agree or necessary, those against harming one another. In order to get to the point where we are willing to give up our unneeded laws and our divisive nation-groups we must radically rethink our perspective, to take in the “big picture” of humanity as a whole.

On Justice and Crime

It is shocking how lightly some regard our constitutional rights to a fair trial, which help insure that few of us are deprived of life, liberty, or property by mistake. Whether attacks on these safeguards are made in the name of *Law and Order* or *Victim's Rights*, they disregard the fact that to punish the innocent is far worse than to free the guilty.

If prosecutors and victims are frustrated by the difficulty and uncertainty of extracting revenge for a crime, they should imagine the horror and despair of being punished for a crime they did not commit. If we wish to assign blame beyond the perpetrator, it should be the society that permits poverty to exist, which breeds hopelessness and desperation. But we must concentrate less on revenge and blame and more on rehabilitation both within and without prisons, and try to create a society that breeds less crime in the first place; one that provides better for the economic and emotional needs of its people.

*Don't call me a bloody vassal!
I am not a juggler in vain.
Would you hand me my cap, Larry?*

Greased for the competition, arriving hours ahead of time, the blatantly religious bodybuilder had an *oilier than thou* attitude.

I'm tired of dead bodies, said the corpulent county coroner, pulling on his pants; *I need a breather!*

UNIDENTIFICATION CARD
THE BEARER OF THIS CARD,
WHO WISHES TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS,
IS IN NO WAY IDENTIFIED HEREBY.
HE, SHE, OR IT IS OF INDETERMINATE
AGE, SEX, AND NATIONAL ORIGIN,
WITH AN UNLISTED UNIDENTIFICATION NUMBER.

MONDAY, JUNE 26, 1989

Motorcycle Trip II: The Reunion

It had been 4 years since my last cross-country trip on the Ratster, and I was ready for another one. The occasion was my 25-year high school reunion, though I also wanted to visit Gypsy Claar in Kansas again, spend time with my son in Lee's Summit, Missouri, and see my stepmother and my boyhood home.

On the Road

I finally left Phoenix around noon. The odometer read 46,420 miles at the start. I stopped at the Sunset Point rest stop. The white Ford that seemed to be following me went on by. All seems well so far. Riding is a lot more comfortable this time with a softer seat. It's a nice sunny day.

Flagstaff

The drain plug in the transmission fell out. I improvised a rubber plug from a piece of oil hose stopped with a bicycle tube air valve, screwed in and wired to the frame. It should stay.

Gasoline: \$3.50 at \$1.11 a gallon. 46,568 miles; 47 mpg.

Holbrook, Arizona, 6:45 pm

The temperature has been cooler since before Flagstaff. It's warm and sunny, but you can wear leather comfortably on the highway. I'll gas up here just in case: 46,673 miles, \$2.00 for 1.7 gallons.

Gallup, New Mexico, 9:30 pm

When it got dark approaching Gallup, it got rather chilly. I added a wool shirt under the leather and was still cold riding. The rest stop outside of Gallup was closed, so I rode into town, got food and coffee, and considered a motel. I stopped at one advertising \$13, but of course there were no rooms of that price left. It would be \$18, which wasn't bad, but I didn't like that tactic and preferred not to spend the money anyway. Gallup is quite old-fashioned looking. I was looking for a convenience store, and it was a while before I found the generic equivalent of one to get a cup of coffee, some vitamins, and information.

The clerk directed me to a small park just outside of town. Camping conditions were not ideal, but I found a spot where I could sleep slightly secluded next to the bike. There were some interesting signs in the park: one said No Alcohol or Drugs, featuring the circle/slash symbol over a marijuana leaf. Another said No Unloading Livestock, with a sign below it reading Use Trash Bins

One can picture a semi load of cattle being let off the truck so they could graze and shit in the park. How the trash bins provide an alternative, I'm not sure.

Sleeping was a bit chilly; it would have been good to have a sleeping bag, but I managed it, waking several times at nearby noises. No one actually bothered me, though.

June 27, 7:00 am

It's still cool with the sun up. I went to a nearby restaurant for coffee and breakfast. Gasoline: \$2.00 for 1.7 gallons at 46,778 miles

Grant's, New Mexico; 9:30 am;

The odometer has stopped odometering, at 46,833 miles, so there'll be no more mileage figures.

In Albuquerque I filled up with \$3.50 at \$1.04 a gallon. I discovered I left behind my adjustable wrench for the rear axle nut, so I had to buy a pair of slip-joint pliers for \$8 at K-Mart. The girl I asked for directions to the K-Mart was a real fox.

I found that I needed to use sunscreen. The sun is intense, despite the cooler air.

Moriarty, New Mexico, 2:00 pm

Their sign promises a McDonald's that wasn't built yet, but the Burger Queen had a chili dog with real good chili. I got gas in Milato, New Mexico: \$2.35. In Tucumcari I gassed up again: \$2.50, and briefly met the most beautiful girl I'd seen yet near the convenience store at First St and Business I-40. If I had lots of time and money...

June 28, 1989, 4:42 am: the Quack of Dawn

I awake by a lake in a secluded weeded clearing just outside Dalhart, Texas, to a chorus of quackers. It was a much better campsite than the last, despite the Texas mosquitoes and the nonresemblance of the ground to a mattress. It's a small placid lake. I heard fish playing last night; this morning it's a duck dawn.

I was going to stop at a bar last night for a beer, but they close at midnight in this Texas county, and it was about that time. As I was unlocking the bike to leave, one of the departing Texans with a pickup truck offered me a cold beer. It was a Coors Light, but that didn't matter-- friendly is friendly. Probably a lot of Texans deal with their patchwork liquor laws with big coolers built into the back of their pickups, so there's always a cold beer.

It was warm enough sleeping last night, and the view of the stars was great. I counted 18 billion and some, but toward the end I got confused by a UFO that kept moving. It might have been a firefly.

It was a bit chilly at dawn, but the sun was beginning to illuminate the earth and warm it. If I'd brought my sawed-off 12-gauge, I probably could have gotten 4 or 5 ducks in one shot, but I didn't have time for a big breakfast. Better just to duck into a cafe on the way. I found a use for the helmet: it keeps the kickstand from sinking into the soft dirt.

Dalhart, Texas, 8:00 am Gas: \$2.85 at \$1.14. About 320 miles to Hutchinson, Kansas. The atlas says it's 1040 miles from Phoenix to Wichita, 1238 to Kansas City.

I rode through Hooker, Oklahoma, where, the signs say, the Hooker Lions welcome you, and you're invited to the Hooker Pig Sale.

To raise funds, the Lions Club could sell their own brand of lead weights for fishermen. They could call it the Hooker Lions' Sinker

Liberal, Kansas, 10:00 am

I added \$2.25 in gas at \$1.13, and the first 1/2 quart of oil. No time to tour Dorothy's house. Maybe next time.

11:30 am: Meade, Kansas Home of the Dalton Gang Hideout....That makes me wonder: do Americans still love outlaws like they used to? At one time, outlaws (bank and train robbers, fast guns, etc.) were the symbol of freedom for the common man. They were what one might be if only one dared, and they usually struck blows against the established greed-heads who were becoming rich by making the people poorer. Most people knew how the system worked, so they secretly or openly applauded the outlaw who took some of it back. Perhaps there were few Robin Hoods; the outlaws usually kept the money, but in the eyes of the people they did it for those who didn't dare to do it themselves.

In simpler times people understood these things. Freedom was still the most important concept when there was still a frontier. When absolute freedom was just over the horizon, fewer people were willing to be oppressed, either legally or economically.

Media now voice the concern of the established greed-heads and portray would-be outlaw heroes as Public Enemies. We live perceiving the world through glass eyes and paper ears, and many of us believe their distortions. Now we accept curtailments of our own freedom in the name of safety. Will we ever see through our own eyes again?

Greensburg, Kansas, 1:24 pm

Gas: \$2.50 at \$1.11. It's about 100 miles to Hutchinson. I'll be stopping to see Gypsy there, but just staying one night because I need to be at the high school reunion when it occurs. I'll stop longer on the way back.

I arrived in Hutchinson around 4:00 pm. I changed my watch to CDT, making it 6:00. I had a little trouble finding Gypsy's house because I thought it was B Street, not B Avenue (to B, or to B?) Gypsy said I should avoid South Hutchinson next time. I didn't know the town was big enough to have two sides. The water tower marks the corner. It has cost about \$23.00 in gas to get this far.

July 29, 6:30 pm

I left Hutchinson, heading to Lee's Summit, Missouri, after buying \$2.50 gas at \$0.99. I got on the wrong highway at Newton; I-135 instead of US-50, due to a poorly marked intersection, which took me 8 miles out of the way. After stopping for gas in Emporia (\$2.50), I arrived in Lee's Summit around midnight.

June 30, 12:30 pm

Headed for Hannibal, Missouri, boyhood home of Mark Twain and I, via US-24, the most direct route. I've always preferred non-freeway highways anyway, especially on the bike. I arrived around 5:00 pm.

Hannibal High School, Class of 1964, 25-year Reunion

Although I knew very few of them then, it seems that as a whole the class of '64 are not a bad bunch, and some of them are actually interesting.

Carole Coats was one of the girls who looks better now than she did then, and from a brief conversation I was impressed with her searching mind and original thinking, as well as her vital, healthy body and radiant smile.

There was Brad Brice and his French wife. They gave me a Bible. That was nice, I suppose, but pushing religion is not what I consider friendly. One of the things I respect most about Judaism is that it doesn't seek converts. Lou Jaworsky still has a great attitude and sense of humor. I recall many years ago he introduced me to the first Mothers of Invention album.

Carolyn Lugering wasn't there, but someone told me she still looks good, as I would have imagined she would.

Carol Mann was, overall, the best-looking woman attending. She lives in San Antonio now. Nancy Williams was another pretty one. Frank Maddox was the only other Harley rider there. He rides with the Vietnam Vets MC. My old friend Charles Janosz was supposed to be there, but he wasn't.

Reunions aren't so much about nostalgia as about satisfying curiosity. And interacting with people for any reason can be good. I tried to get together with Carole Coats, but our schedules didn't mesh before I had to head back West. She tried to call me in Hannibal just after I had left. Too bad; who knows what might have been?

Westward Ho

I headed back to Lee's Summit, then back to Hutchinson, Kansas, now that I have time to spend several days to spend with Gypsy. Visiting Gypsy is always relaxing and peaceful and pleasureable. We think and feel the same in lots of ways. But we have separate lives in separate places. I'm not sure either of us could join the other's. Still, I enjoy being with her when I can. She suggested my route back to Phoenix, through Taos, New Mexico.

July 12, 1989, 2:30 pm

Leaving Hutchinson, I rode into Dodge city around 5:00 and stopped for gas. About 30 miles west of Dodge, the sky began to look dark ahead. A damp chill tinged the wind. I knew I was about to meet the bane of motorcyclists. I was headed for rain. I pulled over at my next opportunity and unpacked my leather jacket. Then, deciding to be really prepared, I dug out my waterproof pants and pulled them on I wanted to be ready for the rain. I restarted the Ratster and rode on toward the dark horizon. The wind picked up and got colder. Lightening flashed. Then it hit. A shotgun blast of hail struck my head and face. Eighty mph winds lashed horizontal rain into my right ear. There was no getting ready for this except being indoors. I stopped on a side road and parked the bike high side toward the wind. It

sheltered me somewhat from the blast. I peeked periodically at the sky for funnel clouds. The wind went on and on with the horizontal rain. When it finally slowed, I began to get wetter, so I got out my tarp and made a tent with myself as the center pole. I'm not Polish, but it worked anyway. Finally, with difficulty, I could roll a cigarette. The lighter failed in the wetness, but the waterproof matches worked. Another eternity later the rain slowed to a trickle. I packed up and rode into the face-peppering sprinkle, 30 miles to Ulysses, my Odyssey nearly over for the day, to the Wagonbed Motel. The pretty desk clerk charged me \$23 for a room with a tiny frog on the floor and Electrolight in Blue on TV.

Thursday, July 13

It shows promise of a Brighter Day, though there are still Dark Shadows of clouds. We'll see how the story unfolds As the World Turns. Perhaps I'll have dry weather when I reach the Edge of Night.

What else but soap operas while at the laundromat? Actually, the dryers are performing a Soap Ballet, drying what got rained on yesterday. Nothing much dried hanging in the motel room overnight. I had to replace the 20-year-old rope that held my mailbag closed.

Once dry I followed US-160 to Trinidad, Colorado, then I-25 south to Raton, and US-64 west to Taos, New Mexico. Though clouds periodically behaved in a threatening manner, I avoided rain on the road to Trinidad. Eastern Colorado looked a lot like Western Kansas: flat plains. There's even a National Grasslands, since they couldn't call it a forest without trees. Well, they could, but everyone would laugh.

After a while hills began rising in the landscape and it looked more interesting. By the time I got to Trinidad the scenery was definitely improved; medium and small mountains, partly covered with trees except for their rocky tops.

Trinidad is a picturesque town, having retained its original buildings and character. I decided to stop for food at La Fiesta, a small family-operated Mexican cafe. It proved quite tasty. Next door to La Fiesta was a bar called the Other Place. I went in for a beer. I noticed the bartender immediately. She was a slim brunette in a black skirt and tube top, a pretty smile and dancing eyes. She had a nicely done tattoo braceletting her left wrist. She also looked strangely familiar. As we talked between her errands to fetch drinks, she said I looked familiar to her, too. We established that we had been in Phoenix more or less the same time, but it wasn't till I asked if she'd ever danced there that we saw the connection. She said she'd danced at the Blue...something. Blue Moon! I said. I asked if she knew Gypsy Jill. Then she remembered it all: she was Patty; had been with Steve who rode the dresser, lived at Oregon Pines, along with Pan Billy, Pegleg, Peacock, Janet, and Jill and I. It had been back in 1983. This unlikely coincidental encounter got me a place to stay the night in her trailer just outside town, which was extremely fortunate because shortly after we got there it rained prodigiously. We spent a pleasant evening watching videos and talking about old times. She hadn't had a ride for awhile, so I took her for one in the morning before I left. She lived amid some beautiful scenery, Fisher's Peak just outside her door, and other nice hills, valleys, streams, and lakes around.

July 14

Leaving Trinidad, I rode down I-25, which winds up and down Raton Pass to Raton; pretty countryside all the way. It's 7800 feet at the top of the pass. Cool weather under blue skies and white clouds. In Cimarron I stopped at an outdoor tool and misc. sale, and noticed it was threatening to rain. I almost decided to try the 56 miles to Taos, but then I stopped at the edge of town and decided the small cafe looked better.

The rain stopped, and the sky turned blue again, so, on to Taos.

The road from Raton to Taos is indescribably beautiful. It descends into a forested canyon, with towering spired cliffs and a creek running beside the curvy road. Then, Eagles Nest: suddenly a lake appears, surrounded by mountains in a valley plain. It started sprinkling there, so I stopped at the Laguna Vista saloon, a very nice place in the little town there-- and had a beer while waiting for the rain to stop. The bartender was a very attractive lady who moved there two years before from Newport Beach. She likes it. I liked her. But, the rain quit, so I rode on. There was forest all the way to Taos.

Taos

It is indeed a cool place, but like many cool places it has become highly commercialized, so it's not quite as cool anymore. Still, it was interesting, and I spent some time checking it out to see if anything might happen. It didn't. I talked to one Harley rider from Georgia who got there 2 weeks ago and is now managing the Harley shop, which is owned by a local parole officer. Hmmm. He said there are some fun women in town, but I didn't find any.

After finally finding my way out of town on US-64 west, I rode a few miles into the setting sun and found what looks like a good campsite: a rest stop by the Rio Grande Gorge, with covered picnic tables.

July 15, 1989

I awake at the Crack of Dawn. I heard it: it sounds like a nice gentle pussy-fart. I don't often wake early enough to see the sun rise, but this morning it was like waking with my head between the spread thighs of a horny woman. There is no prettier color of reddish pink. It made me want to reach out and lick the crotch of the horizon. Pun intended.

Actually, that sound I heard was coming from a couple of hot-air balloons getting ready for flight nearby.

I got gas in Tres Piedres, and breakfast in Chama. Semi-desert plains alternate with forestland. I stopped in Farmington for gas and talked to a girl in a jeep heading for the Telluride Jazz Festival, then had a beer at Zia's west of town. On to Gallup, Holbrook, and US-666, The Beast Highway. I don't know if the number affects the driving, but twice on the two-lane road on a long straight portion, oncoming cars passing forced me to the shoulder rather than getting back in their own lane. Not nice.

I took the Beeline to Phoenix: home at 1:30 am on July 16.

Unified Field Theory Paradox

A true unified field theory would determine all our actions, including our search for the theory itself, and its outcome.

--Hawkings

April 24, 1989

Amazing Grace moved in.

June 23, 1989

Poppy? Well, girls are often named for flowers, and she is a charming little bloom--all 98 pounds of her. Conversation and a message led to a pleasurable evening. She was a delightful wench, and I told her so. Alas, it was a transitory relationship.

June 24

From a flower to a spice: Ginger. A pleasing blonde with tattoos I encountered playing pool at the Crazy Horse. If I hadn't thought Grace was coming back the next day, I would have kept her longer. As it turned out, I should have.

Anthropic Principle

If it wasn't like this, it wouldn't be like this.

(Or, it's like this because it had to be like this to result in us, so if it wasn't, we wouldn't be here to see how it was)

THE ANSWERING MACHINE

The telephone answering message could be up to 30 minutes in length, and this limit was approached by some of the creative messages, including sound plays featuring my roommate Hawkeye/Oracle (Terry Curry) and I, and the occasional guest star.

Phone Message I

We have occasionally received the impression that some of our friends experience frustration at reaching our android servant instead of one of the humans. We understand.

But remember, it is better to have eaten a handful of dried prunes and no cheese than ten pounds of cheese and no prunes.

Avail yourself of this time to meditate, clip your toenails, or scratch your private parts. No one is watching.

A camel in the ocean and a fish in the sand are both in deep trouble, but the fish is easier to fry.

The wise man knows that a fart in a thunderstorm often goes unnoticed.

At the tone, you may yell, *Hey, pick up the phone!* and curse a few times to emphasize your impatience, or calmly leave your message, to which we will respond when the universe wills.

(BEEP)

Phone Message II

[sound of applause] Thank you. The response has been overwhelming....well, whelming, anyway. It is clear that almost everyone appreciates and enjoys the hard work and creative effort we put into our telephone messages. You will be pleased to know that we are currently in production on an epic adventure, a full half hour of drama and humor, starring (no pun intended) those handsome heroes of hyperspace; those devastatingly debonair denizens of discordia; those arbitrary afficianados of alliteration: Captain Rat and...Oracle (aka Hawkeye). Keep tuning in to this number, and keep leaving those witty comments at the tone...

(BEEP)

Phone Message III

[A sound play featuring Captain Rat and Oracle]

Captain Rat: Oracle, allow me to congratulate you on your promotion from Hawkeye to Oracle.

Oracle: Thank you, Captain. I knew it was coming. I could sense it.

Captain Rat: Yes, you've always had the ability to smell rank.

Oracle: I wouldn't have put it quite that way...Captain, out here in space it's important to keep our wits about us.

Captain Rat: You're right, Oracle. Moscowitz! Horowitz! Report to the bridge!

Oracle: I'm glad you brought those lawyers. You never know when someone will hit you with a space suit.

Captain Rat: Well, time to get on with our mission.

Oracle: What is our mission, anyway? And how come we always fly by night?

Captain Rat: That's because it's a nocturnal mission.

Oracle: That could get sticky...

Captain Rat: As you know, we're privately funded...

Oracle: Well-funded privates are important.

Captain Rat: ...by Orgasm Research. They want us to contact alien women throughout the galaxy.

Oracle: And they're paying us for this?

Captain Rat: Of course. We're performing a vaginal service by probing deeply so we can come to know them better.

Oracle: I understand. It's like a political campaign.

Captain Rat: Political campaign?

Oracle: Well, it's going to be an erection year.

(BEEP)

Phone Message IV

Announcer: It's time once again to come fly with those nocturnal navigators of the nether nooks, those upright emessaries of eroticism: Captain Rat and Oracle!

Captain Rat: I'm glad we found this space bar. A cold beer would taste good about now.

Oracle: So would a warm woman.

[Sounds of music and clinking glasses]

Captain Rat: How about those reptile women over there?

Oracle: Hey, they're real longe lizards!

Captain Rat: They're nicely dressed-- I wonder who's their lizard tailor.

Oracle: There's pretty bird-woman playing pool...

Captain Rat: Cute chick. Think she'd like to feather your nest?

Oracle: I'd be tickled pink.

Captain Rat: Let's get a beer. Oh, bartender!

Wanda: Hi, strangers. I'm the bartender: Wanda. Beer?

Oracle: Yes, I wanda beer.

Wanda: No, I'm Wanda.

Captain Rat: OK, we'll buy you one, too.

Oracle: Yes, let's get Wanda a round.

Captain Rat: Check out the cat-woman with the sunglasses!

Oracle: She looks almost human with those shades on.

Captain Rat: Yes, but she just can't hide those lion eyes.

(BEEP)

Phone Message V

[This one was a reaction to an onslaught of phone sales calls from carpet cleaning companies. I like to think that because of this message, they discovered the error of their ways.]

So, you want to clean my carpet. Be aware that we know the scientific secrets that invalidate this concept. So long as gravity continues to operate, removing particles from the planetward side of the domicile is absurd. An infinity of particles just like them are poised to replace them, thus restoring the equilibrium. Eliminate gravity, and you will have a real service to sell. Please call again when you have done so. If you are not a carpet cleaner, please leave a message.

(BEEP)

Phone Message VI

Why won't they answer the phone?
Is it that they're not at home?
Or that they're in a dormant state?
They have been known to sleep quite late.

Perhaps another ring would wake 'em
But if they don't want to, you can't make 'em
They might have finally gone to take the garbage out
Or wanted seafood and went to buy some trout.

Or lobster, crab, oyster, or other crustacean
Or picking up a friend at the Greyhound bus station.
So hang on just a bit while the toilet's flushing
Some things you have to finish without too much rushing.
(BEEP)

Phone message VII

Welcome to Captain Rat and Oracle's used word lot. Did you ever need a good word, but you didn't know where to look? Well, look no further! We have acres and acres of fine used words, some almost new; others real classics. Nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs--they're all here. For that special feeling, try one of our gerunds.

We've got lots of participles, too, just dangling around idly. And, we take trade-ins. Bring us your old cliches; your worn-out trite phrases. We don't care if they run or not-- push, pull, tug, or tow them to our lot. We'll make a deal. Take a look at our inventory:

forsooth...exemplary...touchstone

intercourse...undulate...establishment

wherefore...factoid...facsimile
understatement...tubular...synapse
literary...inflammable...organism
pianist...appendix...afterglow
perpetuity...mound...linguistic
moisten...clavicord...tittilate
intonation
(BEEP)

To Grace

Both of us have loved before,
And lost, or tied, or got rained out.
Perhaps we've learned a thing or four;
We're experienced without a doubt.

Whether we're the worse for wear,
Or better, like fine wine or cheese,
Well, that is neither here nor there.
(But I'll pick the latter, if you please)

I like you better when you're near,
On that there's no confusion
What that portends or means my dear
I'll not leap to conclusion,

For we have time, and it is true
That we find each other tasty.
We'll explore the world of me and you;
There's no need to be hasty.

--captain rat

A black hole has no hair.
--Hawkings

August 20, 1989

She was sitting at the end of the bar by the back door, with intense seductive eyes that seemed to be looking my way rather than at the short gray-haired man who was talking to her and buying her drinks

After Frankie's closed we met again at an after-hours party. I found out her name was Shari.
[She later moved in with me, and eventually became my third wife, which seemed to go fairly well until around 2001.]

Insisting on Freedom

I am writing while I sit in Yellow Cab 267 waiting for the dispatcher to give me my next radio call. I get quite a bit of reading and writing done this way, since it is seldom so busy that I drive nonstop. I lease the cab for 24 hours every other day, usually sleeping about 5 hours of my shift, so am awake in my taxi an average of 66.5 hours per week. That is not as much work as it may seem, since much of the time I can sit and read a book, or write one. Every other day I have a day off, and I can arrange for more anytime I want. I like the freedom in my job.

Insisting on my freedom got me ejected from Central Missouri State College in 1967. I was living in unapproved housing: my Corvair Greenbrier van, for which I had traded my '59 Triumph TR-3, for which I had traded by '55 Chevy, for which I had traded my '59 Studebaker Lark. The Dean of Men, an ironic title for Hollis Chalquist, an ex-Marine, was obsessed with enforcing anachronistic standards on a changing world. He was unable to prove that I was not living in a required supervised room, so he set up a situation in which he could allege that I tried to run over a professor. It was an absurd and untrue charge, but Chalquist was both judge and jury, so I was suspended for a semester.

I was just becoming aware of the quest for peace, justice, and social change being undertaken by the idealists of my generation. My hair and beard got Chalquist's attention. I suddenly learned what it was like to encounter a negative attitude because I was different, something racial, ethnic, and religious minorities had known all along. Mine was a comparatively insignificant incident, but it made me experience first-hand the effects of prejudice and injustice.

My stepmother refused to send me even \$10 for a tank of gas, so I pawned a radio and set off for Kansas City, about 60 miles away. There I learned what it was like to be on my own in a strange city, having to take the first job I could get so I could eat. I picked mushrooms in dark unheated sheds in February for \$1.40 an hour. After a couple of weeks of this, I found a job that kept me warm and dry and fed, though it paid less: McDonald's. As it turned out, that job also brought me my first wife, to whom I sold a hamburger.

May 15, 1990

On May 1, our protagonist moved from 9644 to 9606, on 11th Avenue. He moved from an environment of unsupervised screaming brats and irritating neighbors to pleasant Harley-riding people, with the musical beat of V-twins. The old landlord practiced 18-century capitalism, and the new one seemed relaxed and reasonable. It was a good one-block move.

Captain Cab Fends off Assault

A crazed drunk began behaving inappropriately in Cab 203 shortly after the start of a 4-block ride. When asked to leave the vehicle, he responded by striking the driver, the first such occurrence in his 7-year career. At this, the Captain seized the assailant by the throat and forced him back against the seat. This blocked any further attack. Then he asked the dispatcher to send the police. The misbehaving passenger fled on foot.

Shirley the tattoo artist again sought rescue, like a damsel in distress. She seemed not to be interested in a sexual relationship, but rewarded Michael with a tattoo. She was attractive and likable, a spirited personality, though she could sometimes get picky and demanding, a compensating reaction to her insecurity. Michael didn't pursue her sexually, though he wouldn't have turned her down, either.

Shari seemed pleasant and uncomplicated; though a bit overweight, she was reasonably attractive, sexually eager, and good to fuck.

Meanwhile, Brat returned, out of jail on parole. She had a work-furlough 6 months ago, but that turned out to be a computer error. She also wanted to fuck, but due to a previous date with Shari, that would have to wait until Friday, May 18.

Jody was a very interesting lady; extremely pretty, a great body, and a nice person with a friendly smile. Unfortunately, she had been vulnerable to people-using men. She was attracted to men who "need" her, whose lives needed "fixing". Then, when they are ungrateful enough to cheat on her or treat her badly, she is devastated.

As Michael had done in the past, she forgets that helping others doesn't always produce gratitude. It enhances love in the giver, not the givee. You can't change another person, no matter how much they need changing.

Michael had believed that the sheer power of his love, his understanding, and his goodness would surely correct any wrongs in the woman he loved. How could any problem withstand the intensity of such love, and the determination that love must conquer all?

Love between sex partners is the force that makes human society possible. It is the glue of civilization. Yet, we understand it even less than gravity, which holds the universe together. But, like gravity, love does tend to act according to certain natural laws. These laws are generally ignored by most people who have an ideal concept of how love should behave.

Is it desirable to be needed? It boosts the ego, and leads one to believe in inextricable interdependence. It elevates the lover to the level of oxygen, food, and water, gratifying to one who romantically believes the need is mutual.

Change

Although the young are the natural leaders of change, when things improve, they may think they have done all they could, because they don't know how good it can get. When things get worse, they may become apathetic because they don't know how bad it can get.

It was early on a Thursday morning. Captain Cab had been driving all night. Wednesday night had been even slower than usual. He pulled his taxi into a North Phoenix driveway and started to get out to knock, but a woman waved out the door and said "Just a minute", so he sat back down and started to roll a cigarette.

Shortly, two Phoenix fuzzmobiles pulled up in front of the same house. A tall slim young man with one bad hand emerged from the house to confer with the cops. The Captain overheard him tell the boys in blue that he had been threatened at gunpoint over some money he owed. No, he didn't want to make a report. No, he couldn't identify them. He just wanted protection getting into the cab.

The man got in, accompanied by his dog, while with black spots. "This could be interesting", thought Captain Cab. Visions of skillful tail evasions, and a generous tip flashed through his head. Once the trip was underway, headed to Scottsdale, the true story was revealed.

"The reason those guys held me at gunpoint was I've got 2 pounds of good crystal, and they wanted it." The Captain commented, "Then I don't think calling the cops was a good idea."

"I didn't tell them about the crystal, and they don't know my name", he replied. "I just wanted them to scare off those guys." A little further down the road, he asked, "Can you have your dispatcher make a phone call for me?"

"No."

"I'll pay you extra."

"The dispatcher won't do personal phone calls."

"It's not personal-- it's business."

"It's not cab business. I can stop at a pay phone if you want." They stopped at the Central and Coulter Circle-K. After the call, he said, "A woman in a white Ford is bringing me some money. We have to wait." The meter was clicking 40 cents every 80 seconds. The Captain had no complaint.

"If you see a blue bug or a red truck, go, and don't stop."

"OK."

"Let's go do a line." They drove to a residential area and parked by a hedge. "Ever heard of green kryptonite?" Sure enough, the white powder had a greenish tinge. It was potent, too-- eye-opening,

nose-burning, teeth-clenching speed. They went back to the corner to wait for the white Ford. The bad-handed man watched each passing car tensely for 20 minutes, mistakenly spotting it several times. Finally he said, "We can't wait any longer. Take me to 30th and Thomas, but first stop at Western Union. As the Captain smoothly wove his way down the busy streets, the Dalmatian occasionally looked at another car and barked. Perhaps he shared his master's paranoia. The Captain kept a sharp eye on the rear-view for tails, but there were none.

A telephone answering machine greeting

Michael: Please allow my disembodied voice to welcome you to our alternate reality.

Terry: If you don't know who we are, you probably have the wrong number.

Michael: The music you are hearing is being generated at random by a computer program. It is intended to convey the truly random nature of the universe.

Terry: If you perceive any order to its rhythm or melody, your mind is superimposing it.

Michael: Speaking of the universe, in the interest of intergalactic harmony, we are presently seeking alien woman for a series of peace conferences.

Terry: We don't mean from other Earth countries-- we mean REALLY far out.

Michael: Mellow-Yellow fans-- in June and July, the canary will fly on odd nights and even days.

This machine features a special erogenous tone. Place the receiver against a sensitive part of your body when I finish speaking. Afterward, if you can, leave your message.

Another answering machine greeting

Greetings and felicitations. This telephone is equipped with an automatic electroencephalographic vibe detector. This new device measures the attitude of the caller. If you are a friend, or you are calling for a good purpose, there is no charge for this call. However, if the EEVD detects bad vibes, appropriate charges will appear on your phone bill.

The household you have reached is one of the few citadels of relaxation and positive energy in the known universe. To maintain this balance, we must reject telephone salespeople, especially if they threaten to clean our carpets or sic their dogma on us.

The Snake Lady (some constrictions may apply)

She appeared to be with someone at Frankie's, so though I noticed an impish attractiveness in her expression, interesting tattoos, and a pleasant slim body, I didn't pursue her in my mind.

Later, her companion disappeared. I noticed she seemed amused by Terry's wry humor as the clock hand reached to close the bar. Terry didn't react to this encouragement; he left at closing. As I walked

out to my bike, I heard her say something about hitching to 20th Street and McDowell. I asked her if she'd like to come over for a beer, and I'd give her a ride home later. She readily agreed, as if that's what she wanted to do all along. At this point I still thought she was interested in Terry. She knew we were roommates.

She proved to be talkative and bright, a good conversationalist. Terry and I played some of our favorite tapes of lesser-known artists-- Tom Waites, Ken Nordine, etc.

She said she is called the Snake Lady. She took to Monte the python right away, and vice versa. She has a balled python of her own, and revealed that Monte is a female, while hers is a male, so we discussed intertwining our snakes-- object, snakelets.

It was not yet clear who she wanted to intertwine with-- she wasn't notably flirtatious with either of us, though friendly and open. After hours of music and talk, I decided to crash, went to my room, undressed, and laid down. Quite shortly thereafter she was lying down next to me, caressing me to alertness, not to mention erectness. Before going to sleep we made love twice. Her slim agile body was quite delightful, and she seemed to genuinely enjoy herself.

When I awoke, her naked sleeping body still looked good, but unfortunately I had a dental appointment. I returned later and took her home. She seemed affectionate and interested in seeing me again.

Brandy

Luck with women never hurts, and sometimes fortune comes in spurts.

Just days later, a small, slim "tiny dancer" with a beguiling smile expressed a desire to take a ride on my Ratster...and afterward, on me.

Gypsy Jill nearly acted her way into Cher's dressing room before a concert. She hired a limousine and told the driver "I do Cher's nails." Convinced of the importance of his mission, the limo driver bypassed heavy concert traffic to rush to the backstage entrance, past several security people. Alas, the final step, convincing the stage door guard, failed due to timing. Cher was already headed to the stage,

and would not have had time to get her nails done. Jill, looking just as glamorous and even more exotic than the star, was easily believable in her pretended role.

She said, "I'm sorry it didn't work. I'm sure Cher and I would have hit it off, and I'd do a great job on her nails."

Perhaps it becomes more strikingly evident during the summer when the cab business is slower, and I am working longer hours and sweating in the heat, feeling more weary afterward, for less money, barely making rent and bills, and once again not being able to make it to Sturgis...perhaps then it is more irritating when I walk into the living room and see Terry playing endless computer games, the house in general disarray, the garbage can full of empty beer cans, 90% of which I didn't empty.

It is not less irritating that he knows without my telling him that he is being a burden, and tells me he is depressed by it. Of course I don't want to add to his depression because that will make it harder for him to find a job, so I don't tell him that I, too, am depressed by it.

And just as I try to spare one person I care about my negative feelings, it is also difficult to deal with Kansas Gypsy, who showed up to visit for an indefinite period without warning. Although we had previously discussed riding to Sturgis together IF I went, she knew there was considerable doubt that I could, but she left a message that she was coming, and then DID.

Though I like her, she has decided she is in love with me, and that, along with her tendency to cling, can be rather draining, especially for longer than a few days. Her arrival at the economically leanest time reminded me I was missing Sturgis, forcing me to put Shari on hold, all added up to cause undue stress. When I tried to partially explain in a kind way, her response was essentially that she wanted to see me, and my discomfort with this was not as important. Perhaps my staying out all night after that was rather hurtful, but I needed to do it, and it seems to have conveyed what my words didn't. She left.

Perhaps there is a lesson here, that being too careful of others' feelings can lead to more problems than direct and immediate honesty.

"Oh, Mr. Taxi Driver!"

The teenage girl walked purposefully toward my cab as she uttered those words. It pleased me to hear the tone and form of respect she used. There are those who use the term "cabbie", which, though not specifically derogatory, usually implies that we are, in someone's opinion, low in status. Such people refer to bellhops as "boy", and look down on service occupations, even when they are highly skilled, self-employed professionals.

The girl had left the group with whom she had been hanging out in the Safeway parking lot to approach my gleaming Yellow Cab as it sat under the gleaming Xenon light awaiting my next call. She was long-limbed, immaturely formed, but pleasant to observe. As she drew near, she smiled and politely asked, "Do you have a cigarette?"

I said, "I'll have to roll you one."

Her eyes lit up. “Roll a cigarette? Oh, wow, how do you do that?” She really seemed to have never heard of such a thing.

“Like this”, I replied, and opened my tin, withdrew my rolling machine and papers, and prepared her a perfect Zi-Zag cigarette as she watched, fascinated. I handed it to her. She held it as if it were a magic talisman or a rare jewel.

“Wow”, she said, “I’ll cherish it!” She turned to return to her friends, intent on sharing her new discovery. She probably didn’t hear me say, “Or, you could smoke it.”

Not surprisingly, Michael and other drivers had formed and expressed opinions about Yellow Cab’s management, as in this bit of satire:

Yellow Cab Co.

Interoffice memo

Not for Release to Drivers

As many of you know, there are discrepancies between much of the information we provide to drivers and the actual facts. For example, the recent rate and lease increase: we knew that the 8% rate hike would not offset the 25% lease increase, and only a small percentage of that was needed to pay for workman’s comp.

The purpose of many policy decisions is to assure that (1) driver’s do not organize for collective bargaining, and (2) drivers do not make too much money. The first objective is achieved by causing drivers to distrust and dislike one another as much or more than they dislike and distrust the company. While officially condemning scooping and lying on stands, our system encourages both. The recent zone changes expand the areas in which this system works. Our antiquated and inadequate radio system allows one “open mike” to disrupt business, which is blamed on an unknown driver.

Dispatchers constantly accuse drivers of wrongdoing whether true or not, giving the impression that cheating and incompetence are common. This antagonistic approach also increases the frequency of deliberate “open mikes”.

The second objective, limiting driver income, is necessary to keep drivers from becoming too independent and endangering company control over them. Otherwise too many could afford to become owner-operators, or to develop an attitude of demanding better service on the cars and radios they lease. We must maintain a high level of driver frustration, which impairs their ability to be cheerful and pleasant to customers, and earn tips. To this end, we avoid advertising and seeking high-end business, instead providing accounts with low-dollar special rates. “Personals” are discouraged, and good ones are often sabotaged.

The need for this anti-driver policy is made evident by the fact that in some cities driver groups were able to pool resources and perform a hostile takeover of their company, leaving the original owner bankrupt. This cannot be allowed to happen here.

The Ken-bird

One sunny day I sat waiting,
In my cab I sat waiting,
Waiting, waiting for a call
To come upon my radio.
Suddenly I heard squawking,
Squealing, screeching, not talking
Horrible noises proudly barking
At tender ears with which I hearkened.
I cried, "Oh, Ken-bird,
What is this?
And when, pray tell, will it desist?"
The radio, it squealed once more,
And, quoth the Ken-bird, "Nevermore".
"How," I asked, "do I get calls,
When your voice is nought but squalls?"
The Ken-bird grinned, his eyes were rolling,
"Perhaps, then, you should take up bowling."
I said, "But Ken-bird,
The screech assails me
And the good signals do fail me.
Please make it like it was before."
Quoth the Ken-bird, "Nevermore."
"But why, O Ken-bird, can this be?"
"We don't care", he chirped with glee.
An awful squall like a rusty chair
Came deafeningly over air.
Then the Ken-bird was no more
Only a spot upon the floor
As we looked closer, we could see,
He'd left behind just Ken-debris.

An answering machine greeting

In dialog-verse form

Michael: Forsooth! Methinks a bell hath tolled!

Terry: Knowest thou who be the belle, and who she would tell?

Michael: Ask not for whom the bell tolls.

Terry: Then be it a Southern belle, and what is the toll?

Michael: 'Tis but a Mountain Bell, and a tale that is told.

Terry: And who was she mountin'? Tell the tale of the tail.

Michael: To be or to see, to do or to woo...

Terry: Shew be, do be, doobie dew?

Michael: The tail hangs in the balance.

Terry: Let it sit on the face of a coin, be it head or tail.

Michael: Again, the tintinabulation of the bells, bells, bells, bells.

Terry: You must be feeling Poe-ly...let the machine answer it.

On December 30, as 1990 was rushing to an inevitable death, Susan Leona Strode Waller, my stepmother, died in St. Petersburg, Florida, the site of my birth and of my real mother's death in 1946.

In a letter to my sister Pat, I wrote: "I was thinking that it's too bad we weren't closer in age so that we could relate on the same level when we were growing up. By the time we could have, it was time for me to leave. Nevertheless, considering that conditions were optimum for sibling rivalry, I thought we got along rather well. Were you serious about it bothering you that I used to call you "brat"? You should know that nicknames are a sign of affection, especially when it can't be openly admitted.

I know it wasn't your fault that everyone thought you were cute and adorable, while I was either ignored or yelled at. Still, I could not openly join your fan club, and I never thought you needed my approval. I often wished you could be on my side, since no one else was, but it didn't seem likely.

Adversity and solitude in childhood has probably made me a stronger adult. I learned the value of relying on myself for approval as well as material needs. I learned the importance of questioning authority. I value honesty and integrity much higher than money, so I will not pretend to be someone I'm not for material gain.

It is said that he who tells the truth should have one foot in the stirrup."

April 4, 1991

It was the morning of. According to plan, Jill and John arrived at our home on State at 7:00 am. By 7:30 we were on our way to Garden Grove, an Orange County suburb of Los Angeles near Anaheim. John drove, while I navigated and punned. It was a groan experience. We arrived at the Hyatt at Harbor and Chapman in good time, before registration began at 2:30. It was obvious we were in the right place; as we drove up the stone-tiled drive past the giant pink flamingos in the fountain we could see illustrations on the strategically bared skin of those who had been drawn together there.

After an overpriced cocktail in the hotel bar we stood in a long line to register for the convention, getting our badge pins, ballots, and schedules. A brief fight erupted nearby, cause unknown. Afterward, peace reigned throughout. A party of sorts was next, for the tattooed to see and be seen. Unfortunately, we had charged an old battery, thus battering a dead horse, and the videocamera wouldn't cam. After feasting our eyes on hundreds of moving pictures, and proudly displaying our own, we chose one of many motels nearby. We were, after all, only a throne's stow away from the Magic Kingdom.

In our room, Shari and I gave the videocamera a thorough test, which it passed with flying colors. With the right battery charged, we were ready for action. Next day was the tattoo competition, when the conventioners voted to choose the best tattoos in various categories. Shari's dragon, done by Jill, was entered in *best back or chest*. Each tattoo was paraded on stage, accompanied by the person whose skin it was on. I recorded the events on videotape, a task which I discovered was not as easy as it looks on TV.

Nearby was a channel 5 news reporter interviewing several artists and contestants, so I also taped him taping them. Later, on the 10:00 pm news, I saw that he had taped me taping him, so, pointing the camera at the TV, I taped him taping me taping him. Fortunately he was not there to tape me doing that, since it might have led to an infinite regression, leaving our objective reality to enter a spiral of mutually dependent electronic symbiosis. If a tree falls in a forest unwitnessed by Eyewitness News, does it make an unconfirmed report? Chances are, the other trees will leave, refusing to bark about it.

But, I digress. I was happy to see that the news report was quite positive. Often the media tend to be snide or snooty about tattoos, or anything outside their narrow suburban lifestyles. Even the Arizona Republic had a well-written 2-page article with color pictures. The second night we

stayed in Venice, taking late night and early morning walks on the beach, checking to see if it was like it used to be. The answer was yes and no.

Saturday there were tattooing booths open to the public for a \$5 admission, an opportunity to choose from among the best tattoo artists from all over the world. The planners hadn't expected the size of the crowd. It was so packed that it was difficult to move or even stand, and videotaping was a real problem. More than 4000 attended Saturday and Sunday. Despite the congestion, it was interesting to watch.

There was a lecture by Jack Rudy on the history of black and grey tattooing. He is considered the originator of fine-line work, and specializes in doing portraits. I've seen him duplicate a photograph in a tattoo, which is not easy. The fine-line single-needle style began mostly in prisons, where self-taught artists with lots of time on their hands built their own machines from cassette-recorder motors, toothbrush handles, and guitar strings, many of whom did very good detailed work at a time when professional artists were using a much heavier line style. Rudy's contribution was a synthesis of the two.

We left Saturday evening, since Sunday would be a repeat of Saturday.

1996

On Homicide

Murder, of course, is always a bad thing. If it were not sufficiently serious to be murdered, people are often reported to be "brutally murdered". This implies that there are non-brutal, perhaps gentle or refined murders. To the victim, the distinction is moot, while the survivors may be expected to be more horrified.

Actually, the reverse should be true. A brutal murder likely involves physical action, perhaps using more force than necessary to cause death. This might indicate an act committed in the heat of anger, whether unplanned or an act of revenge.

In contrast, a gentle murder would likely be premeditated, perpetrated on an unsuspecting victim, performed with skill and efficiency, calmly, motivated by greed or for no reason at all. Though less messy, perhaps less painful, wouldn't this actually be more horrifying?

Once upon a time, a woman worked for a church, trying to convert native people to her religion. She became disenchanted with this, and became a pet groomer for show canines. She had gone from a missionary position to doggie-styling.

9608.31 Labor Day Weekend

Mingus mountain between Prescott and Jerome-- highway 89A. Tall pines, short fat rocks, whistling winds, but mostly quiet enough to hear a fart at 100 yards, and smell it if the wind is right.

Sunday we took a hike and found a camp fireplace with the remains of an occult ritual, perhaps native American or Wiccan. There was a stick carved into the likeness of a snake, not detailed but suggestive, with several notches along it, and a sharp point at the tail. There were several wooden dowels, sharpened on one end as if by machine, some with square notches in the other ends. Some had been tied in pairs with cotton string, together with pouches, perhaps made of corn husks, containing some blue powdery substance. There was also a small bag of the blue powder, a corner of a plastic bag, tied but left in the fireplace. There were also some large bird feathers in the area.

Our campsite was the last that was reasonably accessible to a vehicle without 4-wheel drive; we drove over some large rocks to get this far. While we were camped one Jeep Cherokee went further down, and returned later that day. The road in went south. We camped west of the road, facing east. To the west the land sloped down toward a valley, with another rise on the other side of it, all covered with pines, some cedar, and the occasional succulent and cactus.

To the east of us, on somewhat higher ground stand several radio/TV towers, broadcasting and/or microwave relay. TV sound, mostly religious and home shopping, came in on several scanner frequencies. Glendale PD's trunked 856 to 860 megahertz frequencies came in just as clearly as in Glendale, though other Phoenix frequencies did not.

Though rain was reported to the north, we got only moderate breezes here, which of course continued to whistle-roar through the pines in a strange but pleasant almost surf-like sound.

A Future Holiday

Once an anonymous date on a calendar on which Labor Day might occur occasionally, September 8 was declared a national holiday by a unanimous vote of Congress in 2146, and a world holiday by the UN General Assembly in 2149. Designated Cosmic Unity Day, it was the birthday of Michael Owens Waller, also known as Michael Alonzo Walker, whose writings, transmitted toward space, became the basis of interstellar understanding between Earth and three extraterrestrial civilizations contacted so far. Although he was never paid for his work, Michael won a lottery, and was able to afford cryogenic preservation in 2049. After his scheduled thawing in 2196, he will be the first person able to celebrate his own memorial holiday.

9610.12

On the spur of the moment, a whim out of the blue, we loaded the Ranger with our camping gear and headed to Laughlin just for Laughs. Due to the Pat Benatar concert every room in Laughlin was booked, so we had to stay on the more expensive Arizona side in Bullhead City, \$55, about \$25 more than prices in Nevada. The room was spacious enough to throw a sizable orgy, as long as most participants didn't require a bed. The motel style was more practical for moving things into the room so they didn't disappear, and rides across the river were free.

The road, US 93 to I-40 to AZ-68, was scenic but 2 lanes most of the way, lined with white crosses commemorating those dead from unwise passing. If you don't pass wisely, you may pass on. While we visually seemed to go up and down hills, the Ranger knew we were making a long climb. It did not

complain, though, keeping a cool head and pumping its 4 pistons with smooth powerful strokes all the way to the peak. Joshua trees, iron-tipped mountains, shapely rock piles, precariously balanced boulders, hills dotted with spears of saguaro.

We stopped at Nothing. A cage of rattlers, a gift shop, convenience store, towing service, and gas station, all in one. It was efficiently run by the town's population of 4. I asked about a bumpersticker, and the old man said, "They've been ordered, but they're gone now. They were right here," pointing to a bumpersticker-sized empty space in the glass case. Clearly, they were gone. If possible, I will check on the way back to see if the order came in. Meanwhile, I bought a Nothing hat.

Kingman is notably treeless, except for a very few obviously planted and watered, standing in ruler-straight evenly spaced rows. On the outskirts is a golf course, and its bright green watered grass contrasts like neon with the dry rocky sand that is the norm. Perhaps such harsh desolate land alters the mood of the precarious tilting mind of such as the Oklahoma City bomber. How appropriate that he used fertilizer as bomb material.

Of course the desert, even in its extremes, has a natural beauty that, left unmolested, can be admired by anyone who can separate the pure aesthetics from the question of whether the area would be a good place to live.

The Colorado river is so picturesque one might suspect the casino moguls of tinting the water and hiring actors to boat or ski it. Folks are mighty friendly and helpful to a public which continues to, by the laws of chance, lose vast amounts of money to be spread among the smiling providers of hope for lucky wealth.

We took time out from the pursuit of major coin return to cover ourselves in olive oil and test our lubricated skin friction. It had a beneficial effect in lengthening the experience. Sunday, we crossed the Colorado to the other Riverside, where a room in the high-rise is \$17.95. Parking varlets, boys of the bell, and punoramic views. The original Laughlin casino/hotel began in 1966 with 8 rooms by Don Laughlin. If you can get lots of people to give you a quarter, it adds up.

Though the settings are luxurious, there seems to be no snobbery or affectation as is often the case in big hotels, where a pretentious staff tries to impress pretentious guests to justify huge rates. All the Laughlin casino hotels seem to recognize that it is not the self-indulgent rich who make thgem successful, but the hundreds of thousands of regular people who come for a day or two of fun.

I Exist

If I hadn't been born, I would not have known it, and therefore could not regret it, just as I will know nothing after I die. It is only during conscious life that the result of any decision can be enjoyed or regretted.

If a different sperm had won the prize, or if none had, then history in some small way may have been different. There may be parallel universes for each of the thousands of sperm that might have placed first at every conception, and every conceivable ejaculation. That is a lot of fucking universes.

But, if it were possible to travel among them, it might take extensive research in each to tell the difference. Unless some transuniversal recordkeeper had written a guidebook, one wouldn't know which chance happening among the many billions was different.

So, don't worry. Be happy. As for me, I do exist, and I'm trying to make the best of it.

9611

Ken Devries, the classic dispatcher (the Ken-bird), died on 9611.09 at age 53. He was dispatching when I started driving in 1983. His voice was perfect for the job. It came through the radio loud, clear, and authoritative, when the signal was good. He never had to actually shout when delivering his lectures on cabdriving as he saw it, or criticizing a real or imagined error by a driver. No one could infuriate like he could, especially when he accused wrongly, jumping to conclusions when a customer was not picked up. But he was one of the few who actually cared whether calls were covered and drivers played by the rules. Though he often picked on drivers, he was not contemptuous of them as management often was. He dispatched with the confidence of one who knew his job and his ability. May he 10-7 in peace.

Out with the tied

The necktie in Western society is a symbol of submission. As much as tie-wearing drones try to avoid this conclusion, it is inescapable. The tie evolved directly from the slave-collar, which in turn evolved from a practical means of controlling any captive, human or animal. Tie a rope around someone's neck and you assert control. A sharp tug will choke him, and a hard jerk could easily kill. Once your captive is intimidated and convinced that escape is hopeless, then the collar, chain, or thong may be left dangling as a reminder and symbol of subjugation.

Now that literal slavery is no longer practiced, the necktie's statement of submission is more subtle, yet nonetheless real.
