

A YELLOW CAB PASSING THE SF FRANCIS HOTEL

THE NEW

San Francisco's Taxi Horizon®

Number 11

\$1.00

DEEP CITY PRESS



New Yellow: Up from the ruins

PLUS: Lady Cab Drivers • Spain
Lew Welch • George Benet

Marty Breslow's

DUCKOLOGY





City Cab

**285-
X500**

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

Where have we been? Hiding in the bush waiting for a good load, of course. Most of us celebrated at old Yellow's wake, while a few believers waited for the resurrection. In more ways than one, New Yellow seriously stalled production of the *Deep City Press*. The turn of events in the taxi industry in San Francisco over the past year and a half has been dramatic indeed. While most of us are bleary-eyed from so much yellow, it remains for this little magazine to leave some chronicle of those events. Sandy Katzman had our story ready months ago, but it seemed to require the outcome of Proposition K. And the final outcome of its passage will require perhaps years.*

Meanwhile, we've got to figure out ways to keep our meters running. It is dubious that the editors of the *DCP* can long support our magazine unassisted. Our limited finances simply cannot support paper and ink worth its weight in gold. We aim at 2000 copies and realize around 1700. With all talent and labor gratis and a one dollar price tag, we consider ourselves lucky to go only several hundred in the hole. We need the support of the industry- owners, drivers, companies, - if we are to continue.

Nevertheless, the *DCP* is and will continue to be a forum for those who understand Maxie's Maxim, "It ain't just a job, folks." This is our soul. This is another true life cab story from deep in the City.

Ralph

(*In so far as we concern ourselves with reform in the taxi business, insurance, a social disease, ought to rank right up there at the top. Limit the liability in Sacramento, lower overhead, lower the gates. Unfortunately, such a simplistic notion would save too many little people too much money.)

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"I shall always be grateful for the vigorous underground world of small presses and little magazines, without which there would be no poetry in America." -Lew Welch

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DEEP CITY PRESS



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626-2345

*New Yellow:
On the Road
Again*

*by Sandra Katzman
photos by Mike Phillips*

IN THE BEGINNING, there was an air of the victor, proudly occupying enemy territory. There were dreams to be polished. And there was a cab business to run. New Yellow was camping out in the corners of the immense old Yellow facilities, ten acres of downtown San Francisco, across the tracks and down the street from the Southern Pacific train depot on Townsend Street.

Then, as now, there were offices on offices, mostly empty, off of the labyrinthine corridors. In the dispatch area itself, one operator works one patch board, but there is room for eight. Three radio channels are available, but only one is in use. The conveyor belt that carried old Yellow orders along the middle of the long table stands still.

There are ghosts to vanquish. Not only does the old Yellow ghost lurk in creditors and the inherited mortgages on the property, but the spectre of San Francisco Supervisor Quentin Kopp's recently passed Proposition K threatens to hurt the Co-op in a way all the adversities of the past year couldn't. His so-called taxi reform proposals, twice vetoed by Mayor Moscone, now a city ordinance, renders city taxi permits non-transferable-- they cannot be sold or left to survivors. It seems a cold shot to all of the small owner/drivers at New Yellow, most of whom have sunk their life savings into their cab company. The new ordinance will certainly be tested in the courts.

Back in the rainy winter of '77, the brave new company had a long way to go. Out in the lot, hundreds of cabs sat idle, waiting to be reborn into new Yellows. There were already some 150 New Yellow cabs on

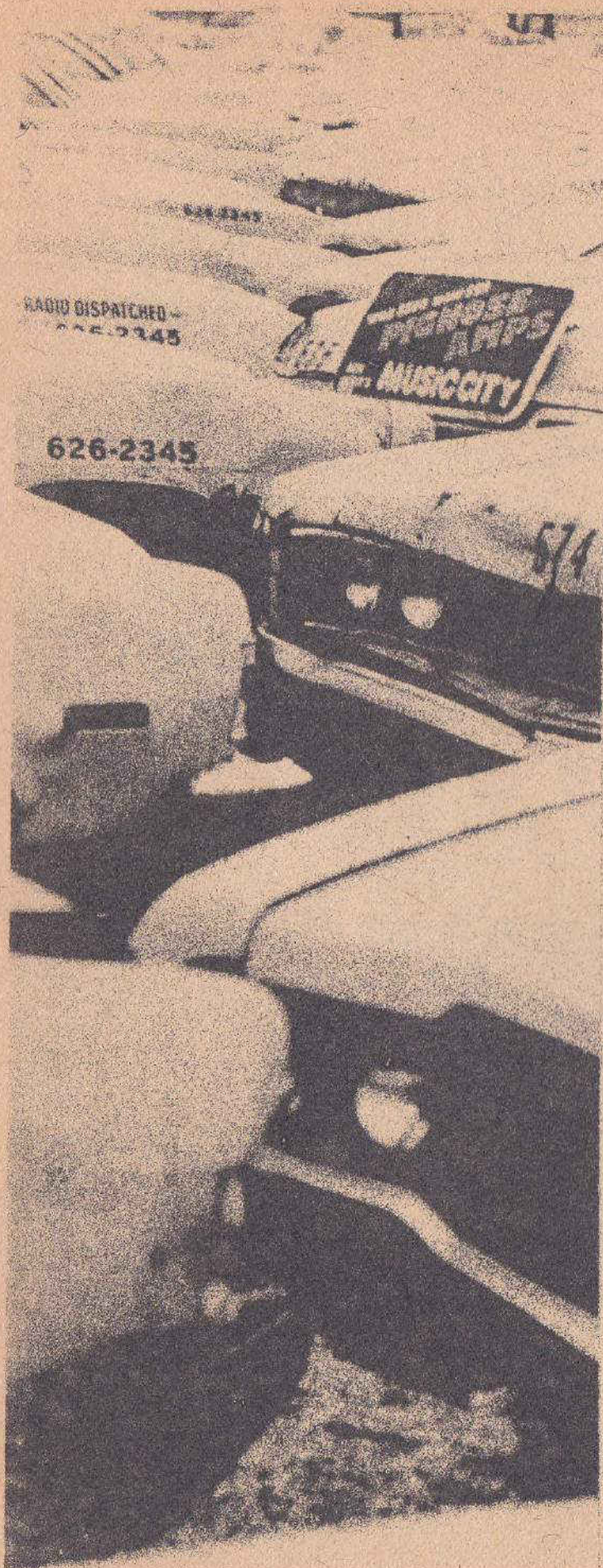
the streets. In fact, among the first customers was Kopp himself, who took one home from the hospital in November.

Since then, the political lines have been drawn both within and outside the company itself. The success of New Yellow the Co-op and New Yellow the business involves a complex and confusing set of elements, the same that have troubled the taxi industry since the first taximeter was smashed a couple of hundred years ago. If the success of the Co-op depended only upon the kind of energy and optimism demonstrated by its mentors, Don Fassett and Patrick Shannon, it might be assured. If success of the business depended only on the theretofore realized benevolence of Mayor Moscone, that too might be taken for granted. But the taxi dance goes on.

GENESIS

New Yellow has a legacy older than Older Yellow-- for want of a better term, Ancient Yellow. In 1908, Ancient Yellow was a well-run, aggressively managed local concern. By 1925, it dominated the cab industry in San Francisco by virtue of absorbing its biggest competitors.

Meanwhile, taxi wars rocked the urban transportation industry across the country. Graft, rampant in the New York State Regulation Bureau, led the city police Department there to take over the licensing of taxicabs in 1924. In *Hacking in New York* (1930), Robert Hazard, a cabbie himself, commented, "I never could see that the License Bureau did anything but make jobs for politicians and make an oppor-



tunity for a shake-down."

San Francisco's first taxicab regulations came soon after-- some of which, like those governing motorized rickshaws, still clutter the books at City Hall. A combination of regulations, the growing automobile industry, and the Depression, caused the initial one dollar value of taxi permits to grow. And grow. And grow, to the present price of \$15,000.

By the time the notorious financier, C. Arnholdt Smith, bought San Francisco-based Yellow Cab Company in 1961, he was buying something very valuable. And it soared in value as Yellow Cabs in twenty-five cities became part of his transportation monopoly over the next sixteen years, until the Westgate-California subsidiary of Yellow Cab maintained a virtual stranglehold on taxi service in all of California's major cities. It had the exclusive right to pick up at three of the state's largest airports. When challenged, the courts would always rule these "rights" to be in the public interest.

In the late Sixties, Smith was forced to sell a number of his small air taxi businesses. He did-- to a business associate in Kansas City. He still owned outright one intrastate carrier (Air California) and the state's biggest commuter airline (Golden West).

Smith's empire began to crumble in 1973 with the failure of San Diego's U.S. National Bank. Smith had escaped too many times. In a mid-fifties audit, for instance, two agents on the brink of discovery were discouraged successfully from further investigation of Smith's schemes. In 1961, another audit re-

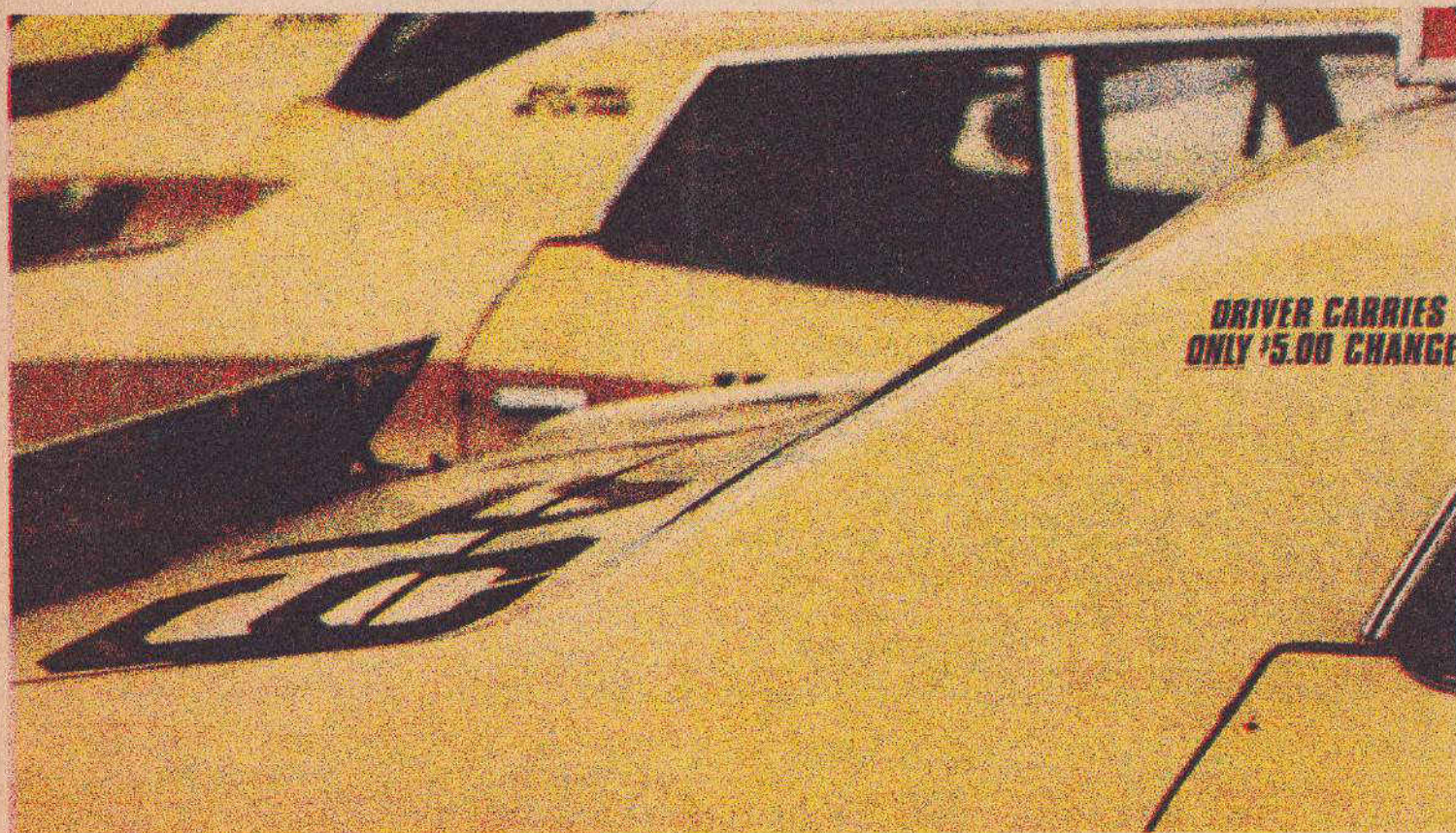
vealed an unpaid one million dollar tax liability. And in 1973, Westgate California hadn't paid dividends to its companies with public stockholders for three years. Smith was slowing down. He was an old man by now, almost eighty, and many of his carefully cultivated political connections in the Republican power structure-- including Nixon-- were crumbling.

It was becoming easier and easier to predict the fall of old Yellow. The *New Deep City Press* did so with all the due vengeance of righteous little guys. David Frankel's account "The Rise and Fall of T. Arnished Smith" (*Deep City Press*, Vol. 2, No. 3) whimsically detailed the process, concluding with Smith's fantastical demise at the wheel of a Yellow Cab. Frankel may have had a vision of the Co-op.

In the same issue of *DCP*, another cabbie naively hoped that Kopp

could "educate the Board of Supervisors by leading an expansive and thorough investigation of the industry" around Yellow's downfall. Kopp had not yet been designated the Official Enemy. In "I Am Curious, Yellow" (*DCP*, Winter 1976), a curious, spurious, furious Frankel asked, "Do you (Old Yellow) really expect to find a sucker on whom you can unload your battered equipment and tarnished name?"

Strangely enough, the very founders of the *Deep City Press* are among those same wheeling entrepreneurs who finally managed to buy old Yellow. In December 1976, their prognostications were realized. Old Yellow folded, ostensibly because it was unable to obtain new insurance policies. Old Yellow held 503 of San Francisco's 850 taxi permits. More than 3,000 drivers and mechanics in San Francisco and five other cities were out of work. But



with the locking of the gates at Eighth and Townsend began the biggest year in the San Francisco cab business for everyone else.

"Everybody made money running back and forth to the airport and sitting on vacant Yellow stands," recalled one cabbie. Among those who saw the opportunities in the resurrection of Yellow was Don Fassett. His was the vision of a cooperative, the people's enterprise, a redemption of idealism. His contributions were the initial financial outlay and a special talent for promotion and organization. He had done everything from dispatching for New York's Port Authority to running a bar in Florida. Fassett teamed his experience and optimism with the inspiration of young Pat Shannon, then a student of ancient philosophy at U.C. Santa Cruz and part time cab driver. Together they planned to sink the money Fassett had earned from his last gambit, Tours/San Francisco, into New Yellow.

Shannon was one "s" of the S/S Acquiring Cab Cooperative, Inc., the legal name for New Yellow while it struggled to win the company. If the twenty seven year old Shannon seemed out of place in what one New Yellow member termed, "the dirty, greasy brutal cab business," per-

(continued on page 49)

Taxis, Cabs, & Hacks

The term "taxi" comes from taximeter, the invention of a man who patented a register guaranteed to put an end to conductors pilfering money from the owners of the vehicles they rented. The inventor presented the taximeter to a certain owner who agreed it was a good idea, but insisted that the inventor drive until the device proved itself. Before it could, a gang of men attacked the vehicle affixed with the device, smashed the register with sledge hammers, and almost murdered the inventor. Decades passed before the experiment was tried again.

The French name, *cabriolets de place*, was abbreviated to "cab" upon import to England. For ten years following, cabs were monopolized by aristocratic owners because the licenses of the older, larger, hackney coaches were not transferable. It sounds more and more familiar. Just before the Reformation, the number of hackney coach licenses in London was limited to eight hundred. Stands were appointed. Despite the problems, complaints, and setbacks that the regulations were supposed to combat, by 1860 there were 4300 cabs in London. Some kind of need was being met.

In the early 1830's, Charles Dickens described "a hackney coach stand under the very window at which we are writing... a fair specimen of the class of vehicle--a great lumbering, square concern of a dingy yellow colour (like a bilious brunette), the panels ornamented with faded coat of arms in shape something like a dissected bat... the horses, with drooping heads, and each with a mane and tail as scanty and straggling as those of a worn-out rocking horse, are standing patiently on some damp straw, occasionally wincing and rattling the harness, and now and then, one of them lifts his mouth to the ear of his companion, as if he were saying, in a whisper, that he should like to assassinate the coachman."

LEW WELCH: TAXI SUITE

1. AFTER ANACREON

When I drive cab

I am moved by strange whistles and wear a hat.

When I drive cab

I am the hunter. My prey leaps out from where it hid, beguiling me with gestures.

When I drive cab

all may command me, yet I am in command of all who do.

When I drive cab

I am guided by voices descending from the naked air.

When I drive cab

A revelation of movement comes to me. They wake now. Now they want to work or look around. Now they want drunkenness and heavy food. Now they contrive to love.

When I drive cab

I bring the sailor home from the sea. In the back of my car he fingers the pelt of his maiden.

When I drive cab

I watch for stragglers in the urban order of things.

When I drive cab

I end the only lit and waitful thing in miles of darkened houses.

2. PASSENGER POEM, THE NURSE

I don't like cats kittens are all right I guess
you can love 'em when they're little, like people,
but then they grow up and take advantage of you
and how can you love 'em anymore?

3. PASSENGER POEM, MRS. ANGUS

There's lots of death down there
and a fish the Spanish people eat
couldn't get me near one
red they are, like meat
Bonita.

A famous jockey and two other lads,
and him with a big race comin' up Sunday,
went out at night in a little boat
and they was washed I think
to a place of reptiles, and eaten, for
none of 'em was ever found.

Yon place scares me.

4. PASSENGER POEM, THE MAILMAN

"I understand you had a parade today," I said,
flipping the meter over and driving into traffic.
Without so much as a yes he got right into it
(carefully, with many pauses):

*We wore
regulation letter-carrier's
uniforms,
except for the leggin's
of course,
and the
helmets. Whatdayacallem?*

"You mean the kind of hat Teddy Roosevelt wore when he went to Africa to shoot lions, Pith Helmets?"

*That's right
helmets.*

*Fellow next to me carried
the association banner.*

*I carried
the American Flag.*

*It looked real
nice.*

5. TOP OF THE MARK

for John Wieners

I guess it's only natural that they
go about their planet as they do
all night long:

Top of the Mark, St. Francis,
Fairmont, Sir Francis Drake

What a price they pay for what they see!

*I cannot help them
I will not cheat them*

Yesterday I drove the actual Cab of Heaven . I am
Leo . I was born this way

my mane is longer than the sun

GEO. BENET: LEW WELCH

Ran into Lew Welch
old beat poet friend of mine
laid my sad story on him
how my mother had died
and my wife and I divorced
and my daughter had married
and how I was at my lowest
psychological ebb
how I started drinking again
as I was lonely.
I told him I met a woman
who interested me
but dealing with her was like
playing handball without walls
our lifestyles differed
our temperaments clashed
besides she dated other men.
Lew said he knew a witch in Bolinas
who could exorcise all my bad luck.
I thought dealing with a witch
would be
the coldest snake I ever touched.

He said
your trouble is
you are a short fat alcoholic longshoreman
from the Mission district
a cigarmoking horseplaying sonofabitch
and worst of all
an incurable romantic.
Besides....I didn't have
any frame of reference
didn't belong to any generation
lost, beat, hip.

I told him he was
a part time junkie
a part time waterfront clerk
a part time alcoholic
a part time cynic
a part time poet
and worst of all
a suburbanite
cause he lived in Marin City.

Why, he asked
if a carpenter does carpentry
and a bridge builder builds bridges
and a banker makes money
well why
does a poet
have to immerse himself in a world of commerce and shipping?
I said, I love that phrasing....
immerse oneself in a world of commerce and shipping.

Lew said, let's have another gin and tonic
then I gotta go on a long walk.
We had four more gin and tonics
and he walked from the Eagle Cafe
and I never saw him again
no, not on this planet
no, never again.

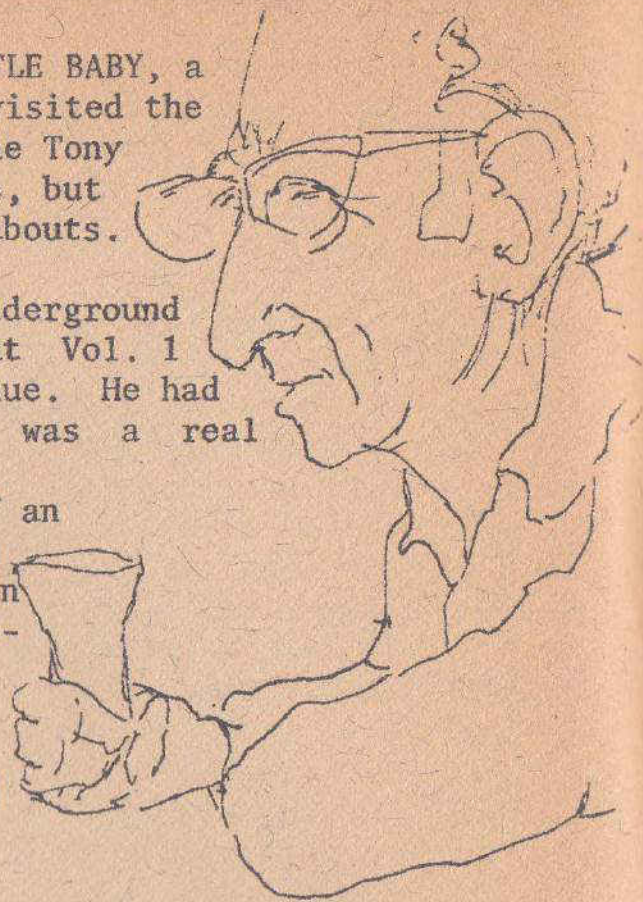
BACK WHEN THE SEVENTIES WAS STILL A BOTTLE BABY, a cartoonist friend of mine from Belgium visited the City. He was blessedly disinterested in the Tony Bennett tour of San Francisco scenic clichés, but was curious about the underground press hereabouts. Did I know one?

Defo, my neighbor, a veteran of the underground newspaper wars, even as we spoke cranking out Vol. 1 No. 1 of a new paper of anti-establishment hue. He had bought a used press, just to print it on. He was a real newspaper junkie.

The press room was a tenement basement off an alley across from the model Levi Strauss jean factory on Valencia. We banged on the door, in the company of a fifth of bourbon. It was Saturday night. His wife said he had gone into the press room Friday after lunch. He hadn't been seen since.

There were noises inside. The din was hard to place. It sounded like a popcorn machine had gone berserk.

The door opened to electric blue eyes running full speed out of a blackblack face the way the headlights of a train



JOHN BRYAN: GYRO GEARLOOSE OF THE UNDERGROUND

by WARREN HINCKLE

Illustration by Dave Geiser

charge from a long tunnel. The black head was supported by black shoulders above a dripping black naked chest. It was a white man covered in ink.

Behind him a bare lightbulb hung uneasily from a lonely cord disappearing into the holes in the ceiling. The bulb cast demented Walt Disney shadows over the basement which was a poppy field of crunched up balls of white paper. A big press sat giving off heat in a dark corner. It looked like some poor thing in the middle of open heart surgery.

I introduced the visitor from Belgium to the inky wet fellow with the wild bright blues-- John Bryan, the mole king of the underground press, a descendant of Caxton who still did his own scut work. He stuck out his hand.

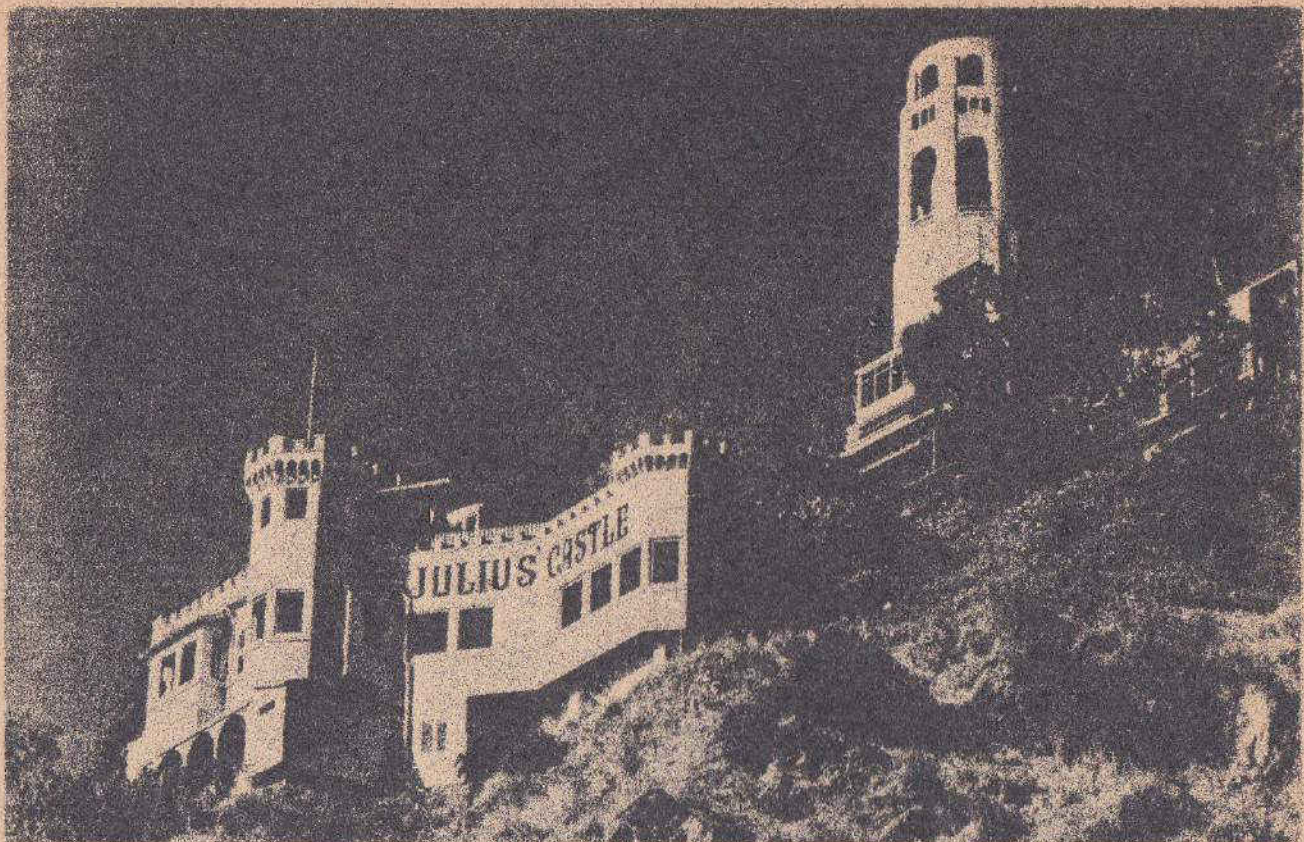
Later, when we left, after finishing the bottle, after watching John Bryan climb into the bowels of his press to coax it to go, my European friend asked me if the bughouse we had just left was typical of the underground papers in the Bay Area. I said it was, when they were done by John Bryan, and the hell of it was that he had done most of them.

The San Francisco *Phoenix*, which was aborning in the bedlam of the basement, was Bryan's sixth publication in not much more than a decade. He began in the early sixties with a home-made lower case literary magazine, *renaissance*, cranked out on a multi in his basement. That was followed by *Notes from Underground*, another lit bit which gave way, in 1964, to a paste pot weekly, *Open City Press*.

Bryan never tired of pointing out that *Open City Press* was the Bay Area's first underground newspaper-- beating the *Berkeley Barb* out of the starting gate by almost a year-- and by gum the second alternative paper in America. The first was the *L.A. Free Press*, recently not given a decent burial by Larry Flynt.

Bryan had been working for the *Examiner*, then the *Chronicle*, but he was not happy. He used his \$700 severance pay to buy the paper to print his own newspaper on. Alas, the pioneer underground paper in San Francisco did not prosper, and Bryan moved to Los Angeles where he hooked up for a term with the *Free Press*, a.k.a. "Freep" to its intimates. Then Bryan began his own L.A. undergrounder, another weekly, *Open City*, which lasted for two years until busted for printing things the L.A. cops in their wisdom thought were obscene. In 1969 Bryan, shaken by the arrest and impoverished by the trial, moved back to San Francisco and across the yard from me.

His house was an amazing mixture of commerce and counter-culture kultur. The living room was full of light tables and paste-up boards. The dining room had the IBM typesetting equipment. The basement was occupied by a giant bellows camera of the time of the Scopes trial on which Bryan shot the film for his printing plates. It also housed Bryan's personal collection of every underground newspaper in God's domain. Bryan treasured these like a miser. He was always fingering them. He slaved through the night at his typesetting machine composing right on the keyboard, and then recompos-



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ing as points of view shifted--sort of a beat-to-hippie Rashomon-- an epic illustrated history of the underground press, and of the underground from Cassady to Kesey eventually downhill to Joe Remiro. This work-in-progress he always pasted up in pages and shot plates of, ready for the day distant when he would print it.

Bryan's real treasure was the fleet of newspaper racks he had bought, begged, bartered or had stolen over the years. He referred affectionately to the racks as his "piggy banks." He just about had the town wall to wall with them. When he wasn't publishing his own sheet, he put other people's papers in his racks and collected the money and took his cut. Whenever he thirsted for a Guinness or wanted to

take his kids to the movies or something, he'd go to one of his street corner piggy banks and milk it. He was unrich, but never at a loss for a piece of change.

Bryan pattered for a while on two post-hippie tabloids withering on the vine of the sixties, San Francisco's *Good Times* and Berkeley's *Tribe*, the rad clone of the *Barb*. In 1972, with some funds from his father, who as I recall was financial editor on a midwestern daily, Bryan launched the splendid *Sunday Paper*, which ran eight pages of original four color comics and rapidly ran out of money.

The *Sunday Paper* was hardly dead and gone when the *Phoenix*, in more modest black and white plumage,



Bryant

MALVINA COFFEE

Where other coffee shops shop
Union at Grant Tel. 392-4736

rose from its ashes. Bryan found Charles Fracchia, a stockbroker who had gone bust in the late sixties' bear market and made a television commercial for a small foreign car in which he talked about losing his Rolls but what the hell, to be publisher. Fracchia went on to better things and singlehandedly kept the paper coming out for three years, less or more.

The printing press Bryan bought for the *Phoenix* was a third hand job which had seen service in the Phillipines during WWII. It apparently was towed underwater across the Pacific because it was awful rusty. He soon enough gave up on the press, which ate more paper than it printed, and took his plates to one of the cash-and-carry commercial shops, the Quinns and the Garretts

of newspaper ros. Bryan could always be seen around press time, scurrying among his sidewalk piggy banks for the coin to pay the piper.

The *Phoenix* discovered some interesting talent, notably Kell Robertson's prose and Dave Geiser's drawings. It was most remarkable as an example of what one man who loves his machines can produce without a crowd, just by staying up all night, every night. The lights were almost always on til dawn at Bryan's house, the IBM machines wheezing from perpetual motion; the infrequent times chez Bryan was dark, his 19th century camera had blown fuses.

John Bryan wrote a book about SLA soldier Joe Remiro. He gave me the manuscript to read before he sent it to the publisher. Amazing. The whole damn thing was set in type. Five hundred pages in 12 pt. Bodoni bold face. After all those light years of nights with his machines, it had become impossible for Bryan to write anything without also typesetting it. He had become one with his machines.

I had lost track of John Bryan. When I accidentally heard at a crap game that he had submitted an article to the *Deep City Press*, I had to see it. Sure enough, he had composed it at the typesetting machine. What follows is of interest as much for the way he did it as for what it says-- an artifact of a perishable time when one man learned to do everything the hard way.**

Please turn the page
for an authentic
John Bryan artifact.



Neal - 1

bryan

by John Bryan

The first few months of 1964 were intoxicating ones for a 29-year-old Yellow Cab driver named Bryan.

I was out hustling every penny I could for my first printing press, getting involved with early CORE demonstrations for equal hiring at places like the Sheraton-Palace and Van Ness Auto Row, running off to the track every few days with Jack Kerouac's automaniacjailkidhero Neal Cassady and his talentedartistcockcrazy girlfriend Ann. Watching the slow mix of disparate cultural and political elements which later created America's most promising intentional community in a place called Haight-Ashbury.

Around April, I gave Yellow my notice for I was going back to work as a reporter on the "Chronicle." I dug driving that cab but was moving so fast, going to work so stoned, having so many near-accidents and almost-stick-ups that it was clear I'd end up dead or considerably worse.

The last night on the job was a Saturday and I waited until dusk before racing over to Neal's Upper Tenderloin apartment just a few blocks from the newly-constructed grey windbreaker called the Federal Building.

He worked those days in a tire shop just around the corner, cracking rims and slapping on recaps to earn the rent for his sweet little kitchenette-studio, the only liveable pad in a transient former warehouse full of speed freaks and dope dealers, lost lovers fighting it out to the end among hallucinatory cockroaches and deadly fistthuds/muffled in deep-pillowed screams.

Neal was also putting aside a few bucks to repay me for a smashed-up Studie he'd flipped over on the road to Ken Kesey's home in La Honda. He eventually bought another of the same year, a beautifully-designed little car which was in better shape than the first (except for the fact that it had no reverse gear. Only Forward! and Further!) Neal was like that. He always paid his debts if not with money than with dope or a great Free Ride Somewhere Interesting. Or even with an old Boy Scout knife handed over one day when I'd helped him through a particularly sticky reckless driving rap.

Neal was like that.

So at about 6 or 6:30, I pulled up in front of his place. Ann had disappeared again into the evening, out to turn a few tricks or spill out her pathetic illusions to some Old Boyfriend or Other. Neal was at loose ends and, as usual, more than willing to take a fast drive around town. We rolled up a half dozen joints, popped a few pills and drank a six-pack. We jumped down the semi-carpeted steps three at a time, raced to the cab. Neal slid into the driver's seat. I never presumed take the wheel when the Old Master himself was around, when Cassady, world's greatest unofficial off-the-track racecardriver wanted to zoom. Neal took control and, despite a few flipovers and a fenderbender or two, he always got you there. Neal was amazing, could push to within half an inch of a wipeout and then pull away miraculously without even nicking the paint. He could get in and out of the thickest rush hour trafffic, jams a cursing New York cabbie could never negotiate. All the time keeping it

neal - 2

bryan

well above 30, playing the radio full blast while conducting two or three conversations with anyone lucky enough to be in the car. (And doing uncanny duets with the Top 40 disc-jockeys and manic pop performers who screamed back at him out of the radio.)

The cab, of course, had no built-in AM but we'd brought along a portable which teetered uneasily on top of the dashboard blaring out soul into a vibrating windshield.

(In those days, a favorite black ballad called "You're No Good" used to keep us company on the way to the race track but we cut it off after Masochistic Annie started to shout back, "Yes I Am! Yes I Am!")

We whipped onto O'Farrell, picking up speed so that when we got to the Airport Bus Depot we were doing nearly sixty, beating out lights, forcing pedestrians back up the curb, cutting in front of more leisurely drivers who never saw us coming and did not believe it when we passed.

Neal beat out another orange-red and zipped over Taylor. He braked, swung a screaming hard-right to cut off a furious independent. (Who'd edged around the corner where half a dozen other hacks waited complacently.) We smoked up to the curb. Neal leered at a delightful young stewardess about to step into the cab of a rival. She returned the smile and pulled her suitcase away from the still-clutching red paw of the other cabbie. She clicked sure and high-heeled up to our steaming old hack. I leaped out to open the front door so she might settle in beside Neal, jumped into the back with her suitcase, handed her a joint as we whistled past Stockton and Grant, hard left onto Kearny.

Neal did his usual routine. Spoke of their interlocked destinies, their first meeting in Ancient Phoenicia, their idyl in Greece, a tragic reunion while riding tumbrels to Dr. Guillotine's infernal invention.

She was star-struck, of course. Invited him up to her North Beach apartment. I waited below, rolled some more joints and kept the engine warm while listening sardonically to the hack warfare on my aging two-way /wireless machine.

In less than 20 minutes, Neal was back zipping his fly. We had a number of other adventures. But I promised to keep this relatively short.

We roared up the north side of Nob Hill, found us a tourist up at the Mark, ran him as fast as our engine and gravity would take us down the mini-mountain-ski-slope they call Mason. Deposited him vomiting and green-faced over at Trader Vic's. Repeated this with telephone operators, a retired judge, a bouncer and two Samoans in various locations at ever-increasing speed.

Got bored. Quitting time was near. I took Neal home.

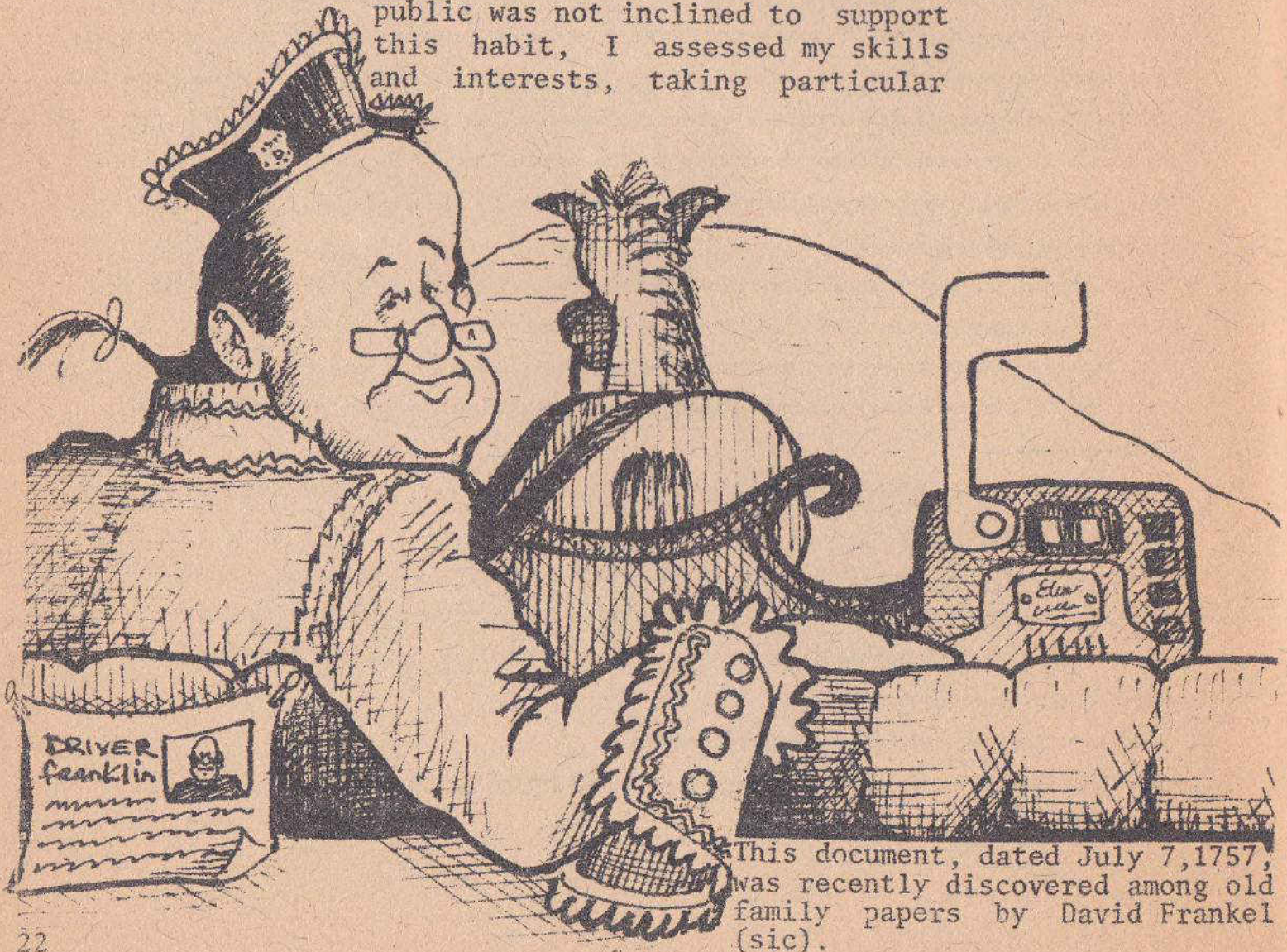
As far as I know, it was the first time he ever drove a hack in this town or any other.

As far as I know, it was the last.

THE POOR HACK'S ALMANAC

Benjamin Franklin

COURTEOUS READER: As you are no doubt aware, I have been an eminent author of almanacs now for a full quarter of a century. What you probably don't know, however, is that, early on, having realized that the public was not inclined to support this habit, I assessed my skills and interests, taking particular



This document, dated July 7, 1757, was recently discovered among old family papers by David Frankel (sic).

note of an opinionated nature and a cantankerous disposition, and turned to the honorable profession of cabbying as a means of earning my daily bread. And it was here, dear reader, behind the stirrup of a Volaré¹ that I did my best and most challenging work.

But one with a strong need² to communicate doesn't just "turn it off," as they say. So I have combined the vocational with the avocational: scouring the streets for a laborious 10-12 hours, before burning the soon-to-be proverbial midnight oil for countless others, in order that I might produce and distribute this work gratis. For as Voltaire recently discovered, virtue is its own reward³.

But, alas, I must confess to other motives, amongst them the dream of posterity, the hope that time will treat my work kindly and not render it obsolete; and ego, the need to influence my fellow cabbies and to alter events; to be, in effect, part of the solution and not the problem. Mostly it's ego. In my rambles, where I am not personally known, I have frequently heard one or other of my adages repeated, with "as The Poor Hack says" at the end of it. What can equal the thrill of hearing oneself

quoted as an eminent authority? Not sex, of which my exploits are legend; not money; not caviar.

Judge then, how I must have been gratified by an incident I am going to relate to you. I stopped my horse recently at the 'port', where a great number of cabbies on Volarés and checkered horses of various stripes were gathered. The hour of the arrival having not yet come, they were hanging around swapping cab stories and conversing on the badness of the times; and one of the cabbies called to a plain, clean old man with white locks, "Pray, Brother Maxie, what think you of the times? How goes it on the street? Where's the action at? And what about equipment and job security? Will gates⁵ go up even higher? What would you advise us to do?" Brother Maxie stood up and replied: "If you would have my advice, I will give it to you in short; for 'a word to the wise is sufficient', and 'many words won't fill a bushel', as the Poor Hack says." They all joined desiring him to speak his mind, and gathering around him he proceeded as follows:

Fellow cabbies, many of you complain about a dirth of passengers, and the fact that cabbying is rapidly becoming the exclusive property of bourgeois tourists. Well I say it's the high rates that drive people away and cause them to seek other, cheaper though less convenient. (continued on page 58)

¹ An Italian stallion of extraordinary horsepower.

² I was tempted, in keeping with an old family affliction of punitis (i.e. the tendency to puntificate), to write "driving need." Get it?

³ This philosophy is sometimes referred to as "Do-goodism" by retarded Tories. (If you'll pardon the redundancy).

⁴ A boneyard where cabbies sit for hours, exchanging stories and fantasies, while ostensibly awaiting fares.

⁵ The price required to remove your horse from the starting gate.

Food-Drugs

By Catherine Baker

Photographed by Mike Phillips

A lot of the magic of being a lady cabbie will be lost when it becomes old hat to see a woman behind the wheel of a taxi. For now, most of us get to laugh at the daily off the wall responses from passengers in San Francisco. Who could pick a more amazing city of surprises?

"Wow! A lady cabbie two days in a row, and here I am a male stripper on Broadway," says my fare as he sits in the back seat.

"This ought to go in Herb Caen."

"You mean you're a man?" I asked in awe.

"Sure, honey, I take estrogen. Actually, even people who see me strip don't know..."

Some cabbies have gotten together lately to exchange stories, lend support and get to know each other better. We have discovered a few common denominators.





First and most important, for all of our moaning and groaning (I've come to believe that's an integral part of the job) most of us have never had a job we liked better. The exceptions are interesting.

"Well, Pat, what have you done that was more interesting?"

"Played the Met," she said casually.

"The Metropolitan Opera House in

New York City?"

"Who is this lady?" I thought.

"Yes, I have a degree from Juilliard and a masters in sociology. At one point, I was asked to accompany at the Met. It was really exciting."

Part of the reason driving cab is interesting is that you never know what's coming next. There's a genuine sense of adventure attached



to the job. There's always a more amazing story around the corner. What other job offers such a complete cross section of humanity? Every sort of person rides a cab. It is a safe environment where people speak freely about themselves. They know that here is a captive audience and I will never see this person again, I can pour my heart out... and they do.

Most of us have never had a job where we made more money. Of course, sometimes there isn't much to make. But those hundred dollar days are so sweet. You just never know when your luck will be with you.

"What is the most money you've ever made in one trip, Pat?"

"1,100 dollars," she said.

"1,100 dollars?" My mouth fell open. "Come on."

"It's true. I got this couple that wanted to go to Tahoe. I turned my cab in and drove them there for 150 dollars. Then I decided to stick around and try my luck. I won. After my flight back and expenses, I had 1,100 dollars."

On the other side of the coin, there are "those days" when the bizarre is paramount.

Marie: I'm sitting at the Greyhound when this dirty, long haired, barefoot hippie walks up to my cab and asks, "Are you free?"

"No, I charge."

He pulls a wad of bills from his pocket.

"Where to?" I asked.
"Berkeley."

We're off. On the way down Mission Street he starts ranting and calling me "nature woman." Then, half way across the Bay Bridge, in the middle of rush hour, he rolls down the window and throws out the whole wad. Bills fly all over the bridge, tires screech as cars go every which way. What can

I do? Nothing. Just as we get to his place, I flag a cop. Maybe I can get at least part of my fare. We three--the cop, the crazy one, and I--go into his hotel room. Let me say here and now that, in a situation like this, I'm not a picky person. I'll take anything. But that room was bare I mean, there was not even an ash-tray I could cop. The cab industry in San Francis-

co has traditionally been open to women (in some cities it is not), with only a couple of exceptions: Luxor and DeSoto. Only recently has that changed. One can always tell the patrons of those companies when they get into the cab and say, "Gee, I've been riding cabs in San Francisco for years and I've never had a lady driver." I respond, "Well, that tells us which companies you usually call, (continued on page 47)



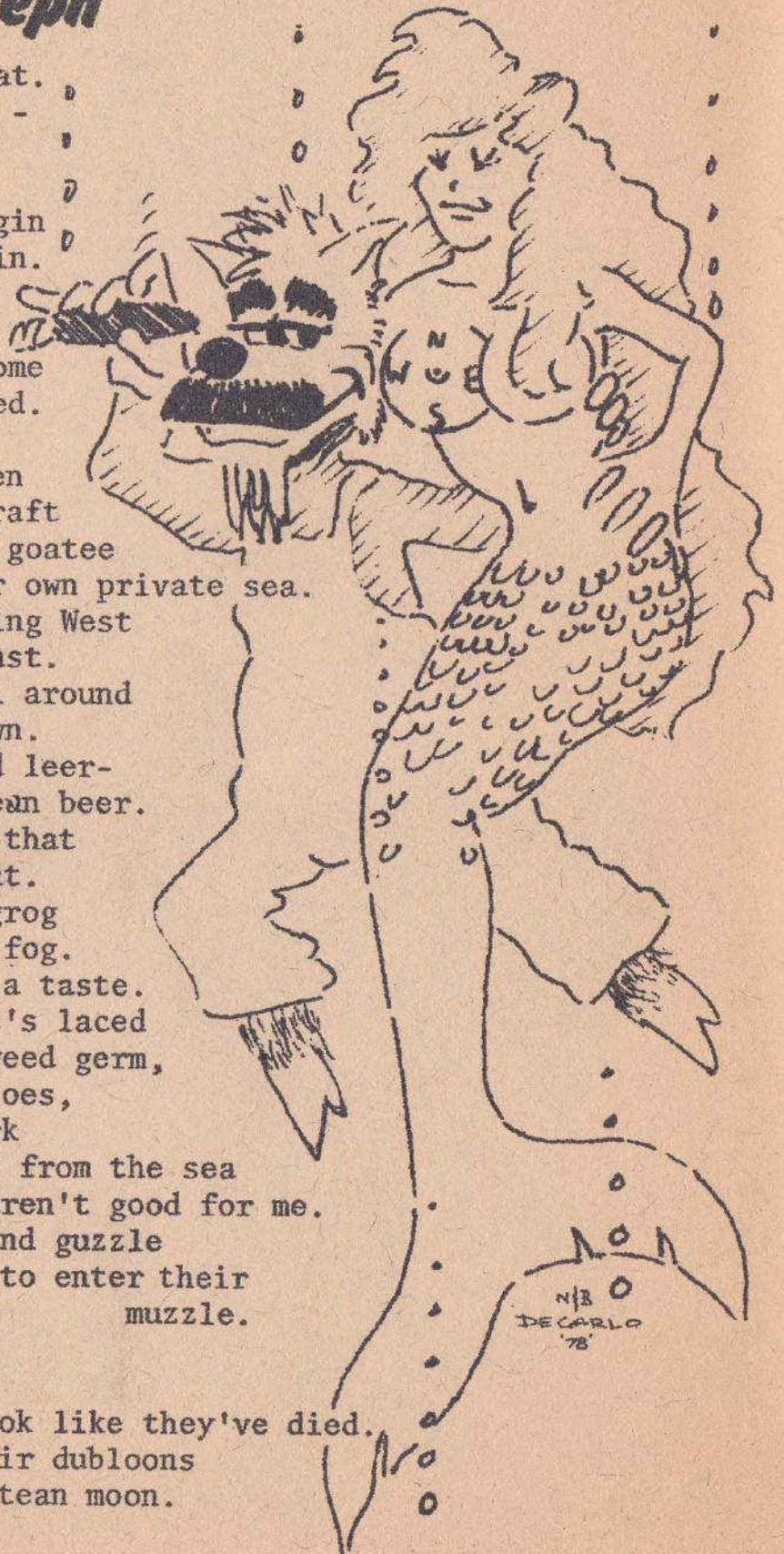
ME AND THE MERMAIDS AND A TWO-LEGGED GOAT :

by Mark Joseph

The drunken boat is still afloat.
I'm sailing here in Hades moat -
Just me and the mermaids
And a two-legged goat.
I drink wine, the goat drinks gin
Depending on what ocean we're in.
The goat gets loaded
Tremendously bloated
He constantly threatens to become
unboated.

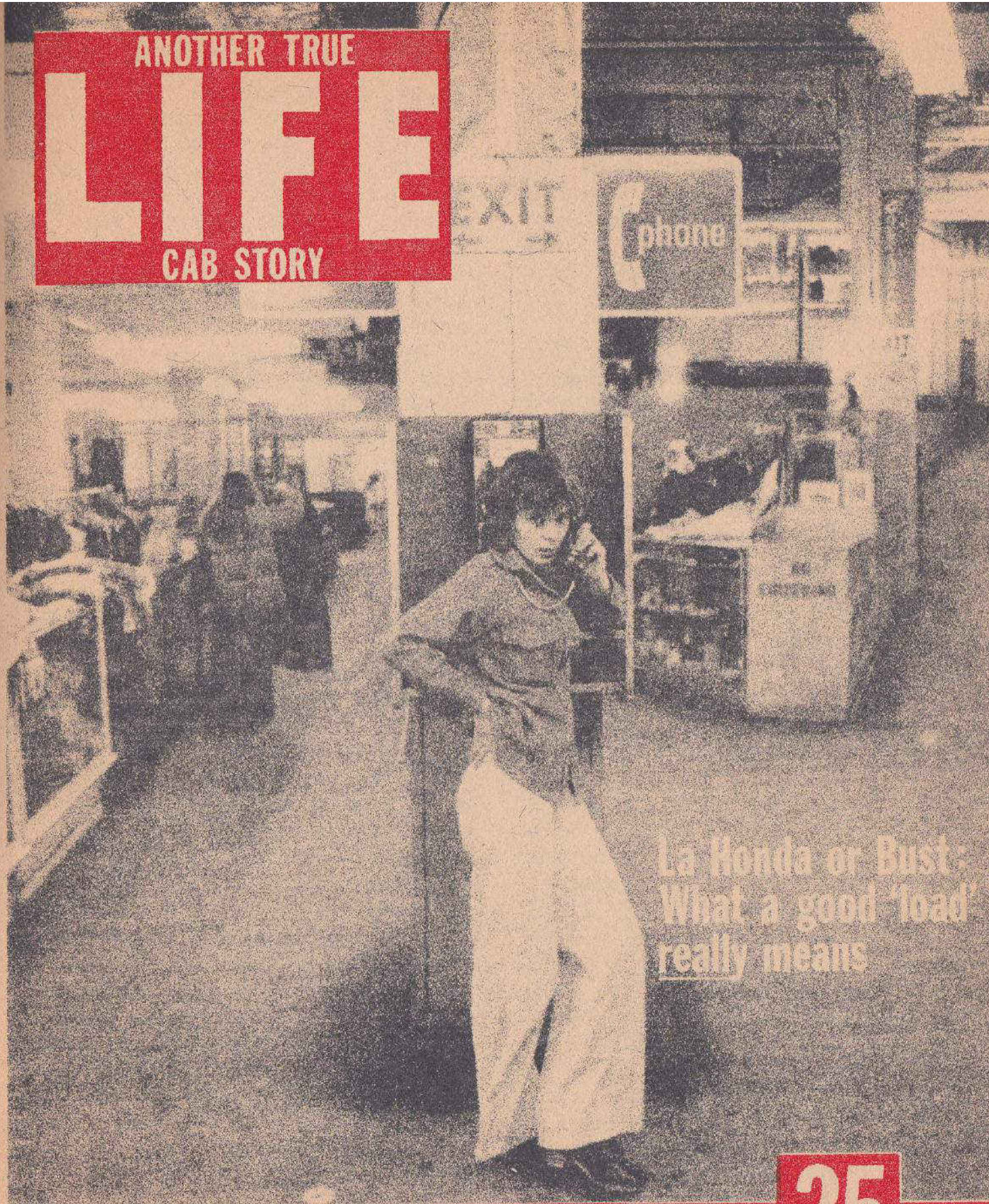
The goat slides forward
The sea rolls aft- and just when
You think he'll fall off that raft
A mermaid grabs him by his old goatee
And takes him for a swim in her own private sea.
We're sailing East, we're sailing West
Our compass is a mermaid's breast.
When the wind dies down we fool around
We find some lost Atlantean town.
The sailors grin, they peer and leer-
They offer the mermaids Atlantean beer.
But Styx and Siren won't drink that
They know it only makes them fat.
Instead they ask for sailor's grog
To which they add some mermaid fog.
The sailors squint, they crave a taste.
The mermaids wink, they know it's laced
With sperm whale sperm and seaweed germ,
A big squid's nose and turtle toes,
Tooth of shark and barnacle bark
And all those things which come from the sea
Which aren't good for you and aren't good for me.
But the sailors grab and slop and guzzle
They can't wait for that stuff to enter their
muzzle.

And before they can say,
"God damn, we're Shanghied!"
They fall on their faces and look like they've died.
So me and the goat loot all their dubbloons
And we sail away with the Atlantean moon.



N/B
DECARLO
'78

ANOTHER TRUE
LIFE
CAB STORY



La Honda or Bust:
What a good 'load'
really means

JUNE **25**, 1978

by Kristie Schroeder

It was one of those busy Friday afternoons last summer when business was hot as the streets. The radio was popping and Ralph was dispatching--or, rather, pleading with us to take radio orders. Most everyone, including myself, was downtown looking for airports. There was no use beating the streets for short fares.

I picked up a fare downtown that took me to 18th & Castro. The moment we reached our destination, "22nd & Guerrero" was squawked out over the radio. Now, "22nd 'Gro" inevitably means "The Ireland 32," an Inner Mission bar, a soused Irishman, and the potential for imminent disaster.

"O.K., Kristie," I told myself, "business has been good--you've got to pay some dues sometime. Go get that bar call." Upon arrival, I radioed in to affirm my decision. The adventure commenced.

True to form, the fare was a roaring drunken Irishman on crutches. "Oh, Lord," I thought, "here we go-- its got to be a trip around the corner to another bar." Sure enough, around the corner to another bar we went. To my astonishment, though, he said, "Wait here, lady, gotta go in here for a minute then we're going to La Honda." I didn't know what he was up to and I certainly didn't trust him, but a fare to La Honda is not one to sneeze at.

I asked Ralph for the flat rate and was told forty-five miles for sixty-six dollars. When "Crutches" returned, I quoted the price and informed him that I wanted the money upfront. He threw me a wad of seventy dollars and said, "C'mon, lady, lessgo, get this thing rolling, got-

ta get there sometime."

The cab was running low on natural gas. I explained that I could get it only at the garage, but he was too drunk to understand what I meant... "Doan worry 'bout any fuckin' gas," he said, "Steal the damn cab-- mebbe to Vegas..." His words trailed off into the incomprehensible.

He wasn't being very coherent about anything. I wasn't at all clear about where he was coming from, so, despite my own reservations, I asked again, "Where do you want to go?"

"La Honda," he yelled. "Dammit, lady, awready toldja five bloody times!"

"O.K., O.K.," I said. "Relax. I'll get you there, but I'm stopping for gas. Then we'll be on our way."

I drove to the lot to fill up. When we got there, Crutches decided he needed to use the bathroom. I got out and helped him struggle out of the cab and into the driver's room where Ralph and some other drivers were playing pool. Crutches decided that he wanted in on the game. Amongst the bunch of us, we dissuaded him and managed to get him to the john.

"Where'd you get that one?," Ralph asked me, chuckling.

"You gave him to me. Ireland 32-- says he's going to La Honda."

"Well, you'd better get the money upfront," he warned.

I went back outside to deal with the gas. Soon Crutches returned, yelling and cursing. "What's this bull shit. Where's the lady cabbie? C'mon, less GO." We got in the cab and took off.

"We gotta stop for booze before the freeway," he cried, "I need more

brandy, more beer, and some ice. Gotta get supplied."

I wanted to keep him pacified, so I did as requested, using some of the cab fare he'd given me for the purchases. We were finally on our way--south on 280.

At first, I had thought that this would be a good fare. I figured that an hour and fifteen minutes each way for seventy dollars was a stroke of luck. But, as the trip progresses, I began to wonder if the whole thing was worth it.

He was next to me in the front seat, using the open glove compartment as a makeshift bar. "Go faster, dammit, faster!" he'd yell in my right ear. I was travelling quite fast enough in the left lane and was not about to speed up, so I ignored him.

Maps and papers started slipping out of the glove compartment. He began grabbing them and throwing them out the window on to 280. His motor control was at an extreme low. He kept spilling brandy on the seat and on me and dropping lit cigars on my shirt.

My tolerance was quickly evaporating. I can put up with most hassles in my cab, but old Crutches was definitely getting to me. Twice I pulled off the freeway to get out and scoop ice and beer out from under me. My clothes were sopping wet. As we continued, he became more and more belligerent--

"C'mon, bitch, get this cab back on the road... don't have time for no fuckin' beauty rests... Fuckin' cabbies 're all the same. Screw an honest man for his money... no goddam decency left in the world..."

The point finally came at which I reacted. When I vehemently ex-

pressed annoyance, he calmed down for a short while, only to resume his incoherent ranting soon thereafter. A secret desire to simply dump him on the side of the road mounted within me.

We finally exited from the freeway and before too long were winding along a thickly wooded section of road. For awhile, the change of scenery seemed to calm him as he became absorbed with what was going on outside the cab. It didn't last long. After five minutes he was on my case once again.

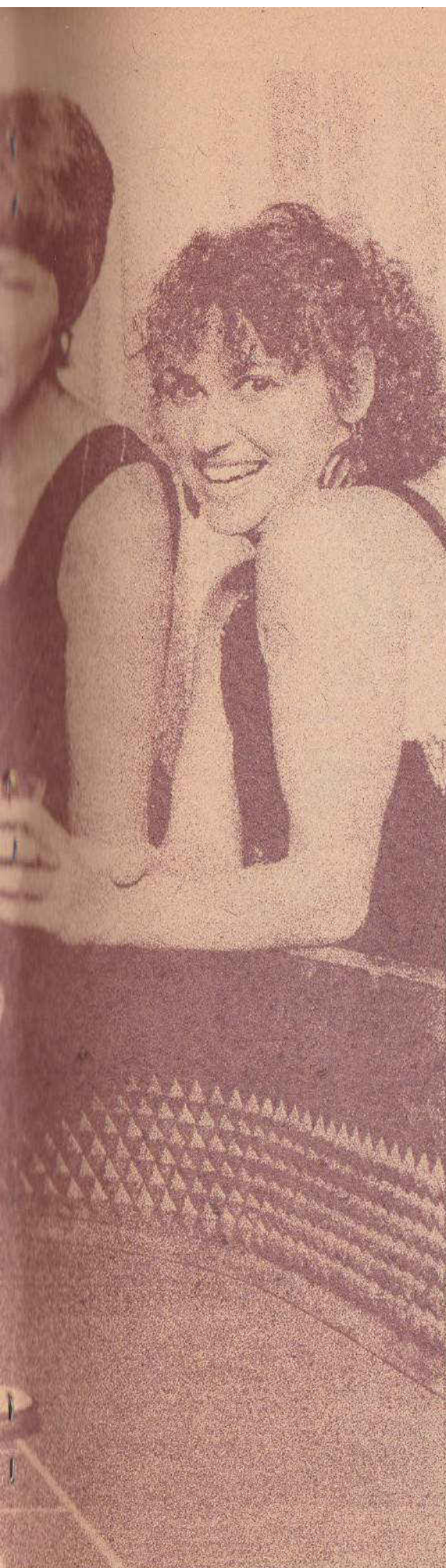
Suddenly, the absurdity of the situation hit me: Here I was, in the driver's seat of a City Cab, sitting next to a red-faced, obnoxiously vocal, sloppy drunk and surrounded by a peaceful, verdant, serene redwood setting. The whole thing was unreal: Crutches appeared a caricature of himself and I was part of the cartoon. "My God," I
(continued on page 43)



ESPRESSO
CAPPUCCINO
BEER WINE
PIZZA
SANDWICHES
OPEN DAILY 10-12
994 GUERRERO

*Love from
Johnny "The Stone"
Stone*





JIMMY THE GLOVE FADES THE MAIN

PLAYING THE FIELD

It was clearly demonstrated in the last issue that the odds favor the house. We studied the Propositions and the Pass and Don't Pass Lines. By simply tallying the ways we can roll a number or any group of numbers on the dice, we can always figure the true odds and compare them to the odds given by the house.

A field bet is a bet, paid off at even odds, that the next roll of the dice will be a field number, in most casinos 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 or 12. (In some casinos 5 is a field number and 4 is not.) A bettor has seven numbers fielding for him and four which do not (5, 6, 7, 8). Most beginning crapshooters think that with seven numbers to win and with only four numbers against them they are on to a good thing. A closer look at the combinations (The 36 Ways) reveals a different story. There are four ways to roll a 5, five ways to roll a 6, six ways to roll a 7, and five ways to roll an 8. In other words, there are 20 ways out of 36 total in which you lose. You have, therefore, only 16 ways in which to win. The percentage against you is 11.1%. On most casino tables the house pays double to a field bet when either a 2 or 12 is rolled, reducing their edge on you to 5.6%.

Next issue: COME LINE, BIG RED 6 AND 8

THE 2-BIT TOUR

by Gene Craven

How d'ya describe the Bay?
It's a right-handed A-O.K.
Where- (here flash a grin)
The forefinger is Marin.

While here- (now slowly tap)
The Golden Gate is the gap
That's drawn a million sails
Between opposing nails.

The upper nail is Sausalito
Find a houseboat- be a mosquito.
The lower nail is the City,
Find a home- be young and pretty.

And- (I know this sounds real dumb)
But, we're headed up the thumb
Where- (pause here for a chuckle)
The airport's at the knuckle.

Now, you won't read this in any book,
But, San Jose's here at the crook.
And, on the back of the hand
Spreads deepest, darkest East Bay land
Where Bart the Magic Dragon rules
Over Concord housewives and Berkeley fools.

And where my trigger finger's cocked, ya know?
Lies Carquinez Straight and Valley-Joe.
Then go due west to San Rafael
...There isn't very much more to tell.
So, just sit back and feel at ease--
And- oh, yes- that's two bits, please.



(Only man can oppose
the thumb precisely
to the forefinger.)

Illustration by Albrecht Dürer

after Mama died, the house where Francis and his Papa lived turned cold as a void settled in Harold Slite's heart. Uncle Jack arrived out of a rainstorm, clutching a battered suitcase and smelling like stale cigars. He stomped the water from his torn shoes and gave his bewildered brother a bear hug, lifting Papa several inches off the rug. "I've come to take care of the boy," he announced.

He settled in the back room; the boy and the old man instant friends. Uncle Jack never did anything quietly. He talked loud, moved loud, sang loud, and refused to wear a hearing aid. Afternoons, he and the boy rode the streetcar to baseball games. Uncle Jack liked to sit in the wooden stands out by right. "El Cheapo Special," he called them. On warm days, he would strip practically down to his longjohns. As the innings wore on, his smile would widen and he bought beer for friend and stranger. The only thing that mattered less than money in his pocket was the score. "Such utter

nonsense!" he roared, the gold in his mouth sparkling like a trombone in a fourth of July parade. "Eighteen grown men running around in orange knickers."

At one of these games, the boy ate a dozen hotdogs and had his first taste of whiskey from the old man's flask. "Next time you'll know better than to gulp it down like that," he laughed, holding his nephew's curly head over the toilet. "This reminds me of the time me and some boys broke into a cellar where old Hack hid his still. I spent the night with my head draped off the side of an ironing board."

"Not now, Unc," the boy pleaded, raising his head for air.

"...nothing like spending the night in an outhouse."

"Please, not nowh--" He held on to his stomach for dear life.

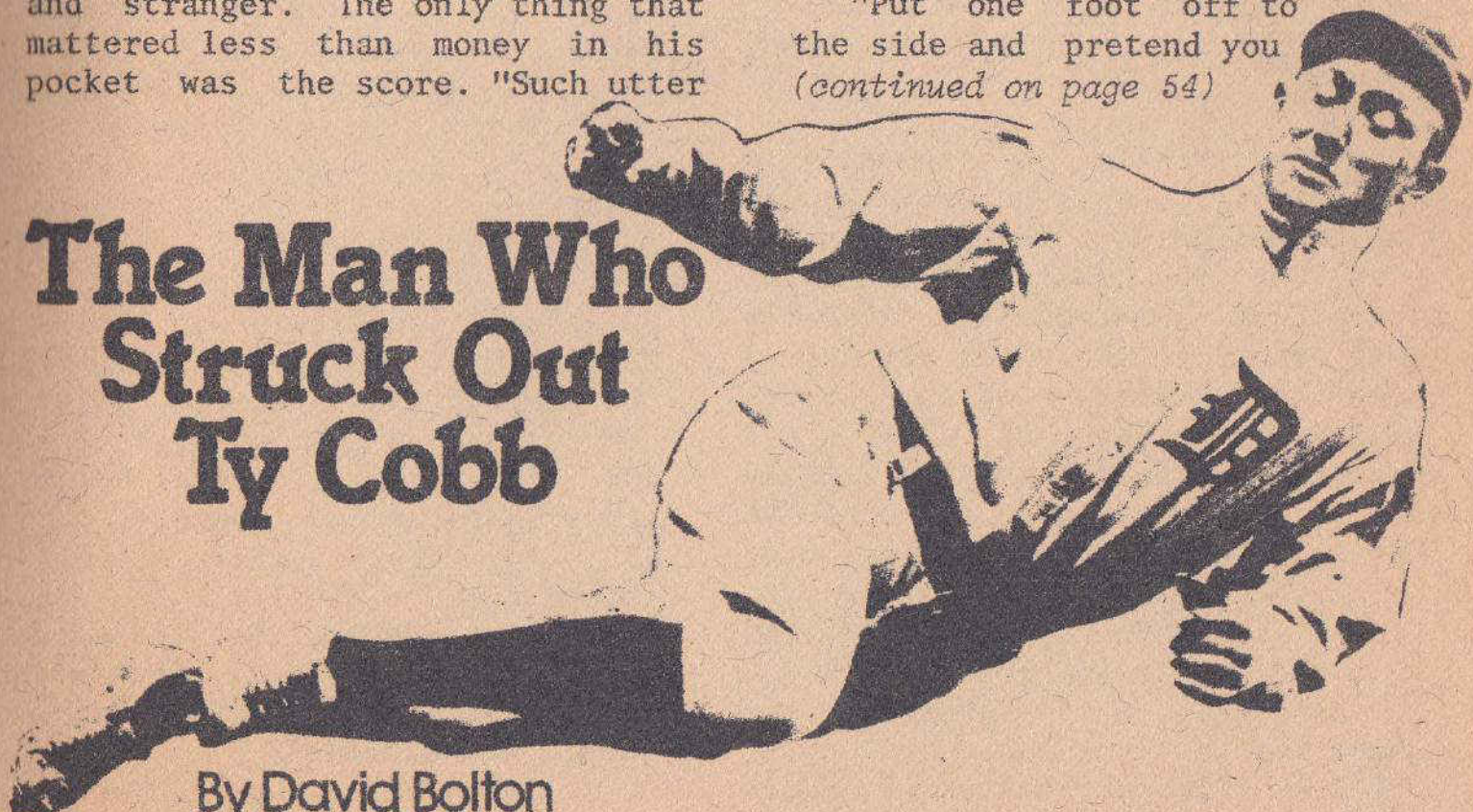
"You say something?"

"I can't stop the merry - go-round."

"Put one foot off to the side and pretend you
(continued on page 54)

The Man Who Struck Out Ty Cobb

By David Bolton



FEBRUARY 5, 1977

by Ginger McIntosh

"Death on Watchman Way" was written by Mark Joseph for the Deep City Press last year when Michael Albert, a 29 year old Veteran cab driver, was senselessly shot to death by two youths on Potrero Hill. Joseph's story seemed shocking yet not uncommon. The fate of Michael Albert haunts every cab driver, deep-seated but not dwelled upon. Our ineffective judicial system is even more frightening as Michael Albert's murderers still walk the streets.

Seldom realized is the anguish of a loved-one at home. Ginger McIntosh brings that home to us.

-Ed.

There's really no assurance a night driver will come home at the end of his shift. Every time he goes out the door could be the last. That knowledge is probably more real to the women waiting at home than to the men on the streets.

Driving a cab at night is a challenge. The man and the machine are a team engaged in constant battle with a hard and cynical city. He can win if he gets that airport, breaks one hundred, if he takes that one last radio order, if he... so he takes a few gambles, and sometimes his luck runs out.

I was up the night Michael Albert

was killed. I often stay up nights when my night driver is working. That night, after the television went off, I read and drank wine. Looking out at the grey city sky that never becomes really dark, I imagined I could see the first pale light of dawn even though the clock said only one a.m. I knew that clock was wrong. It was actually much later and he should already be home. Where was he? Who was he with? What was he doing?

I worried about the night-time ladies, I worried about the North Beach bars and pictured him drunk in every one. I worried about accidents. I worried about everything in a vain attempt to block out the real worry: he was lying bleeding and hurt in some God - forsaken alley.

Suddenly, that night, my radio blared the announcement that a San Francisco cab driver was killed on Potrero Hill. Frantically, I called the harried dispatcher, pleading for assurance that my night driver was all right. I wonder how many other women waited tensely, as I did, for every small detail of information. Finally, the radio announcer revealed that the murdered driver worked for another company, and I experienced a strange jumble of emotions.

I was relieved, of course, but

other feelings surged in quickly after that first moment of joy. I was angry. I did my time as a radical activist, but I have no sympathy for the downtrodden who, in turn, tread upon another working class stiff. Underneath the mystique, a cab driver is another poor slob working long hours to make his monthly payments.

And I was sad, terribly sad for that driver lying dead on some cold and unfamiliar street, and for that one woman, that mother or wife or sister, who would soon be getting a phone call. But my strongest emotion was my desire for my night driver to quit, to become a carpenter, a truck driver-- anything that would end my night time vigils.

The frequency of robberies, assaults and murders testifies to the everpresent danger. We certainly can't have faith in the vigilance or protection of the police: they have a remarkable record of failure to apprehend criminals who terrorize cab drivers. In fact, the city seems to be unconcerned with any aspects of cab drivers' welfare.

While my night driver and many others continue to brave the dangers of the streets, the rewards decrease. Cab drivers make less and less money, always subject to unwanted rate hikes that result in higher gates and fewer passengers.

Yet the mystique of the streets propels them into the night. It's 2 a.m. and I'm writing to keep busy. I should be sleeping but I cannot forget Michael Albert. My driver is out there making the bar run, parked in front of Pam Pam's hoping for a fare, and his worried lady at home is the last thing on his mind.

★★

THE MAGAZINE
BACK-DATED
AND PAPER PERIODICALS
EPHEMERA

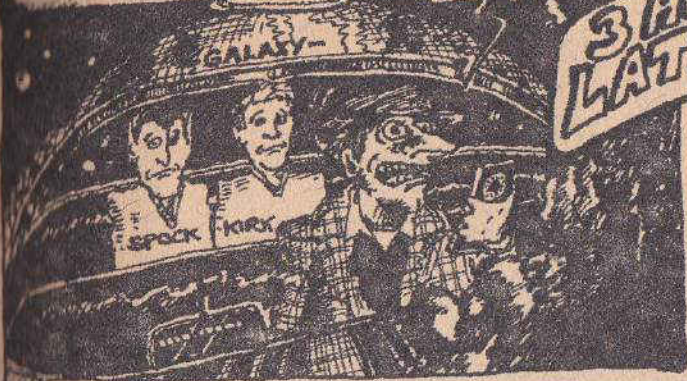
DESIGN R. TUTEN

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YEA, SCORRY, I HAD A LITTLE RUN IN WITH A STRAY METEORITE, ...HOW ABOUT SENDIN' A TOW POD OUT TO ZONE BLUE, ACROSS FROM THE URANIAN STUCKEYS...



3 HOURS LATER

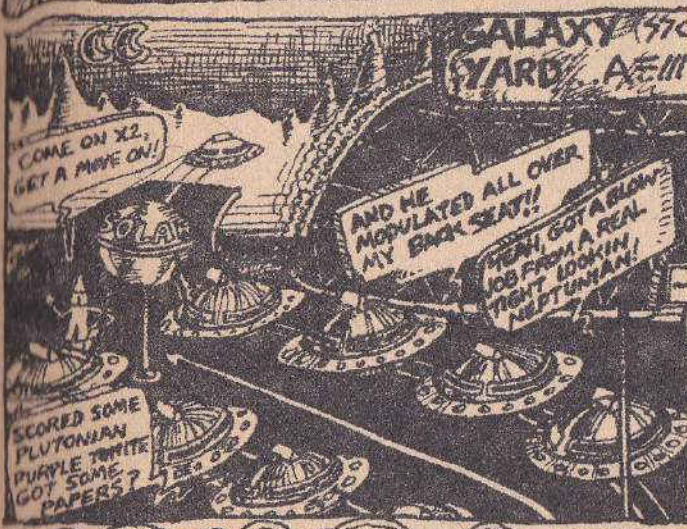
SORRY WE'RE SO LATE, MAXIE....

BUT WE WERE TOWIN' TOURISTS FROM BROADWAY ON VENUS!!

WOW

BIG ACCOUNT, Y'KNOW...

AT-LAST TOWING

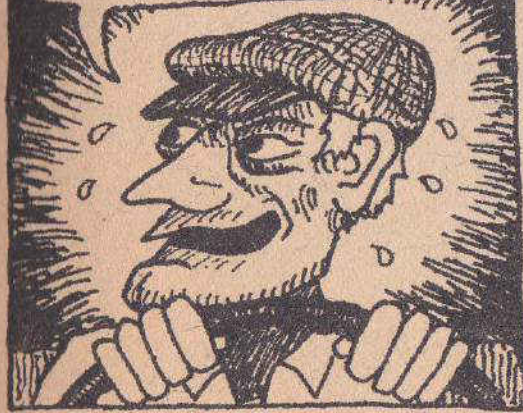


12 CREDITS A TOW BILL, AN' PROBABLY MY JOB FOR KISSIN' THAT METEORITE.... I GOTTA QUIT BEIN' SO SPACED OUT!!

PAY-GATES



HEY, I'M SORRY... GUESS I MUSTA DRIFTED OFF!...



THAT'S OKEY, BUT I NEEDED TO GET TO THE FAIRMONT FAST!! BY THE WAY, HOW LONG DO A SET OF BRAKES LAST?



Sketches of Spain

Deep in the Mission with Rodriguez



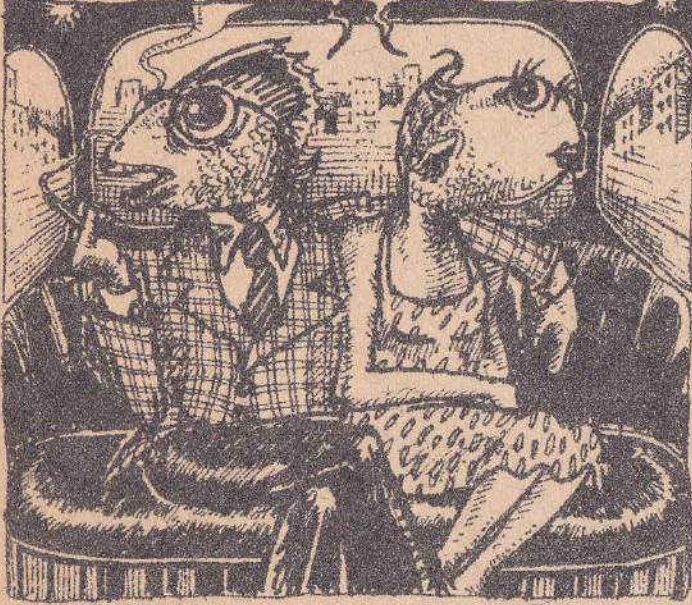


HOW LONG DOES A TRANSMISSION LAST IN THIS TOWN? HOW LONG DOES A TRANSMISSION LAST IN THIS TOWN? HOW LONG DOES A TRANSMISSION LAST IN THIS TOWN?

FISHWHARE

ST. FRANCAIS,
PLEASE.

YOU MUST REALLY
WEAR YOUR BRAKES
OUT ON THESE HILLS!



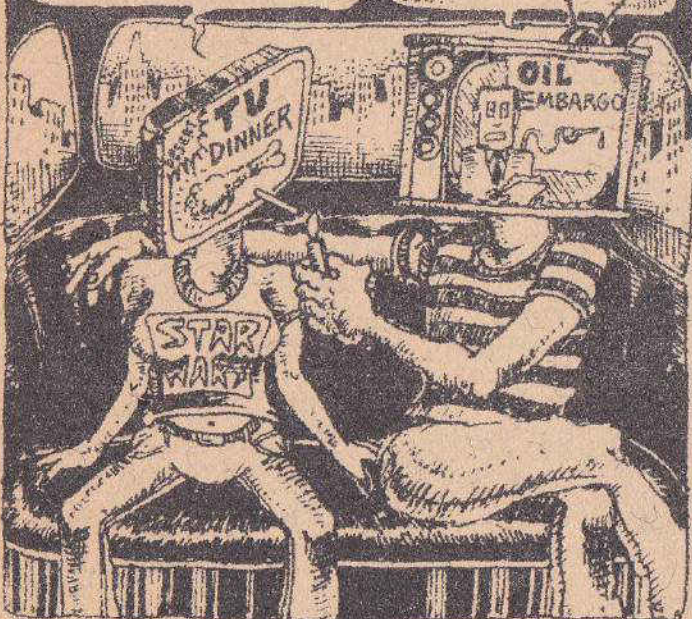
HOLIDAY INN,
PLEASE.

YOU MUST REALLY
WEAR YOUR BRAKES OUT
ON THESE HILLS!



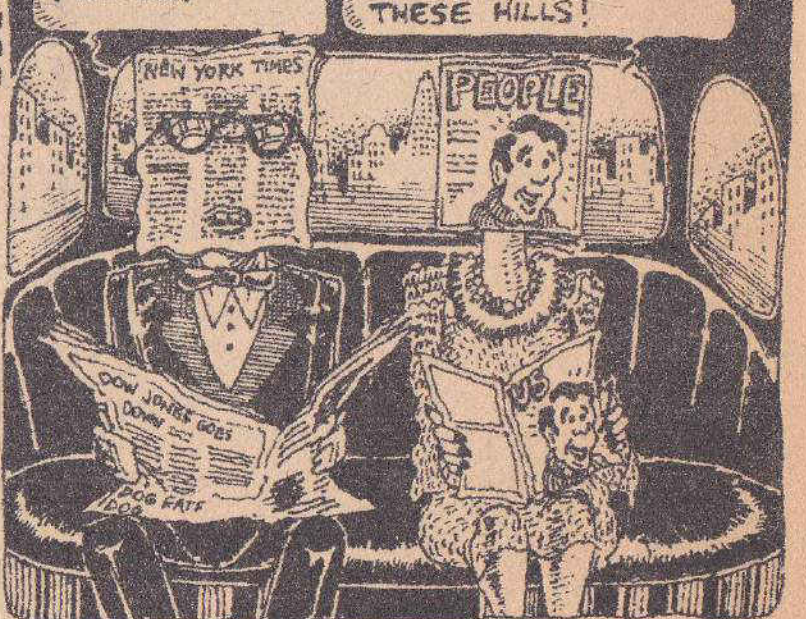
YOU MUST REALLY
WEAR YOUR BRAKES
OUT ON THESE HILLS!

THE VAGABOND,
PLEASE.



THE MARK HOPKINS,
PLEASE.

YOU MUST REALLY WEAR
YOUR BRAKES OUT ON
THESE HILLS!



(True LIFE Cab Story continued)

asked myself, "how do I get myself into these ridiculous situations?!"

The old Irishman's loud insults continued for the remainder of the trip. Upon reaching his destination, a rustic motel complex nestled in amongst the redwoods, my nerves were completely on edge.

"Well, don't just sit there and stare at me, go in and rent me a room," he hollered.

I responded tersely, informing him that more of my time meant more of his money. He threw me another bill. I got out of the cab, slammed the door behind me, and stormed across the parking lot into the bar/restaurant.

"Whatcha looking for," asked a blonde woman at the pool table.

"The manager," I answered through clenched teeth, barely able to control myself.

"Speak to the bartender," and she returned to the cue ball.

I asked the bartender about renting a room for my fare and was informed that no rooms were available due to lack of water.

I went back outside to relay the message, praying to God that I was not going to have to return this character to San Francisco myself. Fortunately, he wanted to stay anyway and demanded help across the parking lot. With my help, he staggered out of the cab. Just as we were beginning to make progress everyone in the bar poured outdoors.

"So it's him you have with you! No wonder you're so uptight!" I felt as though I had been left out of an inside joke until the pool table lady threw her arms around me, offered me a drink, and informed me that he came often, creating commotions and getting into fights

each time. She noted his crutches, referring to them as potential weapons.

The bartender said, "If you ever pick him up again, don't bring him here." Several others asked if he'd paid the fare and offered to if he hadn't. Again, I was asked if I wanted a drink. When I said that I didn't, the lady pool player insisted on buying me a sandwich and a cup of coffee. I was feeling better even though the Irish character continued to harass me in the restaurant. A feeling of close familiarity amongst the clientele coupled with the loveliness of the surroundings settled my nerves.

Soon I felt sufficiently fortified to begin the return trip. My plan was thwarted, though, by a disappearance of the cab keys from the restaurant counter. The identity of the culprit was obvious although he denied taking them. The combined efforts of a few restaurant patrons located my keys in one of the Irishman's pockets.

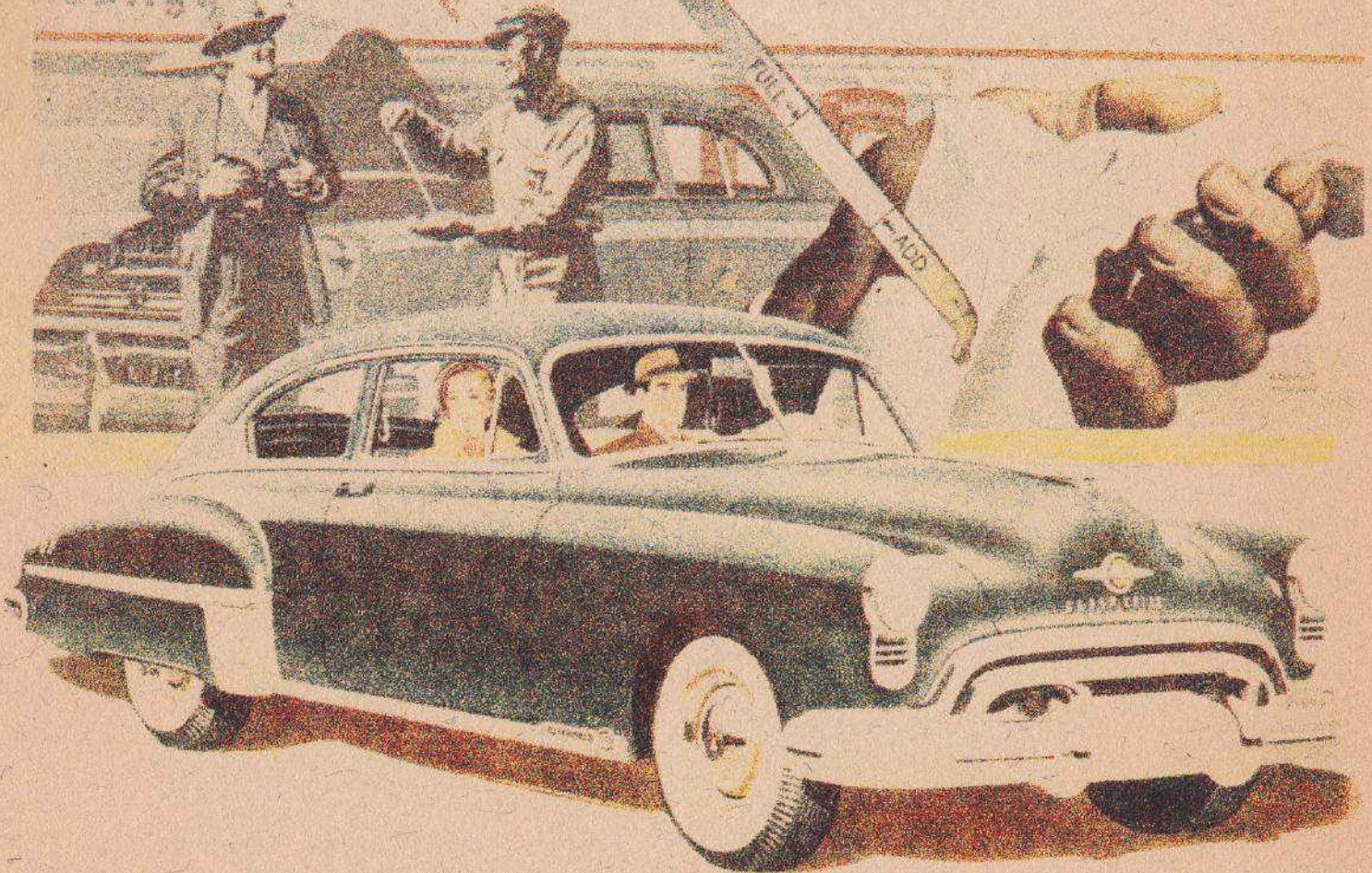
Ten minutes later, driving north on the winding road, I came out from under the trees into a burst of sunlight. I was blinded. My sunglasses were nowhere to be found. I wasn't about to part with them, so I pulled a U-turn right there and returned to the motel. Although he protested wildly, my sunglasses were soon rescued from another one of Crutches' pockets.

Once again, relieved and optimistic, I set off for San Francisco. Yet to come was the last embarrassment: returning the cab to the yard still reeking of beer and brandy. I wonder to this day if the night driver was intoxicated by the fumes... **

Only 45 Miles from Broadway

In '49 we owned a '41 Oldsmobile, surely not up to many more trips "down below." In '50, we decided to start the coming decade with a brand new Oldsmobile Rocket 88, "body by Fisher before Liz." It was a fine auto, four doored, bronze colored, and practical, chosen by parents in lieu of a flashy, fire engine red two-door with white

by R.J. Dutra



walls. We three kids loved the latter, but Mom and Dad settled on the former with an eye to the future and to the elbow room of seven passengers.

It was spacious, holding 3 kids and four adults easily, and for a trip to the City, we usually had a full load. We'd take Grandma to see the Rhododendron Show in Union Square, we'd get our aunt away from the chores on her hot, dry ranch to let her marvel at the cool greenery of Golden Gate Park, we'd take our father for medical check ups and treatments not then available in our native Contra Costa County. We took my brother to Fort Mason to see him off to Korea and we picked up my cousin from "back East" and laughed when he looked across the Bay at the Berkeley Hills and asked, "Are those the Sierras?" Whatever the occasion, for us kids, it was always a trip in the Olds to the wonderful City of Oz.

Driving was still a pleasure on quiet, clean, two-lane roads. Locally maintained, their surfaces would vary from county to county. On these roads, Dad could make the trip from our hometown, Concord, to San Francisco with the Olds' overhead V-8 and four-gear hydramatic system, in under two hours--quite a feat in pre-freeway days.

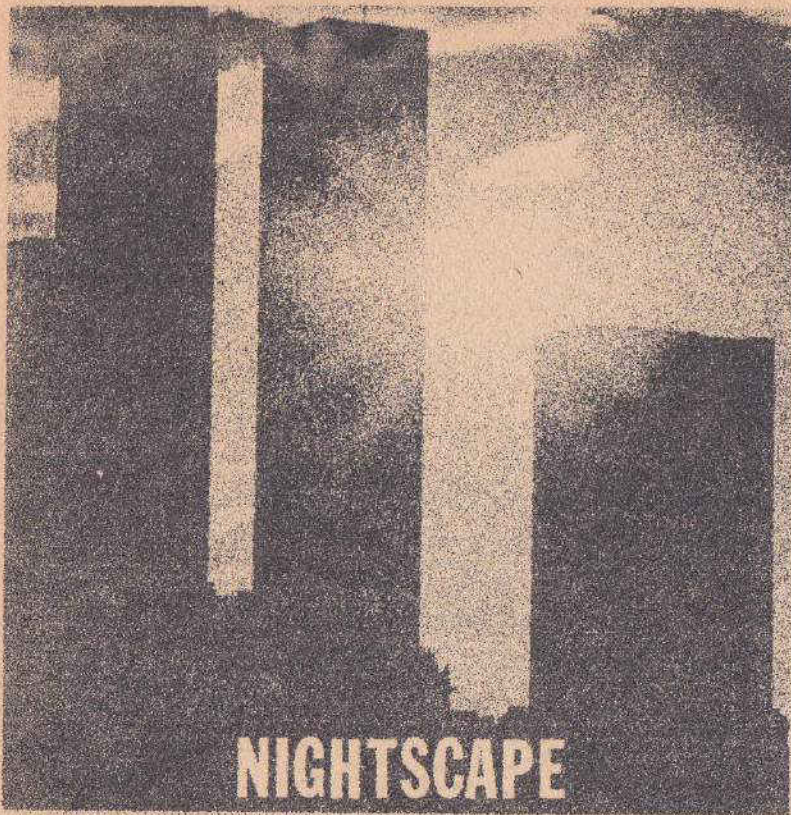
Before each trip the Olds would be gassed and checked at the Associated Oil Station, a local company refining the still abundant San Joaquin-Kern crude oil. Dad would fill the car with Flying A's high priced ethyl, the air, water, and brake and hydramatic fluids were all checked, and the windows were washed--all for under five dollars.

Dressed in our J. C. Penney's

best from downtown Martinez, we'd load into the Oldsmobile as it warmed up in the driveway. My two sisters would wear silk ribbons in their hair, extra petticoats, stiffly starched, and black patent leather Mary Janes with white stockings. It seems I always wore a charcoal grey, three button suit with a handkerchief in the pocket and a clip-on bow tie. To complete the effect, I would double my dose of Brylcreme, putting a good sized gob in each palm, spreading it through my hair, and sealing my 1950's grease pack into place with a hot water soaked comb. And just to be cool, I would dab on some Old Spice. Dad always wore a "sharp" suit and matching felt hat and my mother would don her very best. There were two things she would endure hat, gloves and girdle for: Our Holy Mother the Church and the City. She complained about the former but put on her Sunday dress for the latter.

All settled and ready, we'd pull onto the Port Chicago Highway, drive up to Salvio Street through the six blocks of downtown Concord, and then it would be left on Monument Boulevard. On the right of the boulevard was the Walnut Creek flood plain, low land that turned into a vast tule swamp in wet years, flooding some of the first carelessly built subdivisions. On the left of Monument Boulevard loomed mighty Mount Diablo. It was "The Mountain" to us, resting high above the Diablo, Clayton, Ignacio, and Livermore Valleys, then full of orchards, ranches, truck farms and hayfields.

Monument Boulevard appropriately led to a monument dedicated to Con-



**LUMINESCENT MEN
ASCEND THE PEAKS OF NIGHTSCAPE
CHALLENGING THE DARK**

**RESTLESS MEN TRAVERSE
THE CITY'S TENEBROUS SOUL
GUIDING ITS PASSAGE**

**ETCHING MANDALAS
ON MIDNIGHT'S URBAN PSYCHE
EXPOSING FUTURES**

**GUARDIANS OF LIGHT
SOAR ACROSS THE EDGE OF DREAMS
MANIFESTING DAWN**

(45 Miles continued)

tra Costra's World War I dead. It was built by the W.P.A. under the New Deal, courtesy of F.D.R., who always carried the country. So did Truman in '48, holding together the Democratic Party's Labor-Ethnic coalition.

The monument was the meeting place for roads from Martinez, Pacheco, Concord, Clayton, and Walnut Creek. Nearby was a Japanese truck farm, one patch of fertile black soil; bottom land producing a variety of crops year round. An old man who farmed his few acres with only his and his horse's labor lived there. Us kids could always feel our parent's admiration for this man who plowed, sowed, and reaped the earth, avoiding noisy machines with stubborn respect for quiet land.

Past the monument, a winding pass through some hills by-passed Walnut Creek and fed into the four lane highway through Lafayette and Orinda, itself running up a steep grade to the two-bore Caldecott Tunnel. First the darkness, the radio goes dead--we all catch our breath as we go speeding down the dark, narrow tunnel under a mountain. We think, "Earthquake!" Everyone has been in at least one, and some the great one of 1906. Finally, we breathe a sigh of relief as we come out into Alameda County, always at least ten degrees cooler.

(continued on page 60)

(Lady Drivers continued)

doesn't it?"

Inge has probably taken more guff than any of us since she broke the ice at DeSoto. She is a shy, blonde woman from Germany. It is in the bars that people verbalize more than anywhere else and DeSoto has more bars than any company. Most of the time just walking into a bar draws comments. Sometimes half the people in the bar turn around, give you a look and say they'll take you even though they didn't call one. Sometimes we get something like Inge got:

"Well, a lady cab driver (hic). Do you know how to drive?"

"No," Inge said, and walked out.

Often when we walk in and say, "Somebody call a cab?", the bartender will say, "You want a cab lady? Just a minute and I'll call you one." It takes some explaining to get them to understand that you're the driver of the cab that they've called.

At this time there are probably more women drivers than ever before with the exception of the duration of the Second World War. There are now perhaps forty five women on the road, a small percentage of the people driving.

I never quite know how to respond when a cable car pulls up next to me at a distance of about two and a half feet and someone says, "Look, a lady cab driver," as if I am an object incapable of hearing. What can I do but shake my head and laugh. When you consider that half the people driving automobiles are women, why should it be so shocking for a woman to be driving a cab? I can't go through one day without someone saying something about my

being a woman in a man's job.

At least three times a day, I am asked how long I've been driving. That's the first question from most fares. The next question is, "Aren't you afraid?" People seem to think there's a whole lot of violence connected with driving a cab. They seem to be dying to hear that women cabbies are often victims of brutal attack and harassment. The truth is, I have experienced more violence in one hour of *The Streets of San Francisco* than in three and a half years of driving a cab. What I do see is people being abusive towards themselves in the forms of alcohol and drugs. I also see many people with mental and emotional problems.

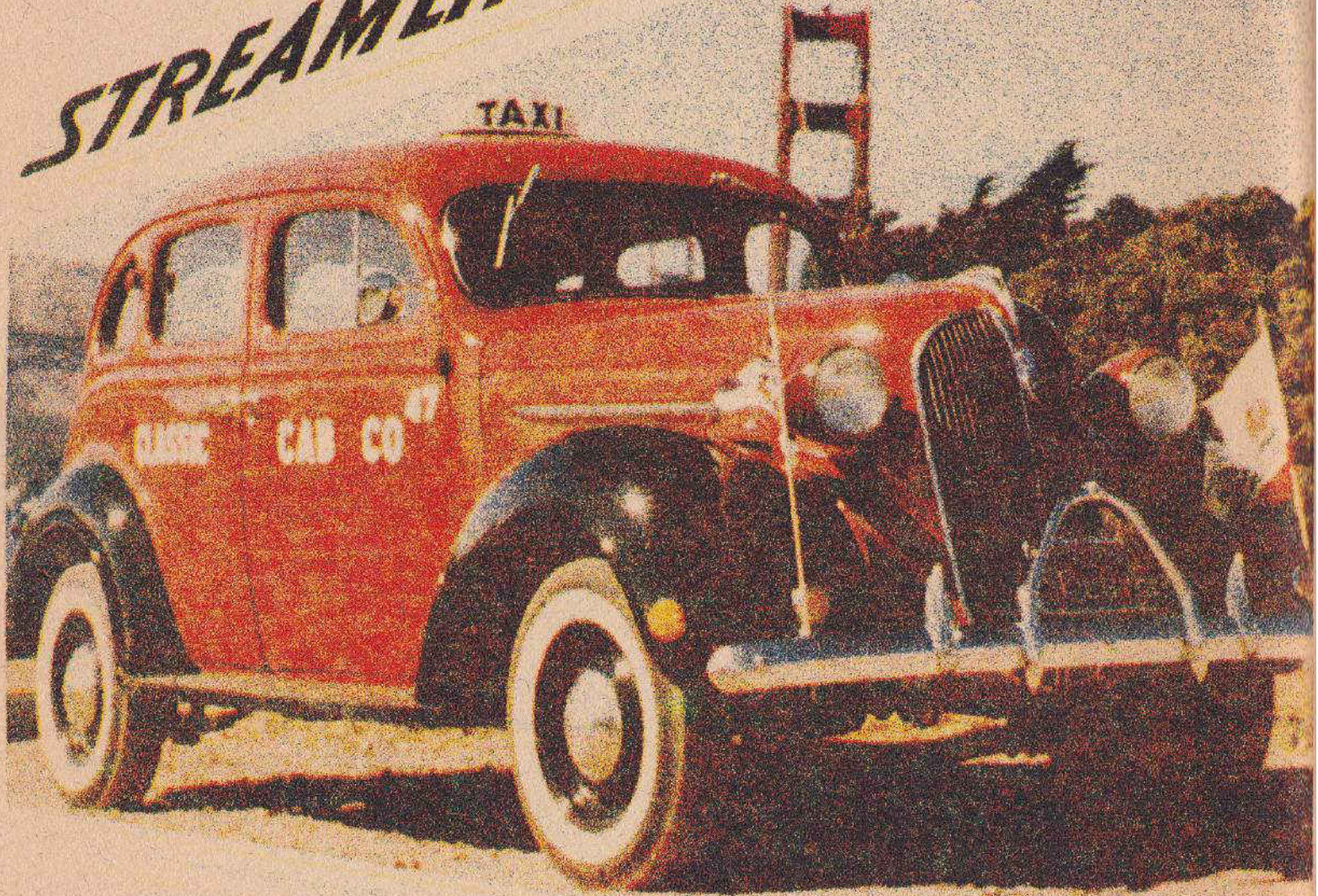
Most of us have been asked at one time or another where to find a woman. Barbara asked Lisa if this question had ever been asked in her cab:

"Oh, it's happened," she replied. "Most of the time men ask so cryptically that I don't know what the hell they're talking about: Like, uh, where is it?... Where can I find it? By that time I figure out what they're talking about." Her response is, "What do you mean where is it? Are you giving me a bad time? It's out there. It's way out there. You'll find it. Can't miss it."

As it turns out, men get asked about sex much more often than we ever do.

Driving a cab is in a class by itself. Someone once asked Lisa when she was going to get a "real job." I just can't imagine a job where one gets a more rounded real picture of humanity. It might be a while before I get a "real job."

STREAMLINE ACTION with



TAXI CABS

(New Yellow continued)

haps it's because there was still much of the student about him. It was a simple guess as to who his new teacher was. Even his most sophmoric pronouncements were nothing if not inspired.

As vice president of New Yellow, Shannon said, "The whole thing is going through a metamorphosis. The old is becoming the new. And you can see it, the line is drawn right down the middle." Looking out the window of his second story office down into the lot, he continued, "There's a line I'm looking at out there in the yard and you can see it as clear as day. You can see the cabs we've prepared and the ones we haven't. The same with the people here. There's a line right down the middle. The line of demarcation is a break in the thinking patterns in the whole cab industry. Some people are progressive, they think forward, of tomorrow; they think of the need for community as far as transportation. They see an end to the private vehicle, they see a pyramid being made of old car bodies, they see the future, and they're working with that in mind. And the other people, they get all boiled up."

Shannon was right, more right at that point than he could have ever known.

Fassett and Shannon were quite a team by themselves, experience and innocence balanced, but Fassett saw a need for someone who knew the cab business. They agreed upon James Steele, the other "s" of S/S Acquiring Company. Steele had been the general manager of DeSoto Cab for seven years. Fassett dispatched Shannon to Steele's home in Marin

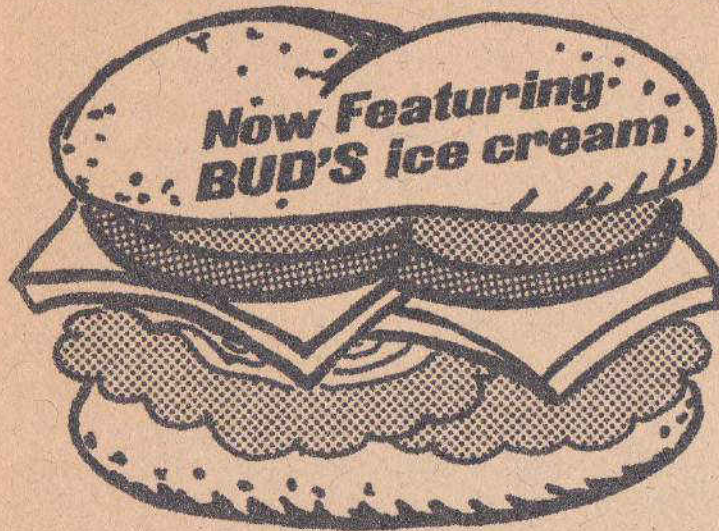
County. Jim Steele joined the New Yellow family as president. Fassett unknowingly introduced the point of origin from which Shannon's carefully described line of demarcation would spring, only this time, within the company itself. Before the year was out the strange trio had sworn to buy old Yellow and make it new.

During the year it took to get San Francisco Yellows back on the road, there were other defunct old Yellow Cab Companies throughout California and, elsewhere, there were companies that put New Yellows, in various forms, back on the road very quickly. In San Diego, Smith's headquarters, Yellow's bankruptcy was hardly declared before the company was sold. In Los Angeles, Oakland, and San Jose, Yellows were assimilated according to those cities' cab regulations without too much trouble or time.

Cab regulations vary considerably from city to city. In Los Angeles, the city makes two tests to judge taxi service before granting licenses: how quickly a cab company answers phone requests and how quickly it dispatches cabs to customers. L.A. also has a franchise system because the city is so spread out. Each cab company has a legal franchise for a particular area of business.

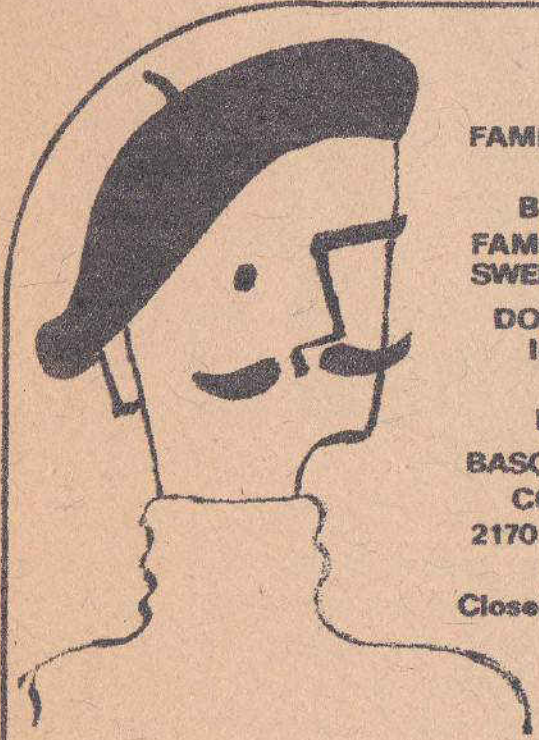
San Francisco has many unwritten traditions similar to those rules spelled out by Los Angeles, as in the way one cab company has the bar business by virtue of direct lines to the bars and another company services the Sunset District, etc. It has other traditions also, traditions which conspired to close down Yellow Cab for nearly a year. And

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CAFE DU NORD

that included Yellow's \$15 million worth of taxi permits-- not revoked when old Yellow's cabs were locked up, despite a city regulation requiring that taxi permits revert back to the City if not used for ten days.

That city regulation was not enforced for two reasons. First, Moscone decided that enforcement would impose "undue hardship"-- under which condition, he was bound to ignore it. He never specified who would have borne this hardship. His decision was challenged. Secondly, Judge Herbert Katz of the San Diego Federal Bankruptcy Court ruled that Yellow's permits, as a part of Yellow Cab's assets, could not be touched while the bankruptcy proceedings regarding Smith's holdings were in progress. Moscone was temporarily vindicated.

Other spawnings of old Yellow, however, like the Airporter Bus, resumed operation. The Airporter Bus was newly insured by a group of prospective owners who were headed by two airport parking operators.

And still old Yellow cabs languished. In March, a public auction was held for Yellow's carcass. In May, Katz awarded old Yellow to New Yellow for \$4.5 million. The very next month, he changed his mind and awarded old Yellow to clients of San Francisco attorney, Harold Dobbs, including former DeSoto organizer/owner, Jerome Hollander, and Los Angeles investor, David Weiss, of International Fastener Corporation, an L.A. liquidation firm. Yellow Checker would put up the bucks, S/S would run the cab business. The bucks consisted of a \$3.9 million loan to S/S, what Shannon termed "the kind of loan we couldn't

get from a bank." In August, Dobbs and the Co-op filed a purchase agreement in a federal court for a joint offer for old Yellow.

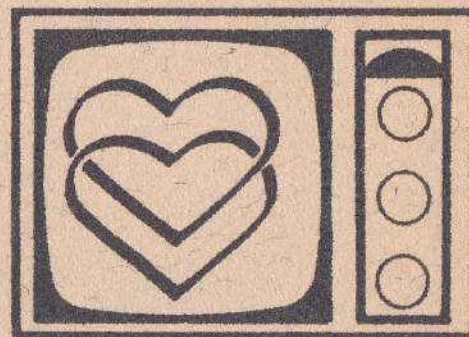
Dobbs was cunning. The former San Francisco Supervisor, mayoral candidate, and old law buddy of the mayor's was too cunning for his own good. He didn't think to take Moscone's name off his payroll until February 1977, coming dangerously close to precipitating a conflict of interest suit. And his arithmetic was transparent. Even Katz couldn't ignore the fact that Dobbs stood to make a fast million on this Yellow business, without risking a thing. Some eleventh hour figuring revealed that Dobbs had in mind a scheme to sell Yellow twice. Well, not exactly to sell the permits, but rather to sell the contractual right to appear as potential transferee of them.

The marriage was called off. Even what Kopp called 'a rump session of the bankruptcy court' couldn't erase the sum. That rump session took place in March at the San Francisco International Airport and included the president of the Police Commission, Judge Katz, the San Francisco Deputy City Attorney, a court bankruptcy receiver, and members of the San Francisco Police Department. On September 14, Katz changed his mind once again-- back to New Yellow and his original decision of May.

In September, the San Francisco Police Commission authorized the transfer of 346 of the permits formerly held by old Yellow to occur by November 10. Two hundred, forty-eight of those were to go to New Yellow, and ninety-eight to five other independent cab companies.

But Dobb's attempt at making mo-

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ney in, what he termed, 'the American tradition' wasn't the only stumbling block for New Yellow. There had been another bidder for old Yellow, known as ESOP (Employees Stock Ownership Plan) and called the "Kelso Plan," after its lawyer. Although ESOP never came up with enough money to be seriously considered as a rival bidder for old Yellow, its spokesman, former old Yellow driver, John Robb, articulated his plan, touting it as middle ground between the horrors of unionized old Yellow and the creeping socialism of a co-operative. This idealized plan, although not embraced by Katz, provided Supervisor Kopp with an example to counter New Yellow's plan for a co-op.

To someone as politically ambitious as Kopp, such an untested deal, unsullied by reality, could be useful-- especially in a union town presently tending towards anti-co-opism. ESOP was not a co-op. It was not like New Yellow where, in actuality, individual owner/operators would lease out their cabs just like all the other companies in town. No, ESOP would be a collective. Every employee would own a piece of the action, stock in the company. The cabs and permits would be owned collectively. And, if ESOP couldn't come up with the money,

their plan was that much more useful to Kopp.

After S/S was awarded old Yellow for \$2,894,000-- \$281,000 less than it would have had to pay in promissory notes to Dobbs' clients--Kopp, bound and determined to reform the taxi industry, went back to the drawing board. He said reform means an end to speculation in taxi permits. Devalue the permits and speculation will end, he argued. Reduce \$12,000 to a minimal \$75 or so. Justifiably, cab owners who purchased those twelve thousand-plus medallions wonder how the city can simply make them worthless without compensation.

Meanwhile, New Yellow started operations on November 8, Kopp took his post-operative cab ride, and Proposition K passed on the June ballot. Fassett, no longer personnel manager and Shannon, no longer assistant manager, were both fired by Steele. In an internal struggle comparable to the machinations of democratic party politics, New Yellow goes along yearning for leadership to match the times. Many Co-op members see the aging Steele as an autocrat. Along with his wife, he sits on the board of directors as president. At the same time, as general manager, he is paid only a few thousand dollars less per year than California's governor.

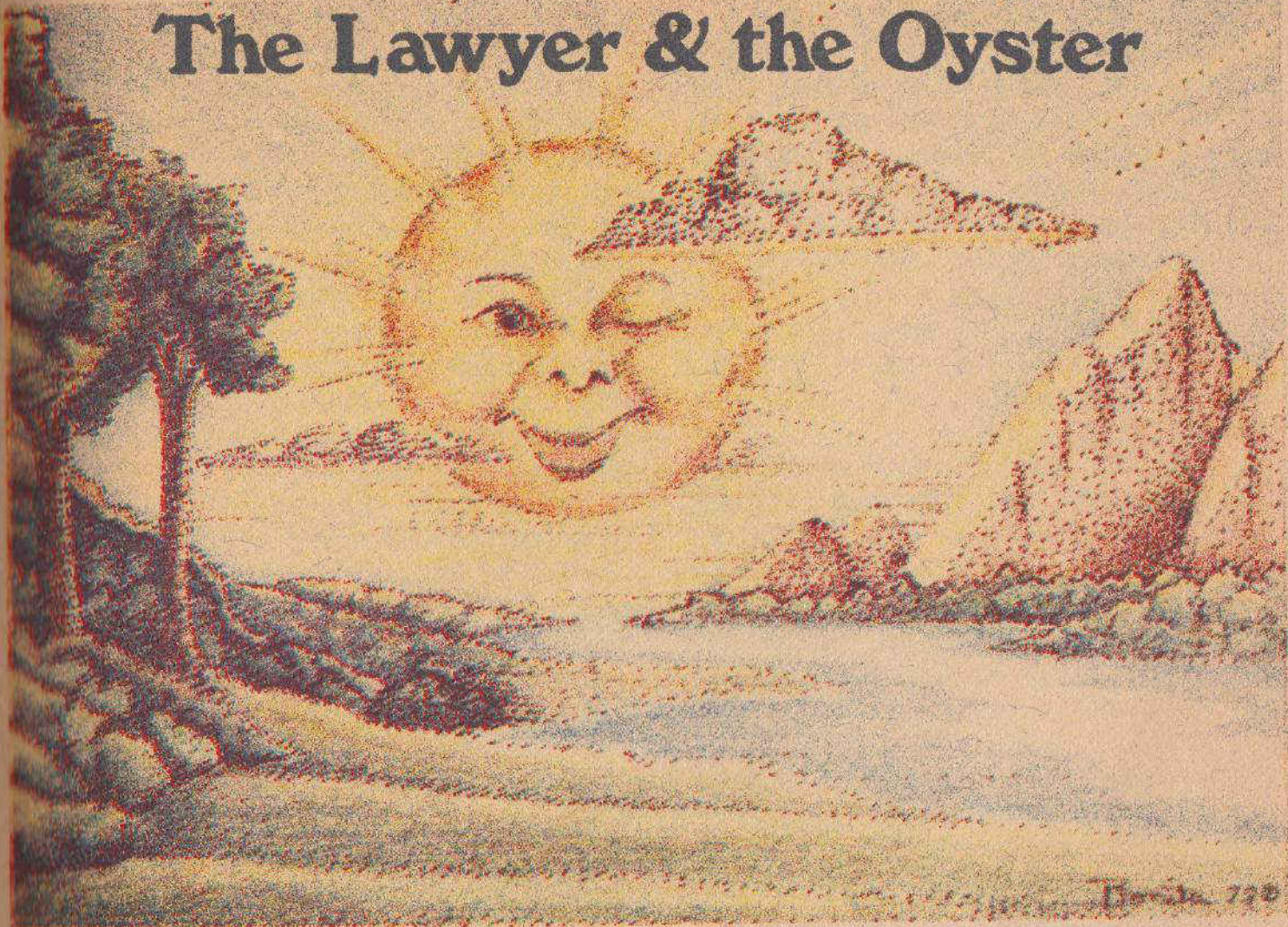
And what about all of the cab industry? The mandate is clear and the times are changing. The next decade promises a close examination of urban transportation. As San Francisco grows so does its need for good taxi service. How that challenge is handled may well depend on the kind of leadership that emerges from New Yellow.**

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The Lawyer & the Oyster



AS TWO MEN WERE WALKING by the seashore they found an oyster, and began to quarrel about it.

"I saw it first," said one man, "so it belongs to me."

"I picked it up," said the other, "and so I have a right to keep it."

As they were quarreling a lawyer came by, and they asked him to give his opinion in the matter.

The lawyer agreed to do so, but before he would give his decision, he required that the two men should give him their assurance that, whatever he might say, they would be quite satisfied with his judgment.

Then the lawyer said: "It seems to me that you both have a claim to

the oyster; so I will divide it between you, and you will then be perfectly satisfied."

Opening the oyster, he quickly ate it, and very gravely handed to each of the men one of the empty shells.

"But you have eaten the oyster!" cried the men excitedly.

"Ah, that was my fee for deciding the case!" the lawyer calmly replied. "But I have divided all that remains in a fair and just manner."

That is what generally happens when two quarrelsome persons go to law.

A TURKISH FABLE

(Ty Cobb continued)

are stepping off of it. That'll put an end to the spinning."

They also went to zoos, and Uncle Jack would stand for a long time making faces at the monkeys. He even got a gorilla to throw some shit at him. "You look like a fellow I fought once in Chicago. Weren't you a beer runner for Capone?" he cracked, dodging the missile. "Yep, you're the one. The smell gives you away. You had the worst armpits. Can't fool me with that getup. No sirree!"

A steaming turd plopped down from the bowels of an elephant. "Wow! Look at the size of that one!" It had to be the most impressive thing the boy had ever laid eyes on. This world truly was full of miracles! "Oh boy, Unc, here comes another one. This one's bigger than a football!"

The old man and the boy laughed till their sides ached.

At least once a day, Papa made sure to let Uncle Jack know that he was living there only through Papa's generosity. Uncle Jack, in turn, showered his younger brother at every opportunity with the expected words of thanks and appreciation. He also made sure to do all the cooking, washing and cleaning for the household. As part of the bargain, he regularly got even by picking the lock to the cabinet and watering down Papa's good whiskey.

Once, after one of his "talks" with Papa, Uncle Jack invited the boy into his back room, where he proceeded to initiate the youth into the wonders and mysteries of alcohol. "It's double fun to tilt a few with a friend rather than alone," he said, magically producing a bottle of whiskey from a shoebox.

How old the boy felt when he fi-

nally managed to get the whiskey into his mouth and not up his nose! "Well done, laddy," Uncle Jack applauded. "I commend you on your persistence. Now don't tell your Papa about this. This is our little secret." Delighted with his corruption of the ten year old, the old man rubbed his hands together and refilled the shotglasses. "Kid," he said, inspecting the rusty liquid beneath the light, "whatever you do, don't end up like me. Your Papa thinks I'm a vulgar bum, and I'm beginning to think he's right."

Uncle Jack tossed the whiskey down his throat and wiped his lips on the blackened sleeve of his long underwear. Though his stomach protested, the boy felt the deepest obligation to act as Uncle Jack's equal. They shared in great secret. The old man seemed to glow with wisdom. Surprisingly, this shot went down much easier than the last. It didn't seem so harsh. Much to the boy's distress, however, Uncle Jack now had four ears, four eyes, and a pair of noses. Hiccupping, he watched the old man try to light a cigar stub for the third time. "I don't think you're a bum," the boy said, wrapping his thin arms around Uncle Jack's legs. "I love you."

Massive hands stroked the boy's shoulder. "Ah, laddy, that's nice of you to say that, but whatever you feel doesn't change nothin', no matter, nohow. I'm still a bum through and through. For years, I was proud of being a bum, proud of getting by on little. Now, all I see is the wasted time I've put in. But you know what's worse than a bum?" he said, wagging his cigar and spilling ashes on the newly vacuumed carpet.

"What's that, Unc?" the boy asked, sliding down to the floor.

"A lawyer," he said with a nose of flames. He rocked back in the chair. "All they know to do is persuade. They don't care which side they're on. Don't be a lawyer like your father--you awake down there?"

"I'm listening. I'm resting my eyes."

"Huh?" he said, cupping his one good ear.

"I'm listening!"

"Okay! You don't want to miss these pearls of wisdom. Now, what was I saying? It sure seemed mighty important ten seconds ago."

"Lawyers!"

"Ah, yes. Those damn scalawags!" He took a furious puff on his cigar. "The reason I'm saying don't be like your father is because that's the easy route. The road to hell is paved with false promises. Don't you forget that. Be a lawyer and you'll always be taking care of other people's business. And let me tell you, there's always lots of business to take care of. If a lawyer don't have any, he'll create some mess he can be useful in the untangling of. The more things get screwed up, the better for the magpies. If things keep drifting the way I see them drift, this poor earth is going to end up in a sorry ass way. Won't be fit for a cockroach," he grunted, stuffing out the cigar. He returned the well - chewed stub to his overalls.

After telling the boy for the third time how he got his nose busted while working as a bouncer-piano player in a speakeasy, Uncle Jack moved on to the stockyards in Chicago. At one point, he landed a job there driving the mallet between the steers' eyes before their throats were cut. To the boy, this was even better than being a fire-

man. "Did the animal feel anything?"

"No," Jack said confidently, "that was the reason for the blow, to numb the poor bugger. I was doing them a favor. They knew they were going to end up in somebody's stomach. Their eyes showed it. Most beautiful eyes I ever saw. I always made sure to hit them but once. I was the best mallet man they had."

While the flask occupied one hip pocket, it was in the other that Uncle Jack carried a tattered copy of Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle*. "The main character's just like your grandfather. Right off the banana boat. Waiting to be fleeced. Dumbest asshole who ever lived. Wasn't his fault, though. He made the mistake of trusting people, and his kids went without shoes in the winter. This is quite a system we live under. It caters to the scumbags."

The boy gloried in their grownup talk and took another swig, this time straight from the bottle. Sneaking it behind Papa's back made it extra fun.

"Did I ever tell you about the time I struck out Ty Cobb?"

He had, on several occasions, but the boy loved the story and told the man no.

"Well," Jack began, settling deeper into the easy chair, "Cobb and his fellow cutthroats blew into town one Sunday for an exhibition. We had some pretty fair country ball players. I didn't even start. Two thousand turned out and the first thing Cobb did up at bat was lay a bunt as cute as pie. 'Safe!' yells the ump. Next pitch, he goes down with his cleat's saying hello to our boys' ankles. This set the tone for the rest of the game. He got a double and a triple later, but somehow we got into the ninth clin-

ging to a one run lead. Wouldn't you know it? It all comes down to the bases loaded, two out, and Tyrus chomping at the bit, as he strolled up to the plate. That's when the skipper called on me. Now I could throw like a mule could kick back then. Trouble was, I had no idea where the ball would go."

The old man rose from the easy chair, threw his girth into the windup, and here came the pitch. "Look out!" I cried. The ball brushed the hair on his head as it flew by. Cobb rose from the dirt, dug his spikes into the box, and cocked his bat. All business. Now I'm really in trouble. I know if I knock him down again, he's liable to come after me with the bat. Since the last time I aimed for the plate and the ball went for the head, this time, I decided to go for the head. 'Steerike one!' A beauty on the outside corner. Cobb didn't blink an eye. By God, by God, if one can make it, why not two? This time, I concentrate on his chin. 'Steerike two!'"

Jack stared hard at Cobb now, shedding a half century of time before the boy's very eyes. His arms swooped below his knees, then he reared back and kicked a leg high. The pitch came: arms, legs, and, last of all, the ball--"Steerike three!"

The boy raised the bottle in celebration.

"WHAT GOES ON HERE?"

"Harry, uh, me and the boy, we--"

"FRANCIS! GO TO YOUR ROOM! AT ONCE!"

Cowering beneath the expected blow, the boy ducked under his father's arm and escaped to his room, where he kept the door cracked so he could hear their voices. "How dare you!...if you ever!..." Almost

as background noise, was the old man's voice, trying to calm Papa. "No harm done..."

"Derelict! I should toss you out on your ear."

"Have a heart...nowhere to go.."

Uncle Jack reminded the boy of an oak tree he once saw standing alone on top of a windy hill. No storm would ever master that old man.

The next day, a Sunday deep in November, he found Uncle Jack slouched in his favorite armchair. A cigar still burned in the ashtray and he could smell whiskey on the old man's lips. He looked so peaceful in his vest. The three had just come from church. Uncle Jack hated church, calling it the nincompoop's crutch, but Papa insisted that, if he wanted to remain under his roof, he had to join them in attendance and communion every Sunday.

Catching the boy's eye were the thick fingers, worn and twisted after a lifetime of use. The hands were lined and cracked, hands that had gripped baseballs and mallets. Once, in an exhibition game, he had struck out the great Ty Cobb. "I could throw like a mule could kick back then, but I was too wild for the bigs."

The old man's suit didn't fit very well. His wide shoulders and tree-like thighs were at odds with the cut, preferring the easy freedom of overalls. The boy noticed the lapel. It was much too still. Uncle Jack had not drifted off into a nice deep sleep, no snore bellowed from his throat... "Unc! Wake up! Don't leave me!"

The newspaper obit briefly summed up the man's life but made no mention of the fact that here was a man who had once struck out the

great Ty Cobb. Uncle Jack had been important only in terms of a relationship to his brother, the politician.

The boy was the only one to cry for the old man and, had he given the sermon, he wouldn't have droned on about the sweetness of death. He would have talked about the time when his uncle threw three pitches straight and hard, harder than any man had thrown before or after. He would have used Uncle Jack's own words to describe the feat. Some of the old man's cronies might have appreciated that if they had made the funeral, but Papa had never bothered to tell them since most lived on skid row. Papa didn't like to associate with the lower class, especially the drunks. They might make a messy scene in front of his political associates. An election was coming up. He couldn't afford it.

Uncle Jack had many times expressed his wish of being buried in work clothes. "My overalls--the ones with grease on them from an honest day's work. Don't bother to press or clean them. I want to go out in harness. Put a hammer in my hand and tell my chums to drop on by. Order the best brass band and booze in town so my chums can sing a few chords when they lower me into the mud. Maybe one or two will even do me the honor of hopping over my grave for good luck. Now that's a funeral I'd hate to miss!"

But Papa wouldn't see to that. He was ashamed that his oldest brother had spent the bulk of his years in a slaughterhouse, though Uncle Jack had helped put Papa through school. Instead, amidst strangers, people who had come for appearance only, Uncle Jack was buried in a tuxedo, something the man swore he never

would wear. His face was all powdered up. "They've ruined him," the boy thought, as he stood before the coffin.

"Francis," Papa said, taking the boy's arm. "You've been standing here for fifteen minutes. The mass is about to begin."

Ponderous organ music filled the church. "Leave me alone."

"Come," he said, glancing over his shoulder.

"No! You ruined Unc."

"I did not," he whispered. "Keep your voice down."

"Unc wanted overalls, not a tuxedo!"

"Now look here, you," he said in a low voice. "That's the way they do things around here. If you don't come with me this very second, I'll give you the whippin' of your life!"

"I don't care," the boy screamed, kicking Papa in the shins. "Let go of me!"

Papa hardly winced. Smiling from side to side all the way down the aisle, he led his son by the ear to the church's bathroom. When he let go, the boy tried to get away by crawling under the metal separation to the toilet. But Papa grabbed Francis' belt, dragged him across the floor and batted the boy around a few times. "I hate you!" the boy said through the blood in his nose. "I'll always hate you. You just wait till I'm big!"

Papa's hand stopped in mid-air. He looked over his shoulder, hoping no one had heard. In short steps, he backed from his son. After straightening his tie and giving his hair a quick brush, Papa swung the door open and left the boy on the tile, staring at a puddle of tears.**

(Poor Hack continued)

-ient forms of travel. Lower the rates and patronage will increase many fold. As the Poor Hack says, "The higher the drop, the smaller the crop."

Many of our ills stem from competition, a cultural phenomenon passed off by the ruling classes as the natural order of things, in their continuous effort to divide and confuse us. Don't fall for this trick. Don't succumb to it. However tempting, never backload, undercut another cabbie, or, especially, race for a fare. As the Poor Hack says, "Don't overtake another from the inside lane. One cabbie's loss is not another's gain." And don't turn aside while others backload, jump lines, or otherwise thieve and swindle. For as the Poor Hack says, "Those who can't police their fate, are asking for a police state." A union⁶ of drivers, in deed as well as structure, is essential to our well-being; providing, of course, that it remains honest and "of the people." As the Poor Hack says, "Either we all hang together, or we'll hang separately."

Many of you complain about inadequate gratuities. But what happens when *you* frequent an inn, a brothel (if you will pardon my tongue), or the coach of a fellow cabbie? And what about the dispatch window⁷? Have you not heard of karma? "Tippeth unto others as

you would have others tippeth unto you," as the Poor Hacks says, as well as "Stiff not the dispatcher who feeds you."

And, while on the subject, judge your tips from whence they come. A working person often can't afford to tip his conscience. But, from one who can, an inadequate tip is an affront to all working people. I frequently throw twopence and threepence back in the face of the perpetrator. As the Poor Hack says, "Never accept a tip less than that which you've earned." An honorable profession should, after all, be treated with dignity.

"Wise men," as the Poor Hack says, "learn by others' harms; fools scarcely by their own." When you see cabs dead-heading back from the 'port, reverse your course without a second's thought. Also, if you're rushed and anticipate trouble, *don't*, for as the Poor Hack says, "If you can't handle a short⁸, keep away from the 'port," and "When in doubt, turn about." Return to town and take care of business. Serve your regular customers (don't cater to convention), for as the Poor Hack says, "A tourist is just a tourist, but a radio call⁹ is a load."

And always check your equipment to be sure it's in proper working order, because sometimes "a little neglect may breed great mischief," as the Poor Hack says, adding "For want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was

⁶ The author was the founder of what later became known as the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Teamsters Local 265 was, in fact, numbered after his I.Q.

⁷ The place where cabbies and dispatchers exchange money for way-bills.

⁸ It's impossible to tell from the context whether "short" refers to short story or short haul.

⁹ Slang for regular, as in "No soap radio call."

lost; for want of a horse the rider was lost; (and for want of a rider the shift was lost)."

Now just who is this "Poor Hack," you ask, and with ample justification. Isn't he some gentleman of leisure who hangs about flying kites, uttering witticisms, and inventing ridiculous items such as "granny glasses?" Not true. While others are asleep or dawdling over their morning tea, he's prowling the streets and downtown inns in search of luggage. For, as he says, "The early bird catches the worm."

Don't be a dilettante. Embrace cabbying; fight for it; improve its conditions; insure its continuity. But if you can't stop the big owners and opportunistic politicians from destroying the industry, learn something else. As the Poor Hack says, "He who hath a trade, hath an estate." But cabbying is not an end-all and be-all; diversify, for as he cautions us, "Early to work and early to bed, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and dead."

And, be careful. There are highwaymen out there anxious to extract your hard-earned monies. When in doubt, keep 'em out. But remember: you've got a job to do, a livelihood to earn, and a service to perform. So, as the Poor Hack says, "Be as thoughtful of those you don't pick up as you are of those you do." And watch what you consume or ingest, considering both its source and potency. As the Poor Hack says, "Quit when you start to put on a heat. One 502 will knock you off the street."

You ask: Can we avoid paying these outrageous gates, and perhaps cut out the middleman? Well, in theory, yes. The municipality could recall all of its licenses, duly

compensate the duly compensatable, and reissue them to us, the drivers, thus cutting out the speculator and cutting down the gates. But capitalist nature (as opposed to human nature) being what it is, it continues to breed hustlers and fast-buck operators out to rip off workers, and politicians, with past and future debts, happy to join them in unholy alliance. And all in the name of "Free Enterprise," too.

Fellow cabbies, I leave you with some hard questions. Will cabbying survive the 18th century? Will the owners bleed us dry? How about the so-called energy crisis that they are attributing to Arabian horses? And what about the cabbie? What will happen to him? Doesn't the Poor Hack say, that "when the last of the working class is hanged, a capitalist will sell the rope?"

Thus the old gentleman ended his harangue. I found that he had thoroughly studied my almanacs and digested all I had dropped on these topics during the course of twenty-five years. The frequent mention he made of me must have tired any one else; but my vanity was wonderfully delighted with it, though I was conscious that not a tenth part of the wisdom which he ascribed to me was my own, but rather the gleanings that I had made of the sense of all ages and nations. However, I resolved to be the better for the echo of it, and though I had first determined to jump the line when nobody was looking, I succeeded in resisting temptation. Reader, if you will do the same, your profit will be as great as mine. I am, as ever, thine to serve thee,

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
July 7, 1757 A.D.

(45 Miles continued)

..."Oh, feel the breeze," Mom was first to exclaim. We, squinty-eyed valley kids, used to a hot sun, shimmering off grass-golden hills, would marvel at the thickly wooded Berkeley Hills, surely full of deer, rabbits, skunks, snakes... even Indians..."Don't be silly, Robert."

We would strain our eyes for the first glimpse of the still distant City, but soon-- down around a bend and then before us-- would appear a blue bay and the sparkling green and white City of Hills, its unchanging skyline sometimes layered with a fog that rolled back out to the Pacific for our visit. Below us would be Oakland with the traffic lights at every intersection on Broadway that led all the way to the lights on MacArthur. We Contra Costans, were sure this was just Oakland's way of keeping you there long enough to spend some money on gas, a cheap motel, something to drink, a traffic ticket-- anything associated with the "last chance to go before we get on the Bridge."

MacArthur dipped under an overpass and continued onto the ever-widening causeway leading to and from the Bridge. On the left was the small Port of Oakland with its busy Ferry Boat Terminal. Nearby, the huge Oakland Army Base was busy with Korea. On the right of the bridge approach were the stinky Oakland mudflats, gathering place for the tide-washed sewage of an expanding Bay population... "Ew, who cut one!?"

There was always a discussion about who would pay the twenty-five cent bridge toll. Custom was, the driver never paid, so we'd usually

let Grandma have the honor. On top, the bridge was six lanes, three each way, the two middle ones known as "suicide lanes." Underneath, trucks and buses ran on four lanes - two each way - next to the Oakland trolley track. The level of excitement always increased as we crossed the county line and went through Yerba Buena Island onto the graceful suspension bridge. Before us would lie the Ferry Building, Coit Tower, the S.P. sign, the City Hall dome, and ships along the Embarcadero. We could sniff at the fresh salt air full of the burnt toast aroma of roasting coffee... "San Francisco, here we come..."

It was off the Bridge at 4th and Harrison and into San Francisco's two way, enter- at- your- own- risk traffic. There were no "NO" signs. It was a grand pandemonium of foot and four-wheeled traffic, all going to or from Market Street. Bus, truck, trolley, van, car, and pedestrian each went its individual way, seemingly oblivious to the inconspicuous but noisy traffic signals.

There were two, huge stop signals on Powell Street; one at Geary and the other at Post. These signals not only had lights, they also had a red "stop" arm and a green "go" one, plus a bell that clanged as they changed. In a day when the standard shift was still the rule, stop signs were absent from most intersections. Then as now, pedestrians had the right-of-way and everyone jay - walked. Crowds and traffic, though, moved with the chaotic efficiency of an ant hill. Somehow, Dad manoevered the Olds through all of this while the rest

of us gawked.

While Dad was at the doctor's, Grandma would be content to sit with quiet respectability in Union Square and Mom would go shopping for a Big City Special. We kids would go shopping, too, exiting from one store dizzy with rides on elevators, escalators and revolving doors, only to enter the next in order to repeat the process. We believed that escalators could swallow and roll you flat. I still can't get through a revolving door without fearing pinched fingers or a bump from behind.

Escalators were O.K., but we had come to ride the cable cars. I had learned to walk up under the gripman, adding my weight to help push the car and thereby gaining the number one standing position on the curb side. (I wouldn't have been happier at the bow of a clipper ship!) My sisters had to sit, as was custom and law for females. We all would wave at passersby who shared in our obvious joy and then would listen in awe as the gripman explained how the cable worked: There were tunnels under the streets filled with tiny Chinamen all in a row who pulled the cable uphill and slowed it on the way down. The clickety-clack was the sound of their wooden-soled sandals underground..."If you don't believe me, just look through the slot!..." We never did. Even in the fifties, the traffic was far too heavy.

Downtown always meant candy at the St. Francis Hotel. Not just a Big Hunk or Baby Ruth, but something from an international selection of sweets that took long consideration to decide upon. I blush

now to think of those three sun-brown country kids gawking over a candy counter with a couple of coins in their hot palms.

Before leaving Union Square, we would drive back to Market Street.. "If you ever get lost in the city, just keep driving 'til you find Market. You won't be lost anymore." ... and up to the Civic Center and City Hall, whose dome was the highest structure for miles. Then it would be up Van Ness Avenue to look at all the different new cars and up and over Nob Hill with its then unobstructed view of the Bay and Bridges. A turn up Grant Avenue would take us through the mysterious Orient, then onto Broadway, allowing us a peek at the "queers and beatniks." We would drive down the crowded Embarcadero to look up at the ships packed into the piers. The Ferry Building tower always reminded someone in the car about the city "fairy" showing his L.A. friend the Northern sights:

"That's where the ferry boats dock."

"Well, really, I knew you were organized up here, but I didn't know you had your own fleet!..."

At Fisherman's Wharf, bustling and commercial, we would drive around fish and ice trucks, dodging box cars and hand lorries to find a parking place near one of the fine seafood restaurants. Before eating, we'd browse among the vast quantity and variety of fish pulled from the Bay and the Pacific. There would be huge sea bass and salmon, giant ugly cod and halibut, stacks of sole, snapper, flounder, and perch, piles of shrimp and smelt, oysters, abalone, squid, starfish, shark, and,

during the season, giant pots of boiling crab. The fishy odor mingled with the salt air and odors from the coffee warehouses and chocolate factory to create a smell unique to the wharf.

At dinner, we would all order clam chowder--I preferred the red--and cocktails-- I chose crab. Then one of us would have a Shrimp Louis, another, a Crab Louis, and another, a platter sized slice of fresh salmon. For me, it was always abalone steak. We kids had soda pop while the adults drank wine, most probably, Tokay. We consumed all, including the huge bowl of cocktail croutons and the basket of hot sourdough bread, constantly refilled by a kind waiter.

Bellies full, we'd pile back into the Olds and motor through the Marina to the majestic ruins of the Palace of Fine Arts. How I longed for an unchaperoned chance to get over the cyclone fence surrounding the crumbling building to roam amongst the only ruins of the Roman Empire west of the Mississippi! We would continue on into the Presidio past green fields planted with white headstones and up to remnants of the cruiser, U.S.S. San Francisco. It seemed the shadow of World War II still hung heavy over a land once again at war. A quick stop at the Palace of the Legion of Honor allowed us a view of the Golden Gate Bridge, then we would drive down to Sutro's Baths and the Cliff House, where we could stare in awe at the vastness of the Pacific... "Is that Hawaii?"... "No, those are only the Farallones."

No trip to San Francisco was complete without a ride through

Golden Gate Park--sand dunes turned to a green oasis by the hand of man and the grace of California's coastal climate. We, who had struggled for generations with stubborn adobe, summer heat and winter frost, were awed by the tropical mysteries of the grand municipal park. The giant trees and deep emerald lawns delighted our eyes, manicured floral displays captured our imaginations, tea and fortune cookies under the eaves of a Japanese pagoda remained exotic delicacies visit after visit.

The day would come to a close, finding us at Shipstad's and Johnson's Ice Follies. Always exiting thrilled and exhausted into the damp San Francisco night, we would marvel at windshield wipers being used even in July. As we would tumble sleepily back into the Oldsmobile, I often chose to lie under the misty rear window to gaze at the sky, the windows, and the Bridge as we drove back across the Bay. It would be someone else's turn to pay yet another 25¢ bridge toll. The tunnel would arrive and go fairly unnoticed, not nearly so dark and scary in the nighttime. We would come down from it and onto the Alcanes Road, then through a pass and down the steep Geary Boulevard grade. Before us, the entire Diablo Valley would be black except for streetlights along North Main in Walnut Creek and the lights along Salvio Street in Concord that ended at our own Port Chicago Highway... We were home once again from Oz to our everyday Concord of the 50's. **

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