

# **The PORTABLE WALL**

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**VOLUME II NUMBER 2 SPRING 1988**

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**A real homemade magazine**

**-Claude Scotte returns!  
--stories, news, letters, health  
hints, comix, poetry  
--Irreverant! Free press!**



# THE PORTABLE WALL

**VOLUME II NUMBER 2 SPRING 1988**

Idle Reader,

This is the tradition of THE PORTABLE WALL: Freedom of expression. I'll admit the actual mag has never lived up to what it could be. . . but it could be . . . next time! As we oil up the press here at Basement I feel that same delight in being free of shackling concerns for profit. Nor are we nonprofit, as in government tax regs. (No stamped paper to be had.) I'm going to suspend the "fine print" thing this issue. I have a new offset press. Anyway my nephews, the Angel Bros., are not here to set type.

I did some collaborating with Linda Flechsig, a writer with whom I have been friends nearly ten years. Several months ago over a cup of cocoa she



told howa job she had with the government ruined her hope of fairness and justice. She was angry and indignant.

The wall, of which this mag is a portable, is the one with handwriting.

THE PORTABLE WALL

• Dan Struckman  
215 Burlington  
Billings, Montana 59101

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# LETTERS & HEALTH HINTS

I'm still working for the California Department of Parks and Recreation but have changed jobs, at least temporarily. A year ago I moved from Restoration Archeology to Museum Collections Management work on what's called a "Training and Development" assignment. I'm apparently half-trained and developed, as the time's half gone. Actually, I'm the resident microcomputer nanny, working at handling information about the comings and goings of our collections, trying to justify (ad nauseum) bigger computers more appropriate to the task at hand, etc. I got excited about microcomputers about 1980 (a long time ago, microcomputerly speaking), seeing lots of ways they could be used in archeology, history, museums. Anyway I'm finally getting some formal training and generally enjoying myself but remain a little confused about ends and means, medium and message. I am missing the archeological field work, dirty old buildings, the bits and pieces that speak (ever so haltingly) about the folks who populated my projects in years gone by. We'll see...

One of the more sobering realities in our lives at present is our friend who has AIDS. Welcome to the 1990's. Actually he's doing quite well at the moment, thanks to the AZT—well enough to be off to Washington at the front of the parade in his wheelchair last October. He came back all fired up. Yes it can (and will) happen here, and when it does it's scary. Like other crises, however, it does seem to bring out a lot of the good in people (most of them anyway). A lot of the

veneer, stereotypes, every-day problems sort of fall away, leaving here and now, in all its everydayness, to be made the best of.

Dear PW:

I thought the last *The Portable Wall* was very classy. It looks great—I read lots in between my organic chemistry lessons. Trying to finish my Masters thesis this year.

Frank Dugan  
Missoula, Montana

Dear PW:

I am writing to comment on the poetry I found in the last issue of *The Portable Wall*. Give me a break, Dan! "Aftermath of a day at the Beach" brings back old memories of checklists in military tech manuals, "Out in the Big Empty" sounds like the opening to yet another Rambo sequel and "Elms" like a poorly-written short story. "Mobeus Surf" reads better if you take out every other line and read it backwards! I won't comment on "No Fun!!!" for obvious reasons, but you've got to be kidding.

What's wrong with rhyme? What's wrong with a certain rhythm? What ever happened to "There once was a girl from Nantucket," etc. etc.? Now that's real poetry!

Poets should stop thinking about their own quest for individuality and start considering the pleasure a well written poem gives the reader.

Ronson Pilch III  
Box 1  
Billings, Montana

## Fryberger's Inferno

I didn't use to read fiction. I found truth to be not only stranger but stronger. Why read a novel (a fiction!)

*was a dark, secluding place called Alley Oop's (in honor of the caveman hero, as we were a rather antediluvian bunch), to have dinny*

about the Amazon when you could plunge into *The Rivers Ran East* (Leonard Clark) or *Yanoama* (Ettore Biocca), hair raising accounts of true facts from the depths?

Two Latin-American novels, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Gabriel Garcia Marquez) and *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon* (Jorge Amado), booted me from my dogmatic slumber. Hey, this stuff is better than the facts—funnier, sexier, more mysterious. This stuff is passionate! In most books from the United States I find a coolly contained passion. Eries of ironies. Chilling out.

But take *Infante's Inferno*, please. Steal that book! Okay, it's not for everybody. One blurb sums it up in terms of "...tawdry, macho Cuban sex." Not every body's cup of T(estosterone).

"Give me libertinism or give me death," proclaims G. Cabrera Infante, author, and protagonist in that "waist land of sex," Havana in the late '40's. We accompany Infante, the timid predator ("only a shy oxymoron like me could have been so daring."), through his early tit-illations, his inevitable cumming of age, and his further randy rendezvous. (It's fun to write *a la* Infante.) The novel is engorged with Infante's fornications, but the writing does not merely cater to voyeurism:

*"Other times we ventured further: to the waterfront bars on the Alameda de Paula, where there*



Dirk Lee

*with King Guzzle and Chairman Moo, and usually we ended up on Virtudes Street in a place called Cave Can, barking our heads off on the border of the Colon colony, lupanar zone, from bar to bayu. What a howler that was—drinking wolfsbane juice with a lupa vulgaris or rather, vulvaris."*

Now that's a pretty tough read—I need at least a couple of dictionaries to parse such a passage—but the humor and the erotic pulse tend to carry you along, and sometimes, away.

Go to p. 14 please

It was January 13, 1988, Billings Montana. I was trying to find a certain book so I could fix my new printing press I bought Saturday from Jerry Oblander.



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Jerry & his brother-in-law

eased it down while  
Stacy Emmett and I  
worked from below.  
we had the rope  
looped around a  
car bumper

CUT AWAY  
VIEW OF  
STAIRS

The "Book Place" was locked up, all right. As I walked back to the van a young man yelled from a passing pick up truck ...



Claude, as usual, has everything under control. How does he do it? Let's ask him ...



## THE PORTABLE WALL

... "A thing of the past"  
— Claude Scottie

Where is Claude these days?  
Living at home, of course —



Hi boys and girls - you think it's easy being the sage for the Portable Wall? Right! When you have learned (the way I have) to see the truth through the always heavy bombardment of horse biscuits, then the rest is easy. Except I gotta fill up the rest of the panel. We got a new printing press and now I can strew my mess all over town! Heh! Heh! (Cackle) Heh! Snort! (Dang kids!)

Let's be honest! Happiness is gotten by helping others. The goal of all this is to become as fully human as possible. What do we need with a larger defense budget?? We have to help those we've been neglecting - Politicians?!! Bah! Look around you!

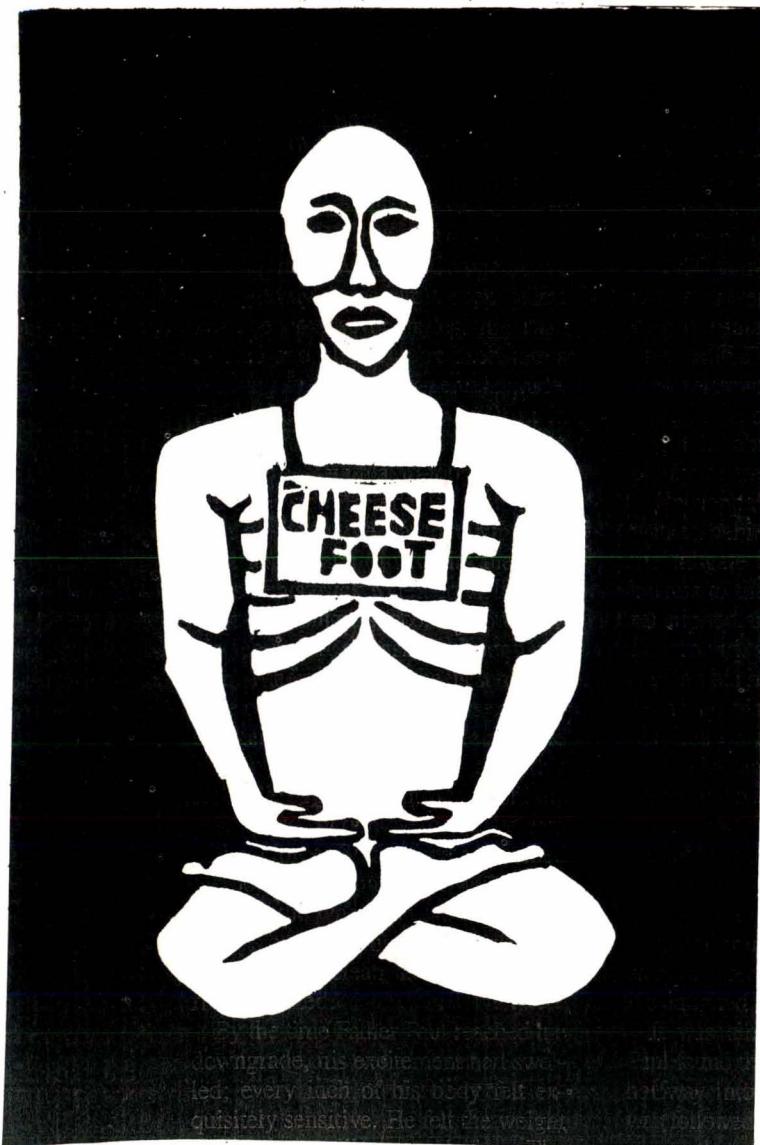
— Like that fat guy who lives next door. We don't know. Maybe we can learn a lot from the dude with the fat gut - So c'mon! Let's go meet him...



So?  
I don't want any!



Jon Angel



Dear PW:

The first number of your second volume is splendid! The content, as always, with *The Portable Wall*, provided a serendipitous experience, but it was the handset type and letter-press printing that touched my heart and mind. You are practicing an admirable craft in every way.

Nathaniel Blumberg  
Wood, Fire, Ashes Press  
Box 99  
Big Fork, Montana 59911

Dear PW:

We got your magazine some time back. Your printing press creates a dandy product—each letter stomped right down there into the body of the paper—you could probably read it even if you forgot the ink.

Larry Felton  
1026 37th Street  
Sacramento, California 95816

Dear PW:

I read the issue of *The Portable Wall* which came in the mail today. I was delighted by the publication and am eager to get it on its way into the hands of some of my friends. I especially enjoyed your soap operette "Self Service" and am eagerly awaiting the next installment.

Congratulations and keep up the good work on the *Wall*.

Renee Sherrer  
Box 1456  
Montana Institute of the Arts  
Billings, Montana 59103

Dear PW:

Mark Fryberger sent me a copy of *The Portable Wall* the other week, and I was happy to hear the news and see the work!! I'm glad it's still there.

Peter Rutledge Koch  
Typographic Design  
439 23rd Street  
Oakland, California 94612

# *A Confederacy of Dunces*

JOHN KENNEDY TOOLE

LOUISIANA STATE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS  
*Baton Rouge and London*  
1980

His vision of history temporarily fading, Ignatius sketched a noose at the bottom of the page. Then he drew a revolver and a little box on which he neatly printed GAS CHAMBER. He scratched the side of the pencil back and forth across the paper and labeled this APOCALYPSE. When he had finished decorating the page, he threw the tablet to the floor among many others that were scattered about. This had been a very productive morning, he thought. He had not accomplished so much in weeks. Looking at the dozens of Big Chief tablets that made a rug of Indian headdresses around the bed, Ignatius thought smugly that on their yellowed pages and wide-ruled lines were the seeds of a magnificent study in comparative history. Very disordered, of course. But one day he would assume the task of editing these fragments of his mentality into a jigsaw puzzle of a very grand design; the completed puzzle would show literate men the disaster course that history had been taking for the past four centuries. In the five years that he had dedicated to this work, he had produced an average of only six paragraphs monthly. He could not even remember what he had written in some of the tablets, and he realized that several were filled principally with doodling. However, Ignatius thought calmly, Rome was not built in a day.

## BREAKING-IN A NEW PAIR OF SPECS

Accidents scream from the radio,  
newspapers drip with gore,  
folks run-down, bent or pruned,  
who can tote the score?

It's too bad, it's really sad,  
but I've got my own pain in the neck,  
oh, it's true, my nose has turned blue,  
breaking-in a new pair of specs.

I don't say I'm punctured,  
lacerated or lamed,  
I haven't been whiplashed,  
stove-in or maimed.

What goes with me, it's plain to see,  
is the death of a thousand pecks,  
yes, my dear, I've sawn off my ear,  
breaking-in a new pair of specs.

New glasses are a finicky tenant,  
just moved into a new place,  
they scratch, gouge and pinch,  
rearranging the furniture on your face.

Glasses shrill their implacable will,  
to leave your head a wreck:  
“Ah, it's clear, your nose should go here,”  
breaking-in a new pair of specs

Now I'd tiptoe to Timbuctu,  
I'd flap through outer space,  
I'd crawl on my knees anywhere,  
to pry this monster from my face.

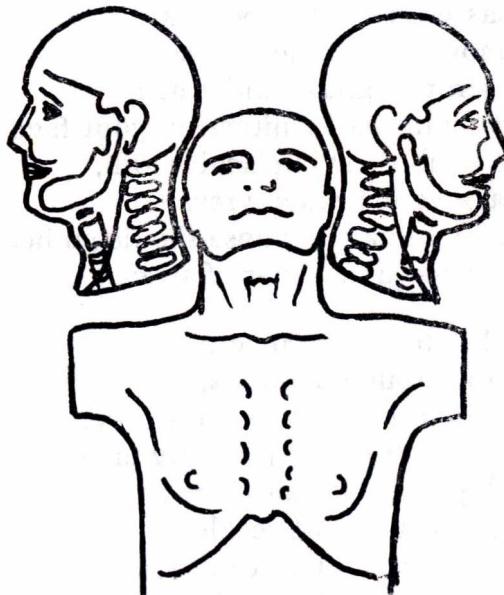
Not a day goes by that I don't try,  
an act for me most reckless,  
but too bad for me, I can't see  
when I go through the day speckless.

--Gray Harris

## SEPTEMBER

He sands a Saturday,  
blows dust on the cat,  
whirs his light machine through  
dappled wood. A daughter unearths  
treasures from the cellar in  
sweet cleaning for a "True Blue" record  
she coos by heart, sashaying through  
her upside down chores. Day smooths  
into shape as blond sun echoes the girl's  
hair, yellow from summer.  
You nap and dream colors,  
deep green divides into leaves,  
multiplies into English mazes.  
Sweet butter quiet hums,  
pours on your back like peace.

--Anne Harris



## PROUST AT NIGHT

Syrupy air drags into tired lungs,  
fills anxious caverns  
You lie monitoring when to gasp,  
when to struggle, when to skim  
in surface staccato.  
Snips of old poems speak to you  
and word songs scan over  
unscannable breathing.  
Remembered lines prick giddy joy,  
stimulate rhythms for taking in  
light, painless air

--Anne Harris

## ON JUGGLING

When we watch  
Someone else  
Doing something  
Somewhere  
We say  
I can do that  
No doubt better.  
But can we?

--Clara Struckman

# Nicaraguans Face Ecological Woes

—From an article by E.W. Pfeiffer, U of MT

I visited the NW region of Nicaragua recently with a delegation including officials of the Friends of the Earth, Audubon Society and Greenpeace, among others.

Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America. For the past 50 years its rich natural resources have been exploited by American and European corporations without regard for ecological principles, in much the same way as our western states were ravaged by eastern financial interests. Metals were mined, dense stands of pine were stripped and large banana plantations established in the cleared areas.



Cotton, introduced in the 1950s, accelerated the assault on Nicaragua's environment as thousands of subsistence farmers were forced into the foothills. These campesinos wreaked havoc on large areas of forest as they moved farther into timbered areas.

Being highly susceptible to insects, cotton requires the massive use of pesticides. An American chemical company built a plant in 1968 near Managua to produce pesticides. Investigators have since traced high mercury concentrations in Lake Managua to the plant. Fish from the lake, a source of food in the capital city, were contaminated with mercury.

Nicaraguans were poisoned by DDT as insects like the boll weevil and mosquito became more resistant to this chemical agent. Nicaraguans have the highest concentrations of DDT in fluids like breast milk of any people in the world.

In 1979 the Sandanistas formed IRENA, an environmental protection agency, to oversee resource development, especially good forest management. IRENA also has a program of biological control of pests to replace indiscriminate use of poisons. In summary the present government appears dedicated to rational management, but activities of the Contras are inhibiting these programs.

**THE AUTHOR WRITES**  
after viewing this condensation  
of his article:



**4-27-88**

"Dan... It [the summary] is... good, but you should call U.S. companies 'North American.' All of us in the Western Hemisphere are Americans."  
Regards, Bert [E.W. Pfeiffer]

# The Passion of Father Paul

by Henry Matusek

"Before we end our services this morning, I have one thing I would like to say." Father Paul moved uneasily in the pulpit. "You are aware of the plague our society is now facing—AIDS has attacked humankind as God's wrath."

"AIDS has even infected the priesthood, God help us. I made my vows more than 20 years ago. Since that day, I have devoted myself completely to the Lord. I have never known lust, and I never will. I have given myself to the Lord, soul and body, so that I may serve Him and spread His word."

"I vow to you, His beloved children of Cowperstown, that I will remain true to the Lord. Together we will survive the righteous flood of His wrath. Join me now in prayer." Father Paul bowed his head and, in a resonant voice, ended Mass. Only a few noted that he concluded the prayer with "drive carefully" instead of "Amen."

After Mass, Father Paul returned to the rectory. He hung his cassock carefully in the closet, and tucked his shoes side-by-side under his desk. With his head back and Beethoven's Ninth flowing through his ears, he sat in the study with a glass of port.

Liz, his housekeeper-cum-secretary, tapped on the door, opened it, and walked into the study.

"That was a wonderful Mass today, Father."

"Thank you," he said. "I know when I've pleased you, I've done the very best." Liz blushed.

"Can I get you anything?"

"Thank you, no. The wine is enough."

"Then I'll leave you alone. You must be tired after this morning."

"Thanks. Oh, Liz, I almost forgot." Liz stopped and faced him.

"Would you cancel my appointments for tomorrow?" Father Paul rubbed his eyes.

"Of course. Visiting your sister up north again?"

"Yes."

"How is she? Better, I hope."

"Ah...yes, she is, Liz." Father Paul seemed distracted.

"Is there a telephone where you can be reached?"

"No." He sat up. "No, Liz, she still doesn't have a phone." He hesitated. "I try...to convince her to put one in, but she doesn't want the bother," said Father Paul, avoiding Liz's eyes.

"I understand: the ringing and all, with her being so sick."

"Yes." He smiled.

"Will you be leaving in the morning?"

"No, I'll leave this evening after an early supper. A sandwich will be fine."

"All right, Father, I'll bring you a ham and cheese in about an hour. Be sure to give your sister my best. I'd really like to meet her someday."

"Yes, I will. I tell her about you often...my sister." Father Paul smiled and sipped from his glass.

Before leaving town that night, Father Paul stopped behind a local gas station closed for the evening. Earlier in the week, he had spotted just what he needed. The mechanic had slipped in a puddle of oil while servicing Father Paul's truck. He asked what they did with all the oil and grease drained from cars. The mechanic told him about the barrel in back that the gas station dumped into. "Most places do it that way, Father," explained the young mechanic.

In the dark Father Paul lifted the half-full barrel into the bed of his truck. He would need more, but there were many gas stations between Cowperstown and where he was going.

After several hours of collecting, he had three almost-full barrels; they rode easily in the bed of his truck. They were heavy enough, and the road smooth enough, that he spilled very little.

Fifty miles west of Cowperstown the highway drops into a deep valley. For the next seven miles, the road twisted and turned upon itself like a writhing snake, in a six-percent grade. Father Paul had a particular turn in mind, where the road cut back almost 100 degrees, with a 50-foot ravine on the outer side. He enjoyed taking this turn as fast as he dared, trying it a little faster each time. With the windows of his truck rolled down and the wind whipping his face, he would grit his teeth and slingshot through the turn. When the rear wheels started to slide out and the front wheels screamed against the force, his heart would skip a beat, sweat would lather his face. Slowly, he would ease off the gas, letting friction overcome the centrifugal force. By the time he reached the bottom, his hands would be slippery on the wheel, sweat would blur his vision, and his soul would feel cleansed, as clean as when he was first baptized.

By the time Father Paul reached the downgrade, his excitement had swelled; every inch of his body felt exquisitely sensitive. He felt the weight of his clothes like never before. The sweat made the cloth cling to the back of his shoulders. When he turned the wheel, he felt the shirt tug at his waist. His pants pulled at the inside of his thighs when he worked the pedals, and he could feel his socks

bunching around his ankles. Every nerve in his body seemed taut.

Mindful of his cargo, he took the hill slower than usual. He downshifted, leaning into the turns as if it would make the truck more stable. He had come far to spoil it with a careless mistake now. He pulled off the road about 200 yards above the turn. There was a wide shoulder there and trees he could hide his truck behind. At 2:30 there was no traffic. Truckers almost never used this road, preferring the interstate to the north. The only traffic this older road saw was Cowperstown residents commuting to work in the county seat, which would begin in about two hours. He had plenty of time.

He stepped down from the cab and walked behind the truck. He lowered the tailgate and wrestled the heavy barrels to the ground. The third barrel slipped and fell, slopping oil over the ground, spattering his cheeks and making his hands slippery. Laughing, he wiped his hands on his pants and his face on the bottom of his shirt.

One by one, he tilted the barrels on edge and rolled them to the top of the turn. This is going to be the best yet, he thought to himself. This is far more exciting than taking dogs from backyards to the pound. And, separating children from their parents at shopping centers... mere child's play. He laughed at his wit.

It was almost 4:00 before Father Paul found the perfect position. About halfway into the turn, a shallow rut was followed by a bump that stretched across the old pavement. Every time he had driven through the turn, the steering wheel would jerk in his hands like a live thing when he hit this spot.

He rolled the barrels to the pavement and tipped them over. The oil and grease spilled out, forming a slick

over the road. He then rolled the barrels to the guardrail and threw them over. Licking the sweat from his lips, he listened to the rumble of the barrels as they bounced to the bottom.

Father Paul sat on the guardrail and looked over his handiwork. He was having second thoughts—not about the deed itself, but whether it would work. The oil and grease patch didn't look like much. His doubt lasted only a few seconds, though; he was, after all, a priest. He had faith.

Leaning against the rail, he felt the breeze coming up from the valley, carrying with it the humidity of the warm summer morning to come. Sounds of crickets and rustling leaves filled his ears. From this background, came another sound, almost as faint as memory but mistakenly real. A car was coming; the first of the day's commuters on his way to work. Father Paul got up from the rail and ran up the hill.

The car, a red Datsun, came racing down the quiet, old highway. He could see the headlights as the car came closer. It flew past his truck and approached the turn where Father Paul was waiting. The Datsun hit the bump, the front of the car lifted and rear wheels dug in. The front wheels lost traction on the slick and the car started to slide toward the guard rail. It hit the rail a glancing blow on the driver's side, flipped up onto the rail, teetered for a second and then fell over the rail into the ravine.

Father Paul watched in silence. If the driver could have noticed, he would have seen Father Paul's tight smile and his firey eyes. His heart skipped a beat when the Datsun teetered on the rail, and it nearly burst with excitement when the car rolled over the edge.

He felt the sudden rush and tingle he always felt when he did these things, but this time the feeling was much more intense. He had taken life! Not a yammering dog's life, but the life of a breathing, living human being. He felt alive and vital. There was a pounding in his body, stronger and faster than a heartbeat, that seemed to sap his strength. He leaned back against the rail as his body shook and trembled in ecstacy.

Father Paul stood up. His heartbeat had returned to normal and the warm breeze dried the sweat on his face. He turned and walked up the hill to wait for the next car. ■

## HAIR

By Clara

mine's blonde  
yours short  
her's long  
mom's grey  
so will mine...someday  
some thin  
old kin  
some straight  
just fate



## INFERNO (cont. from p.3)



Anyway, if you're still with me on this Latin Lit kick, take a look at *Macho Camacho's Beat* (Luis Rafael Sanchez), which goes something like this:

*"And ladies and gentlemen, friends, the most delicious and most sweet sound cuts through me the way it's going to cut through you, my feet get away from me, the joints in my torso get away from me, my seat's all happy because Macho Camacho's guaracha has come to stay, live it up and dance Mama, live it up the way I do as I drop down and drop up."*

Or could I perhaps show you something in:

*"One's first memories, naturally, cannot be described in conventional words. They are visceral, archaic. Larvae in the heart of the fruit, worms wiggle in the mud. Remote sensations, vague pains. Confused visions: a stormy sky above a tempestuous sea; from between dark clouds, a winged horse majestically descending."*

—from *The Centaur in the Garden* (Moacyr Scliar)

Infante says, "But life goes on, more persistent than words." Fair enough. But words go on too, and some more persistently than others, like those that come at me on a beeline from the South.

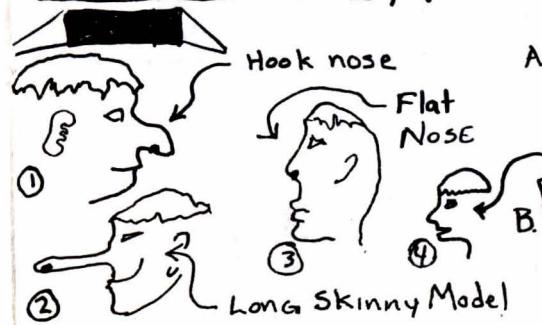
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Each year over 40 million rabbits and squirrels die needlessly. You can prevent it.





NOWADAYS YOU CAN PRETTY MUCH  
CHOOSE YOUR OWN NOSE

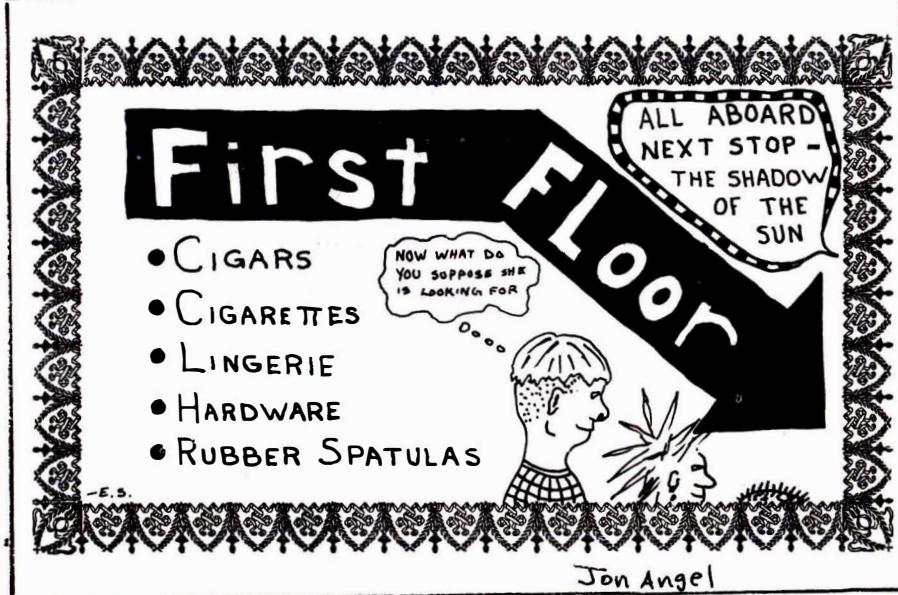
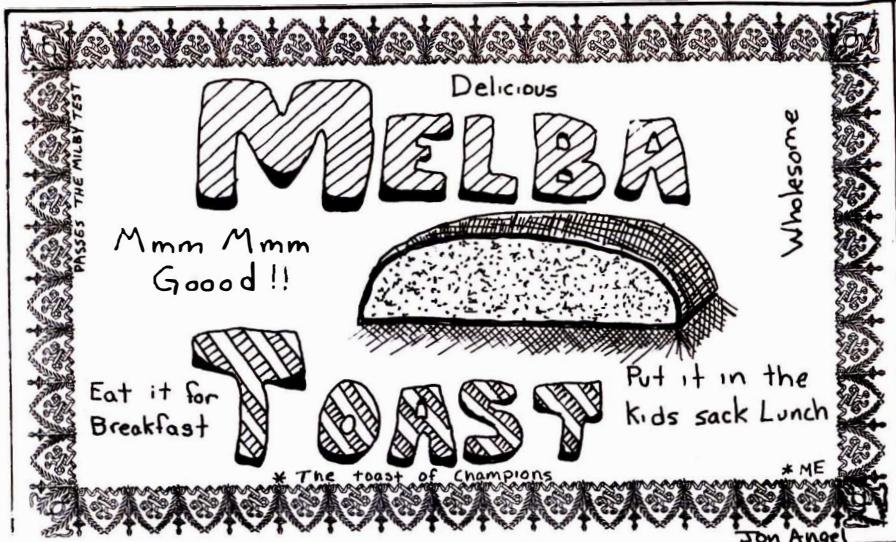


A. Which one do you have?

B. Which one would you rather have?

1
2
3
4

MARK ONE ANSWER ONLY



WHERE THE ABOVE CARDS ARE  
DISPLAYED GOOD BARBERS AND BEAUTICIANS  
ARE ALWAYS FOUND

## Costs: Issue no. 1

1400 sheets of paper (200 wasted)totaling:	80.50
200 covers wasted & 200 more: \$15 per 200:	30
cuts mounted:	78
1 lb Tough-tex ink:	15
set of quad guides to replace squished ones:	12
envelopes & postage:	15
	Total cost: \$230.50

Sales receipts (est.): \$55

Thanks to Chuck & Jon Angel for MANY HOURS of tedious typesetting. Jerry Oblander of Midland Printing stapled the first ish and set up the new offset press. Marion Hansen gave \$100 toward its purchase. Gray Harris edited & wrote. His mother was our best buyer.



Basement Press