

## The Society Page

By Gene Mahoney

Russian Hill Upholstery & Décor is still located in Nob Hill, not Russian Hill.

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It's been almost a year since Bacchus Kirk, that longtime neighborhood bar at 925 Bush closed. Peacekeeper, a trendier cocktail lounge is there now... At the Warfield: Whitney, 11/1. Bishop Briggs, 11/2. Matt and Kim, 11/4. Jay Park, 11/6... It's been a while since I saw a guy walking down California Street with a dog hanging out of his jacket while he walked a duck on a leash. Is he a neighborhood regular or just a visitor? I should know this but I live in Menlo Park and the only time I'm in Nob Hill is when I'm dropping off the paper or harassing unsuspecting merchants into foolishly taking out advertising in it.

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I'm writing this column on Labor Day weekend, the holiday which honors the American Labor Movement. So, sacrilegiously, I'd like to recommend a very pithy article you can find online called "Labor Unions Didn't Bring You This Or Any Other Weekend."

Written by Tom Woods (whose father, ironically, was a Teamster), it disputes the widely held belief that labor unions gave us weekends off from work and improved our lives.

Woods writes that if that was true, then all Third World countries would have to do to end poverty and have more time off would be to... start some labor unions.

Woods points out the real reason that conditions improved for workers was technological advancement. Machines were invented, so physical output was increased in quantity and quality to a large degree. The greater supply put a downward pressure on prices relative to wage rates. Hence, the standard of living rose for people.



## San Francisco Herald

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*"Serving Nob Hill and Beyond"*

Back then, getting two days off a week from work, and more pleasant working conditions, meant more to people than making some more money. Nowadays, people prefer more cash.

Woods also states that American workers had the 8 hour workday before more heavily unionized workers in Europe did, and they earned more money. Also, only a third of American workers were unionized at the height of the Labor Movement.

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At the Regency Ballroom: The Cinematic Orchestra, 11/22. The Aquabats!, 11/23. Herobust, 11/30. Snoh Aalegra, 12/2. Falling in Reverse, 12/12.

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Recently, my father developed dementia. Things were getting really bad, so I planned on bidding California adieu after 34 years and moving to Florida, where he lived, to help my stepmother and sister take care of him. I had planned on moving around Labor Day, so there would have been no time for a farewell issue of the Herald. A friend of the family recommended I visit for a week first to check out the situation, before I relocated, and I agreed, but Dad died two days before I planned to leave.

I don't want to get too sappy (he wouldn't have wanted that anyway) so if I had to search my mind for the best

memory of my father, I guess it would be when I was about eight years old.

It was my second year of Little League. My first year was a disaster. I didn't know what the hell I was doing. But for my second year I had matured, gone in with more confidence, and did much better.

One game I was the starting pitcher. I did very well. I even struck out the sides one inning. Then I started to lose my stuff around the fifth inning and began giving up hits left and right. I got taken out of the game.

Later, I went to bat. But as luck would have it, the other team let this guy named Hank pitch. He was so excited about getting the opportunity, he could hardly control his glee as he took the mound. Hank threw a pitch that was high - and so slow my grandmother could have hit it. I cracked that baby into the deepest outfield. My dad was coaching third and waved the two guys who were on base in. I could have made third but he put up his hands, so I accepted a two run RBI double. (I think we won the game, too.)

Afterwards, Dad took me to 7 Eleven and bought me a 7UP. He said I hit the ball further than anyone that day. So if I had to pick a best memory of Dad - that wouldn't be it. But it's one that isn't too personal to print here. Let's just say that even though my parents were divorced, he lived in another state, and I didn't see him much, he stepped up to the plate when it really counted.

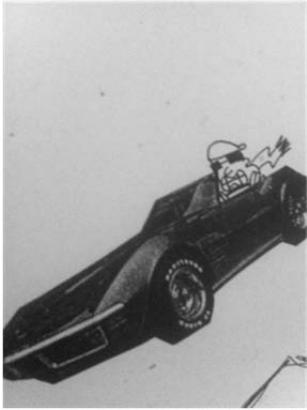
Hank and I became friends in seventh grade and remained friends until our mid-twenties. Then he married this awful person and it all fell apart. But I still owe him something. If he hadn't been pitching that day, I wouldn't have that fond memory of Dad I just wrote about.

Do me a favor. Call your dad now. If he's not around or you just can't do it, call your mom, or your brother, or sister, or an aunt, uncle - you get the idea. Do it now.

Don't end up like me.###

## I'll Give You A Tip

### By Mr. Fabulous



*Art by Dan Wiffler*

I had just eaten a good steak dinner at the Sea Palm Grill in Venice. I was walking out to my car when the restaurant's manager came running after me. He tapped me on the shoulder. "Ahh...sir...if you have a minute..."

I stopped and turned around. "Sure, baby. What's up?"

"Well, it's, ahh...I was wondering...did you, uh...did you find the service here to be adequate?"

I smiled. "Oh, absolutely. Karen was a sweetheart. Kept checking to see if I wanted another beer or anything. Just terrific."

"And the food was okay?..."

"Yeah. I loved it. Just like my mom used to make."

He shifted his feet. "Well, I was wondering then, ahh...I noticed that you didn't leave any sort of gratuity, or anything...for Karen..."

"Yes, I did."

The manager paused. "Well, there was a piece of napkin on the table..."

He showed me the napkin. I nodded. "Yup. That's it."

The manager took a pair of reading glasses out of his shirt pocket and put them on. He looked at the napkin. "...It has some numbers written on it. I'm not quite sure what that is..."

I nodded again. "Yeah. That's my phone number."

The manager looked up at me. His reading glasses were perched on the edge of his nose. "I don't understand."

"I figured I'd give Karen my phone number. This way she can call me."

"For what?"

I smiled. "Well, there was just this vibe, you know...I could just tell that she dug me." The manager looked at me. "Karen's married."

"Oh."

"To me."

I patted the manager on the shoulder. "Oh, well...cool. Then you know what I mean."

The manager shook his head. "I'm not sure that I do."

I nodded.

"Well, that's okay." I reached into my pocket and pulled out a \$10 bill. I handed it to him. "Here you go. Make sure Karen gets this."

I turned and walked out to my Hyundai.###

## The Winner and Still Champ

### By Mr. Fabulous

When I returned to L.A., I was scheduled to have a lunch meeting at Ed Silver Productions to discuss

Sylvester Stallone's upcoming project, "Arsenal: The Return." Ed himself would be there; he wanted to make it clear that if I worked with Sly, I would have to avoid any of the 'negative energy' I'd displayed at Oprah's party.

On the way to Ed's office, I stopped at Kroger's Deli and grabbed a turkey sandwich and an iced tea. Then I started walking along Hollywood Boulevard.

As I started along the sidewalk, I spotted Julia Roberts and her curly auburn hair walking a few yards in front of me. Julia had just stepped out of Artine's Big Salads and was striding along the sidewalk carrying a brown lunch bag. I hurried off toward her.

Near Vine Street, I drew up next to her. As I did so, I leaned toward her and said, "UH-OH...LOOK OUT...my takeout lunch is RAPIDLY catching up with yours, and...look out...it's taking the lead now...and...WHOOSH...it's leaving yours in the dust..." I turned to her and smiled, giving her my 'I'm-as-good-as-candy' smile. Then I pivoted and started to walk past her.

But Julia whirled at me. "JESUS. WHAT THE HELL?"

I slowed down and looked back at her. "What's the matter?"

"YOU ASSHOLE. YOU SCARED THE HELL OUT OF ME."

"Baby, I'm not that scary looking. Some people think I'm kinda handsome—"

Julia pointed a finger at me. Her hand was shaking. "I thought you were a terrorist or something. Don't you know what's going on in the world? What the hell's your problem?"

"Oh come on. I was racing your lunch bag."

Julia squinted at me. "WHAT?"

"I was racing your lunch bag. And mine was clearly winning. Freddie and I were passing you like a Volkswagen stalled on the Santa Ana."

Julia put her hand to her forehead. "God, you're just some nut."

"No, I'm not. I used to race Tom Hanks along Los Feliz all the time. He'd have a chicken salad on wheat bread from Paco's. I'd have a burrito from Si Señor. A burrito's much more aerodynamic. I'd leave him sucking wind like a gullyfish."

Julia started walking away from me. Her shoes made rapid click-click sounds on the sidewalk. I called after her. "Uh-oh, Julia's making a late surge..."

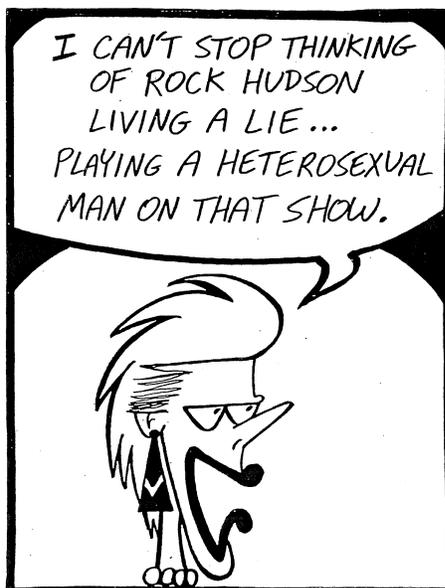
I clutched my lunch and started racing after her. I was amazed: Julia was moving just like Ben Affleck at The Swizzle Stick. I shouted after her, "Baby, no one's taken me in almost seven years...YOU CAN RUN, BUT YOU CAN'T HIDE..." I began to really move. "I'm carrying a Lyman's 32-ounce Iced Tea, and I'm STILL gonna catch you...No one's gonna take me on my HOME TURF."

Soon I was sweating. But I was gaining ground. I watched Julia switch her lunch bag from one hand to the other. I recognized that move: she was beginning to falter. It was only a matter of time.

I stepped through the Del Rey intersection and, by the next corner, had drawn up parallel to her. I nodded quickly. "Thanks for playing." Then I breezed past her.

I hit the sidewalk and accelerated, leaving her trailing in my wake.###

GOOD CLEAN FUN  
WRITTEN, DRAWN, AND  
©2019 BY  
GENE MAHONEY  
"WE'RE  
PARTYIN'!"



SINCE T.V. WENT DIGITAL  
THERE'S ALL THESE NEW CHANNELS.  
I CAN SEE WHY PEOPLE DON'T  
WANT TO LEAVE THE HOUSE AND  
FACE THE REAL WORLD.



THE USE OF ROUNDUP  
WEED KILLER HAS BEEN  
LINKED TO CANCER!  
SIGNIFICANT COMPENSATION...



THOUGH ALL THESE  
COMMERCIALS RECRUITING  
CLIENTS FOR CLASS ACTION  
LAWSUITS ARE IRRITATING.



YOU THINK THIS IS **GREAT**?!  
30 YEARS AGO WE WOULD BE  
NURSING HANGOVERS AFTER  
SPENDING ALL NIGHT AT THE  
DNA LOUNGE.



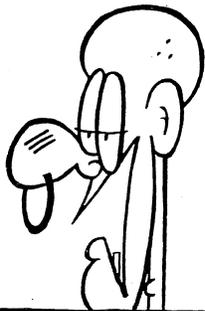
I'M ALEX TREBEK.  
ARE YOU OVER  
AGE 50?



NOW WE'RE WATCHING  
LIFE INSURANCE  
COMMERCIALS AIMED AT  
PEOPLE OVER 50.



WE ARE  
OVER 50.

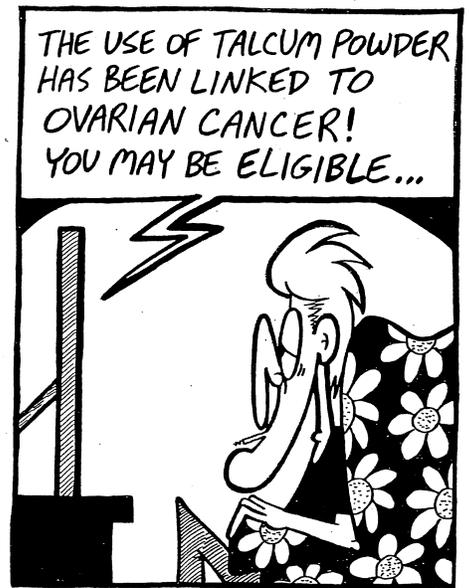


WELL, AT LEAST WE'RE  
STILL ALIVE...  
NOT LIKE THOSE MURDER  
VICTIMS ON "THE  
FORENSIC FILES."



ON RIGHT AFTER  
"LASSIE."  
AN ALL-DAY  
MARATHON,  
TOO.





### **The Worst Roommate Ever, Part 3: The Wicked Witch of Wilmington (Or Life in a Psyche Ward)**

**By James Dylan**

(The names have been changed to protect the idiots.)

Hi, you might remember me. I used to write for the San Francisco Herald from 1999 until 2002. My stories were usually about life in the city, many simply describing my experiences with roommates. I looked up my old friend Gene Mahoney the other day, and found he still puts out his paper, and since I've had yet another traumatizing roommate experience, I decided to send him this story.

I've spent the last three years overseas, working in the most boring country in the world, Qatar. I'm not making a joke. Qatar was voted the most boring country in the world by Lonely Planet. At the end of my third year (and contract), I decided to come back to the states, if for nothing else than to simply get away from that place. The company I worked for flew me back to the place I signed up three years earlier, which happened to be Wilmington, North Carolina.

I started scanning Craigslist for a room to rent. Finally, after a week or so, an ad popped up advertising a small room for rent in a three bedroom apartment in which the owner converted the living room into a bedroom, so there was no communal area, which was fine with me. The place much cheaper than others listed on Craigslist, so I was a little hesitant when I showed up to look at it.

I didn't see anything that I couldn't deal with though, and for \$275 a month, I signed a one-month lease agreement.

The landlord was a younger guy, he couldn't have been over 25. He said he bought the house 2 years earlier and converted all of the apartments into rooms which he said were easier to rent out.

He told me I would be living with a 21-year old dude who worked at a restaurant at night, and slept all day, so I would barely see him, which turned out to be true. He said the other room was rented to a 30-year old unemployed Hispanic woman that he didn't know much about. He said everybody seemed cool, he never had any complaints, and that everyone pretty much kept to themselves. He gave me a key and took off. I started moving in the next day.

I didn't see the dude, "Darrell", until after a few days, but I met the woman, "Maria", right away. As I was moving in, she had the door to her room open, and I could see her sitting on the bed watching me. I said "Hi, I'm James" to her, and she suddenly came alive, jumping up, talking excitedly, asking all kinds of questions. We chatted for a little bit, she asked what I did, but when I asked what she did, she rambled on for a minute or two, something about how she lived in DC for a few years "fighting for her rights", etc.

I asked her what exactly did she fight for, thinking maybe... civil rights? Abortion? Because she was Hispanic, I thought maybe illegal aliens' rights? She waved her hands in the air as if to dismiss the question and said, "It doesn't matter now, nothing does." Having lived in San Francisco for all those years, I met more than my fair share of whackos and crazy people, and she fit the description perfectly, so I just moved her from my "possible friend-with-benefits" column into my "slightly whacky" column. No problem.

Maria was 30 years old, about 5'5, chubby, and not terrible looking. She always wore her hair in a pony-tail and always wore a white jogging outfit. She didn't have a job, although she wouldn't admit it. I am guessing she got money from Social Security for being a whacko. I know she admitted once to having food stamps.

Almost immediately, I started noticing odd things happening. It started as I was moving in. Every time I went out to my Jeep to get a box, when I came back to the door, it was closed and locked. As in dead-bolt locked. I had to keep getting my keys out to unlock the door to get back inside. When I re-entered the apartment, the other roommates' doors were closed, so I had no idea who was doing it. Several times I would come back into the apartment and see Maria walking from the hallway where my room was, into her own room and shutting the door. My room was the only room in this hallway, so she had no business being there. Well, you know how it is when you move into a new place, people are curious, I was thinking maybe she was shy or paranoid, and so far she hadn't done anything "too" strange. Of course, living in San Francisco, my threshold for "odd behavior" is pretty high. Well, that was just the beginning, and it all went downhill from here. The first week, whenever I took a shower, I would come out of the bathroom and see her scurrying out of my hallway into her own room and then shut her door. Me, being the unsuspecting and trusting person I am, never locked my door when I was in the apartment, even when I was in the bathroom.

Honestly, I didn't think she was stealing or anything. I just thought maybe she had a bad experience and wanted to see what was in my room. Since I had a storage unit and

planned to leave in 2 months anyway, I left most everything there and only moved a few things into my room: a desk, a sofa-bed, my old TV, clothes and some books. There was really nothing in my room that was worth anything, so I didn't think about it. After that, though, I always brought my wallet into the bathroom with me, just to be safe.

Being the new guy in the apartment, I was hesitant to say anything to either of my roommates that they might take as complaining or whining. One weird thing about living here was that there wasn't anybody "in charge". The landlord owned the building, so there was no lease holder in the apartment to issue any rules, make people clean up their messes, or complain to about anything. Maria had a habit of leaving her dirty dishes in the sink overnight (or longer), but I didn't feel I had the right to say anything to her just yet, having only moved in a week prior.

Other little weird things about Maria soon appeared, and I quickly realized something wasn't right. She would take 2 hour showers, which pissed Darrell and me off as we all had to split the water bill. We felt like we were subsidizing her hygiene. Hers was the only room that didn't have an AC in it, so she would leave her room open all the time to get some cool air from the AC in the kitchen. Meaning we could all hear her TV because her door was constantly open, and the electric bill would be higher because the AC in the kitchen was constantly running, even though it didn't need to.

Sometimes, after waiting for her to get out of the bathroom, she would come out and go into her room, and I would find a nice present in the toilet. Your choice as to what she left, either is correct. Also, you know how when women have their period, it is normal for them

to try and conceal it, or at least be discreet about it? As in taking the used feminine product, wrapping it up or stuffing it under the other trash in the small waste container? Not Maria! She acted as though she was proud of it and simply placed it in the trash can on display for all to see. Sometimes it looked like she an abortion in the toilet.

Maria had a strange obsession with the bathroom, as if it was a sanctuary for her. Sometimes, when leaving my room, I would unlock the door and open it, and suddenly see her running from her room into the bathroom ahead of me, locking the door behind her.

Then she would stay inside, locked up for hours on end. One time I walked to the bathroom, and not knowing if anyone was inside, simply opened the door. Inside was a fully clothed Maria, sitting on the toilet (with the seat down), staring out the window at the backyard. She jumped up in shock and slammed the door in my face.

One night, after a week or so, I had been in the shower for a few minutes and was just starting to shampoo my hair, when I heard a knock on the door. I thought to myself, I guess someone needs to use the bathroom, and decided I would hurry up and not waste a lot of time. Me, Mr. Compassionate. I had just finished shampooing when I heard another knock on the door, this time louder and faster. Man, I thought, someone needs to go, now! I turned off the water and stepped out of the shower, drying myself off as I opened the door to the bathroom. There was no one waiting outside. I could see Maria's door open, and she was sitting on her futon reading a magazine. She didn't even look up at me. I walked to my room and once inside, left the door open to see if anyone was going to use the

bathroom. No one did. I left the door open for a good 10 minutes and not one person went to the bathroom.

It was around this time I decided to stop being the "new guy" and start telling people to fuck off. I walked to the bathroom, saw the door was closed and could hear water running. I assumed someone was taking a shower. I turned and started walking back to my room when suddenly I heard yelling in the bathroom. It was Maria arguing with herself.

"I told this motherfucker that I didn't have to do it, and he told ME I had to, and *blah blah blah*". I stood outside for a good ten minutes listening to her cry, scream and argue with herself about life.

I tiptoed to my room and called the landlord.

"Hello?"

"Hi, this is James, the new guy. Ummm, is there something you wanted to tell me about Maria?"

The landlord told me he had suspected something about her, but thought she was just a harmless whacko. He told me the guy who lived in my room before me had suddenly left with no warning. He suspected it was something to do with Maria, but the guy never told him why.

The landlord said he had some complaints about her in the past, and finally told her that he was giving her one last chance and then he was kicking her out. He told me Darrell also complained about her. That one night his girlfriend came over to hang out, and Maria came knocking on his door and started yelling at them. She said his girlfriend needed to leave, that she wasn't allowed in the apartment! Of course, we are totally allowed to have friends over. There is nothing in the lease agreement forbidding that.

Anyway, I told the landlord everything that had been going on, and he said he would ask her to leave. The next day he filed papers for her to get evicted, and suddenly the real Maria was released. I would be in my room and hear her out in the hallway, pacing back and forth, arguing and yelling with herself.

"They're slowly killing me! You know, when you have a gun, you kill someone quick! But what they are doing to me is torture - killing me slowly! I hate these people!"

She was good at switching it off, too. It was during this incident that the landlord and I hatched a plan to get her out of the apartment. We called 911 in the hope that when the cops showed up, they would see how crazy she was, and take her away. But the second the cops knocked on the door, she was the sweetest person you ever saw - totally rational. The cops didn't know what to do or say, so they left.

Darrell and I both noticed our food and other belongings slowly disappearing. I had a new bottle of \$15 shampoo from the Body Shop, and after the second week the thing was almost empty. I was in the shower and tried to squeeze some shampoo out, but instead a very watery substance came out instead. She had obviously used most of the shampoo, and then half filled the bottle with water to try and cover it up.

Darrell had bought a large bottle of mouthwash, and 2 days later he came knocking on my door. "Dude, I just bought this fucking bottle, and look! It's half empty! What the fuck is she doing, drinking it? Does she pour it into little bottles and keep it in her room? Or is she simply throwing it away? What the fuck?"

We soon learned that if we had anything that was

opened, she thought it was fair game. ANYTHING we had in the kitchen, if someone else had opened it, she would take. If I put new milk in the fridge, unopened, after a week it was still unopened. But once I opened it, the next day it was about a quarter full. I took it, filled it with water, dishwashing soap and red food coloring, hoping to ruin whatever she poured it on.

Darrell, being a redneck working-class kind of guy, noticed his ham slices disappearing. So he started wiping his ass with them and putting them back in the plastic bags they came in. He said they were his meat and he had every right to wipe his ass with his ham slices if he wanted to, and if someone was going to steal them and eat them, that was their problem. He said it was a problem he was willing to live with. He was pretty scuzzy, so even though a guy wiping ham slices on his ass is gross anyway, the fact that he didn't take a shower every day and always had BO didn't help much either.

Although I didn't agree with his methods, he did encourage me to participate in my own way, which I am ashamed to admit I did. I poured the water out of my once full shampoo bottle, filled it about a quarter full of shampoo from another bottle, and peed in it until it was full. Then I put it back on MY shelf. Oh, I forgot to tell you - we all had our own shelves, which we all agreed were off limits to everyone except the owner. So you see? Lines were drawn, and rules were made up and agreed upon. If someone took something from someone else's shelf, it was obvious theft. Darrel and I felt free to sabotage our own things as much as we wanted to.

One day Maria knocked on my door and I opened it to find her fuming. She accused me of using her toilet paper, even

though I have my own and kept it in my room. I showed her my shelf where I pretty much kept everything by this point. She calmed down, satisfied. My toilet paper was expensive, made from virgin rainforest trees, while she owned the really cheap stuff that immediately disintegrates in your hands.

So she walks across the hall and knocks on Darrell's door, waking him up (Mistake. Never wake up a redneck after a hard night of work, and then accuse him of stealing toilet paper after you've been stealing all his food). Man, he let her have it.

"Bitch, you got some balls coming here accusing me of that shit, when you been stealing every fucking thing me and JD have in this place! How about my mouthwash?! And where the fuck is my toothbrush?! I'll tell you what, you touch one more thing that's mine and I'll drag you out the front door and beat the shit out of you!" He slammed the door in her face and went back to bed. Poor Maria could only stand there, shocked. I don't think she knew, that we knew, she stole from us. She mumbled something about "It stops!" and went back to her room. We would often hear her in there, yelling, shouting, arguing, etc. The girl who lives above her called the landlord more than once to complain about the noise downstairs.

One day I walked out of my room and found Maria sitting in the hallway, as if waiting for me. She asked, "Did you used to be a writer?" I was shocked and could only look at her, and stammer something.

So tell me, how the hell did she know I used to be a writer? I haven't written a thing since I left San Francisco 8 years ago, and Mahoney took all my stuff off the Herald's website. If you Google me, you won't find a

thing about me being a writer. There is nothing in my room to suggest I do or did write, unless she saw the books and my laptop. On my laptop I have a folder labeled "Documents", and inside it another folder labeled "Articles", but that was it. I was never away from my room long enough for her to dig around on my laptop. I take quick showers. Besides, after the first week, I always locked my door when I was in the bathroom, once I realized she was a thief.

She was always asking me questions whenever she ran into me (which was often, as she rarely left the house). "Who did you work for? You said you worked for the government?" Stuff like that. Yes, I worked as a military contractor overseas on a "secret" airbase. Yes, I own a registered handgun. Yes, I own a black suit.

One day she followed me outside and confronted me - one hand on her hip, the other waving a finger at me.

"So tell me, who are you really? Uh huh, uh huh? You work for the government, right? Uh huh? Right? Why are you here again? What do you want from me? Uh huh? I noticed you took the passenger seat out of your Jeep, why did you do that?" (I went camping and needed the room.) "Uh huh? You knew I was going to ask you for a ride, didn't you?"

She often asked to use my phone (she didn't have one), or even my laptop to check her email. One night she knocked on my door and I opened it to see Maria all dressed up in a nice dress, her D-cups pushed up, standing seductively against the side of the hallway. She asked if I was going downtown. Another time she asked if I was going to order any delivery food. I think she figured that if she flirted like that I would give her things. Who knows?

I befriended the owner of a small gourmet grocery store up the street, and one day I mentioned to him I was having roommate issues. He immediately asked, "Is her name Maria?" I swear to you this is true. Believe it or not, he said he once let her stay in his apartment for 2 weeks before kicking her out.

He told me she did a lot of the same things that I told him about, as in running to the bathroom before you could get to it and locking herself inside for hours, stealing food and shampoo, and generally just being a disgusting pig. To be fair to Maria, he said he heard that she was once a smart college student, and that she was in a terrible car accident and suffered brain trauma and is now mentally disturbed as a result. Whether this is true or not, I can't say. But she definitely IS mentally disturbed!

He told me that she used his phone to call the FBI every other day, and that he only found out because the FBI called his number asking to talk to her! He told me he tried to be friends with her, and that she came by his store every evening or so to talk and lock herself in his bathroom for an hour or so. But then she screwed him.

One evening she asked to use his store phone, which he made sure was only good for local calls. Maria gets it and sweet-talks the AT&T operator to change his contract to allow international calls, claiming that she is his WIFE! This moron operator goes along with it, even ignoring the fact that she didn't know his PIN, and she then proceeds to call Puerto Rico, among other places. Needless to say, she rang up quite a bill which the owner of the store soon found out about, and kicked her ass out. He is also fighting with AT&T now, saying HE had a valid "local calls only" contract with them, and HE

didn't change it, SHE did! And also, that HE had a PIN with them to prevent any changes like this, which AT&T ignored! Sounds to me like he has a valid point.

He told me everything I needed to know about her, the most important being that her own mother and sister had restraining orders against her!



**Above: James in Iraq (which was paradise compared to the apartment he moved in to when he returned home to the States.)**

Also, she has spent time in jail for assaulting cops in a prior eviction, and that she has spent time in quite a few mental health facilities. He told me she was banned from most of the businesses downtown for various offenses - one being assault! Evidently she was sitting in a coffee shop talking to herself, and the lady next to her got up to leave, and as she bent over, Maria lashed out and whacked her in the face!

In my travels and adventures in life, I was drawn to the Buddhist philosophy. While I am not, nor do I consider myself a Buddhist, I try to follow their way of living - their lifestyles. I am mostly a vegetarian now, rarely ever eating meat. I practice tolerance and compassion as much as I can remember to, although it is hard sometimes. If I catch a moth or a spider in the house, I try to catch it and release it outside.

I was always aware that Maria was emotionally and mentally fucked up, and I tried to be compassionate to her and her situation, feeling that this was a test of sorts. But when her own flesh and blood, her own mother and sister, have restraining orders against her

for God's sake.....what can I do?

I took a deep breath and swore I'd at least make an attempt to help. I called several women's shelters and mental health facilities, but they all told me the same thing. She could only commit herself, or be committed by a family member or by the police if they felt she was a threat to herself or others. I told them that she was being evicted and would soon be living on the streets, and that she was totally irrational and delusional, thinking I was with the FBI and there was a big conspiracy.

I won't go into length about what it was like the last two months living there. Yes, it was two months, because Maria fought the eviction with every ounce of energy she had. She showed up to court with a totally fake lease agreement, and when the judge dismissed it, she rushed him in a fury! They had to haul her away, and the eviction was granted.

Near the end, Darrell and I had pretty much everything we owned in our rooms. We had both stopped buying food, and our rooms were filled with boxes of things that we would normally keep in the kitchen or bathroom. I am an AC nut, and I always kept my room cold enough that keeping lunch meat or milk in it wasn't that big a deal. Darrell told me it was the same with him, that he had "Sunny D" and pork rinds stacked to the ceiling.

When the day came for her to leave, she wouldn't. She acted like she wasn't going anywhere. So the landlord goes to the sheriff with all his papers, and believe it or not, the sheriff doesn't have time. So the landlord has to make an appointment about 10 days after the official eviction date!

The last freaky thing to happen between Maria and

myself was the night before she was evicted. It was 3 in the morning, with rain and thunder outside. I was having trouble sleeping, as I knew Maria was bumping around the apartment. By this time neither Darrel nor me left our rooms unless to leave the apartment. Yes, we were pissing in Gatorade bottles by now, as Maria was usually locked in the bathroom. It was either that or go outside behind the house. Also, I had parked my Jeep far away from the house in case she wanted to do something to it after being evicted.

So here it is, 3 a.m., and I hear a slow, dangerous knock on my bedroom door. I jolt up from the bed and stare at the door, noticing there is no light shining through the space at the bottom. Nice. 3 a.m. and she is standing outside my door in the dark. The chances of me opening that door, much less even acknowledging that I was in the room, were about....let's see....ZERO?

Here I am, a grown man, a veteran of the Iraq War, with a loaded handgun in my room, and I am about to piss myself. I can only envision her standing there like Carrie, covered in blood with a large kitchen knife. I didn't move a muscle, afraid she might hear the floorboards creak. I don't even think I took a breath for 5 minutes. Finally I got on my knees and crawled over to the door and looked at the bottom. It was dark, but I didn't see her feet. I went back to bed and laid down, but, of course I didn't sleep. Don't laugh at me for being a coward unless you've lived with a psycho and seen the things she's done. (For fuck's sake, a restraining order from her own family?)

I was lying there around 4:30 a.m. now, sensitive to any sound, when she knocked again. This time louder and slower. I felt a tingle up my spine as I lay frozen in bed, my right hand reaching for my 9mm. I was thinking, Could I

get in trouble for shooting a roommate who was crazy?

I lay there motionless until I heard her shuffle away and heard her door close. I relaxed my grip on the gun, but was too wired to sleep. The sheriff would be here in 4 hours, I kept reminding myself. I might have dozed off a bit as the sun came up, and at 8:45 I received a text from the landlord to unlock the front door at 9 sharp and walk outside, which I did when the time came.

Surprisingly, there wasn't much drama. The landlord was there with the sheriff, and he changed all the locks. Maria had somehow acquired a U-Haul van and started carrying all her junk to it. She saw me standing across the street and beckoned me to come help her. I laughed at her "balls" and said, "No thanks. You steal all my food and then you want me to help you move?" I know, it's not being very Buddhist, but I didn't even want to be near her, fearing she might stab me. She DID blame me for getting evicted, you know.

Well, finally she got all her junk out by herself, and we closed the door behind her and locked the deadbolt. I felt like hugging Darrell and crying, as if the Americans had just liberated us from Buchenwald. The landlord hung out a little bit longer, arguing with us when we told him that since HE chose Maria to live here, that we didn't feel like we should have to pay the utilities bill that SHE rang up with her three-hour showers and constant running of the apartment A/C. He also told us that Maria had emailed him the day before asking "for more time", that she hadn't found a place to move to yet. (We all found this funny, because for the last two months she had gone to the public library every other day and had found the time to send nasty emails to the landlord and his wife. But she

was unable to scan Craigslist for a room?)

He left, and walked back in about a minute later saying, "The bitch ripped my windshield wiper off my car!" He called the cops and filed a report. He also told them that she was driving a U-Haul without a license, as we all knew she didn't have one.

We immediately started cleaning up the apartment. I deep-cleaned the nasty refrigerator, Darrell sterilized the bathroom. We took all the things that we had been hiding in our rooms and put them on the shelves throughout the apartment. We were amazed at how much room we now had! For the first time since I moved there, I cooked in the kitchen and ate at the table in the small dining room, it was great.

After a few weeks, I went on an extended vacation to Asia and California, and didn't get back to Wilmington until 4 months later. I looked up a friend and asked him how he'd been, what was going on around town, and if he had heard anything about Maria.

He laughed and said he had and told me what he knew. We still don't know who rented that U-Haul van for her, but as I suspected, she didn't return it when she was supposed to. The fact she was seen driving it around town for a week afterwards pretty much told me that. I guess U-Haul kept calling the guy who was stupid enough to rent it for her, and he gave them her name and number. They kept calling her trying to get her to return the van, but she kept putting it off, and they finally filed a stolen vehicle report with the police, and she was nabbed up in Raleigh and spent a few months in jail!

My friend told me all this, because just a few weeks prior to this conversation, guess who showed up in his doorstep at 7 am? ###

## BURNING MAN 2000

By Howard Hallis

Can't think of how to begin this thing. You try to think of some clever line or hook to start off your article to get people intrigued with what you experienced. Try to make it a little different. A lot of Burning Man articles I've read have been from the perspective of middle-aged journalists who mix a dash of Jack Kerouac narrative with a bit of history of the event, describing Larry Harvey's inspiration for setting big effigies on fire in the paragraph after they describe their "transcendental journey into the barren salt-flats of Nevada, through clouds of dust and painted tribal bodies, ready to become one with the ritual of flame" or some shit like that. Hey, this is tried and true road trip reporting. It worked in Creative Writing class in high school. So why not use it again for the newspaper, magazine or web site that shelled out big bucks for your ticket, your rental car and your provisions?

This year no one funded my trip. The motor home, tickets, costumes, food and drinks came out of my own wallet, and it was really expensive. Tickets rose in price steadily throughout the year, peaking at around \$200 the week before the event. Being an old fart, I bitched about it but ended up balking and ordering them anyway. The Burning Man people blame federal land management for the rise in the cost of tickets. They wanted more than half a million dollars for permission to set shit on fire in the barren desert this year. Those c#@\*suckers should be cutting the Burning Man promoters the best deal they could for all the money the event brings Reno, Gerlach and all the surrounding communities during the week of the festival. Still, that's government in action for you.

Random Burning Man thoughts: This is going to be the longest 3 and a quarter miles EVER! Don't trust a guy

in a thong. The JPEGs would be a good name for a band.

We left LA at 3:45 on Friday afternoon for Black Rock. Most of our friends were already there and the ones that stayed at home were giving us shit about leaving so late. This was my 9th year going to the Burning Man festival, so they can kiss my ass. I've had years there spending a week out on the Playa building various art installations in the scorching heat and other years where it would be dust storm after dust storm for days on end. We were going to stay Saturday and Sunday night, and we were going to have a good time. Quality over quantity, you bastards! Honestly, now that my girlfriend and I have real jobs, it was the only time we could both get away from our cubicles. Sad, but true.

I rented a 25 foot motor home which ran on regular Unleaded which is the best size to get. Big enough to sleep at least 4 people comfortably, easy to drive (like a U-Haul), and reliable even with the Firestone tires. Still, with gas prices being \$2 and even higher all the way up to Nevada, each fill-up cost around \$60-\$70. This whole thing was gonna make us all broke by the time the weekend was over!

Our little group consisted of me, my girlfriend Sara and my best friend Erik. I got Erik's ticket on the condition that he would drive, which he did most of the way until he wussed out and got too tired around Bishop and had me take over. By that time I was nicely stoned, and I just obeyed all the speed laws and remembered the British scientific study that claimed marijuana actually improved driving ability by making people more acutely aware of the road. We had mix tapes full of great bands: Lumirova, The Dragons, stuff from the unreleased Tom Waits CD "Alice", Johnny Cash, Nick Cave, Dead Can Dance, Billie Holiday, Os Mutantes, and a bunch of other stuff to make the journey enjoyable. It was a nice trip up. Sara slept most of the way. Erik kept talking as usual. We stopped by Walmart in Palmdale to

get a few more provisions and I picked up a pair of Olsen Twins dolls. I'll bet I was the only one at Burning Man with a set of Mary Kate and Ashley figures! We ruled!

When we got to Black Rock around 4 in the morning on Saturday, it had been raining all night. The Playa was a muddy mess, and they made us park in the holding area just outside of the main camp. We didn't care. By that time we were all exhausted, and after Erik was as passed out as he was going to get, Sara and I warmed ourselves under the covers by doing what most couples do to stay warm and passed out ourselves an hour later.

Random Burning Man thoughts: Pac-Man clouds. The new drug craze of the 0's is going to be Viagra mixed with Prozac and Black Mystery Color Mr. Squeeze.

We got up at around 10AM no worse for wear and drove into the Playa. All our friends were over at the Black Light District, which we found in about 30 minutes. Everyone that slept in a tent had a miserable night and were all muddy and wet from the rain. Good thing I paid the H.A.R.P. Project (the government's weather control thru upper-atmosphere ion charging base in Alaska) to make sure it wouldn't rain anymore over the weekend. It cost \$52,000 for them to control the weather for 3 days and 2 nights, but it was worth it. Soon it will be much cheaper, but there's still a few nay-sayers that whine about the bad effects weather control will have on the environment and all that crap. Makes it expensive. But the good folks at H.A.R.P. and the red-blooded American Capitalists like you and me were willing to take the environmental risk for a price. \$52,000 seemed like a good deal. It never rained again while we were there, so it must have worked.

In the afternoon we sipped on Johnny Walker Blue with our friends Buck and Yuki and rode bikes around to look at this year's sculptures and installations. The motorized couch was back, as was the coffee house, Michael Gump's Bug Van, Bianca's

Smut Shack, Thunderdome, and the animated neon bikes. Missing in action were Wood Pussy and their pyrotechnic show, most of LA Cacophony, the bone tree, the lighthouse car, McSatans, the Zardoz head, Cirkus Redickulless, The Bindlestiff Circus, Bike Camp, The Seemen, the shark car, the giant block of ice, and the naked gun range (which wasn't there since 1993, but I had to mention it because it was so weird to see naked people firing automatic weapons. Too bad no guns are allowed at Burning Man anymore. Actually, with all the asshole frat boys, that might be a good thing...)

There were a few nice installations/sculptures out there this year, like the 3 Headed God, the giant man made out of books and the dragon car, but 1999 blew this year away. Perhaps all the money it was costing everyone just to get up to the event this time may have affected some of the artist's budgets. Not everyone is an internet millionaire intent on making strange structures at an alterna-hippie festival. (What's an alterna-hippie you ask? Simple, a hippie with piercings and more Jane's Addiction bootlegs than Grateful Dead tapes).

Random Burning Man thoughts: How long does it take to get to Mars? I'll only go once they've perfected teleportation. My slate is blank. Sara stuck her finger in the pickle jar. If Nazi Skins and KKK wanted to go to Burning Man, would they allow them to set up theme camps? Would they be tolerant of intolerance?

There were more cops at Burning Man this year than a free donut night at Krispy Kreme. Not just cops but full-fledged D.E.A., riding around on their little golf carts looking for alterna-hippies unlucky enough to be caught in mid-bong suck. Despite all this, drugs were easier to come by this year than they were for me in 1999, and the Ecstasy we did was fantastic.

We dropped for the burn and got dressed up. My costume this year was an air conditioned space helmet, laser beam gloves, a silver cape and an

electronic chest piece that blinked hypnotic patterns. My girlfriend had a blue and red super hero suit and my friend Erik had his classic desert explorer outfit ready to go. We teamed up with my friend Amber (a first timer), who had spiky blue hair and a red fluffy overcoat, as well as our pals Buck and Yuki and watched them burn it all down.

The Black Rock Rangers told Erik the next day that the man burning was a disappointment. Some explosions didn't go off as planned and they were all bummed, but I thought it was a great burn this year. The fucker wouldn't fall down for a good 10 minutes (at least it SEEMED like 10 minutes)!

Afterward we made the trek from bonfire to bonfire trying to keep warm (it was really cold this year at night) and ended up going to some raves, some clubs, hearing some bands and meeting lots of nice folks.

Sara and I passed out at about 3:30 in the morning, warm in the motor home bed. RV's are the only way to do Burning Man. Avoid dust storms, heat and any other environmental problem except for tornadoes, and I haven't seen one of those yet out at Black Rock.

Random Burning Man thoughts: The L.E.D. clothing this year was amazing. Best I've seen yet. Some people actually sewed hundreds of lights into their fun-first sweaters. It won't be long before people are sending DVD signals through fiber optic fabric and playing cartoons on their pants.

Sunday: Woke up at noon. Performance artist Kari French led us over to the Absinthe bar, where I traded some cool Pez dispensers for some home-made Absinthe that tasted like bug spray mixed with Robitussen. Sara and I headed back to the RV for a little intimacy after that and when we came back out to roast some chicken dogs we found out that someone had stolen Amber's bike when she went to use the Port-A-Johns. This especially sucked, because the last thing you want to

realize after you get out of one of those stinky toilets is that someone shit on you even worse than you expected. I felt bad for Amber, but worse for Sara, who refused to use the turd-chambers even after they were freshly cleaned.

You might be thinking, hey... We had an RV... Why not use the toilet in there? Well, from my experience with the motor home we got in 1998, I knew that doing #2 in our camper was OUT OF THE QUESTION. Sure enough, our shower was clogged. Can you imagine what it would have been like if... I don't even want to think about it.

Being a veteran of Burning Man toilet situations, I knew this drill, and newbies should pay attention: 1. Wait for the waste disposal trucks to clean out your neighborhood port-a-potty and go right after they leave. 2. Bring Baby Wipes to clean the seat. 3. Bring your own toilet paper to avoid wet, soggy, urine filled paper that sometimes greets you in the stalls. 4. Bring a lighted stick of incense to kill the smell.

One more poop reference and then I'll stop. We decided to take E again when we went out around the Playa Sunday night. Erik had to go to the bathroom really bad and described coming on to the drug as he was taking a shit:

"There I was, almost doubled over from pain and I knew that I had to go really bad. We found some Port-A-Potties and I prayed they were clean. When I got in, I found them to be in perfect condition and proceeded dropping logs. As the moonlight shined down on the stench-filled latrine, I had a moment of pure bliss... it was such an amazing feeling. Like a spiritual awakening as I sat there, and I knew I was coming on. It was the most incredible bowel movement I ever had."

As that thought settles in your head, we'll move on...

Random Burning Man thoughts: Someone put something in the something. Lee Marvin would have

loved it out here. Time is irrelevant. Some people are too fat to walk around naked.

We wandered around again in a dazed state of happy euphoria and watched the Tesla Coil guy shoot giant volts of electricity out of his body. Some guy at one of the dance clubs hit on Sara and used the line "Wanna make out?" Another guy tried to slime on her by saying he was a lawyer. I was in my air-conditioned space helmet, so I was fairly oblivious to all of this, but noted to myself afterward that as an event gets bigger, the amount of assholes who end up hearing about it and ruining it grows as well. They couldn't ruin our evening though, which ended up being a very nice one despite their attempts at sabotage.

We left the next morning at 8AM and it only took us 10 minutes to leave. Amazing, considering it took us 8 hours to get off the playa last year. Glad they got the "Exodus" figured out this time. We had Kari French and my old friend Jennifer with us for the ride home. They agreed to help us with the awful gas prices, and we all dropped by The Peppermill Casino in Reno for our annual tradition of eating the buffet there after Burning Man. It's great to eat a really good meal for the first time in a few days. They completely remodeled the buffet at Peppermill last December, and now it's twice as big with fake thunderstorms and waterfalls.

The trip home was long thanks to an overturned Frito Lay truck and the holiday traffic, and the roach coach we stopped at for dinner near Fresno was the most disgusting food I have ever eaten. The cheese was bad and looked like it was rancid, and all the other customers there were missing a limb or an eye. Erik, Kari and Jennifer loved it though. Sara and I vowed we would never eat roach coach food again.

But would we do Burning Man again? Probably, it's still one of the biggest parties around. Lots of folks claim it has sold itself out and gone corporate, but those people are usually the ones that have never even

been there. I'll say this much... There were no Coca-Cola or Pepsi stands, Starbucks trailers, cigarette machines, VISA logos, expensive t-shirt vendors or any merchandise booths of any kind other than the coffee stand in center camp. No other event in the world of that size can claim they are free of any of those things anymore. Sure Burning Man isn't perfect and may not be what it used to be when I first started going to it in 1992 and there were only 1000 there. Things have to change as they evolve. It's the nature of the beast. I've had good years and bad years out at old Black Rock and I'd say in summation that this time was a lot of fun. If you've never been, you should try to check it out, because there still isn't anything else like it.###

*Telegraph from Berkeley*

## **San Francisco 1976: Sleeping by the Dock of the Bay**

**By Ace Backwords**

It occurred to me today that I hadn't been to San Francisco in over 10 years. Even though it's only minutes away, right across the other side of the Bay. And I suddenly felt an urge to visit my old haunts. Even as one of my Facebook friends cautioned me that "It might make you cry." I guess San Francisco circa 2019 might be a bit of a bring-down from the San Francisco of my hey-day, back in the late '70s and early '80s.

The first place I'd want to see – as if driven by some homing pigeon instinct – is my old camping spot on the Fremont Street off-ramp. It was a great spot, almost completely hidden away from the rest of San Francisco. And in the year I camped there I only saw 2 other people come back there the whole time. To get there you had to walk up the Fremont Street exit the wrong way. And then walk along this narrow grassy path on top of this steep hill – which was too steep for people to climb up from the street way below. So it was a completely secluded spot.

I camped right underneath the Bay Bridge. Put my pillow right up against the slab concrete pillar of the bridge. Way above my head I could hear the traffic from the bridge, the cars endlessly whizzing back and forth from San Francisco to Oakland. And I had a spectacular view of the San Francisco Bay, and beyond that the skyline of Berkeley and Oakland way off in the distance, and this big endless sky over my head. Years later when they built expensive condos on the street below me, a big advertising pitch was "the million dollar view." Of course I had it all to my own back then, and for free.

The area was mostly a warehouse district. So after 6 in the evening when the workday ended, and on the weekend, it was like a ghost-town and I had the entire neighborhood pretty much to myself. It was the perfect spot for me to hang at when I was 19 (in retrospect the only thing it lacked was feral cats). It was a place where I could sit and lick my wounds, and see if I could formulate some kind of a plan for what to do with the rest of my life.

That would be the first place I'd visit if I ever went back to San Francisco. To see if the ghost of Ace Backwords Past was still lingering in the air.###

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Well....

*Did you call your father?*