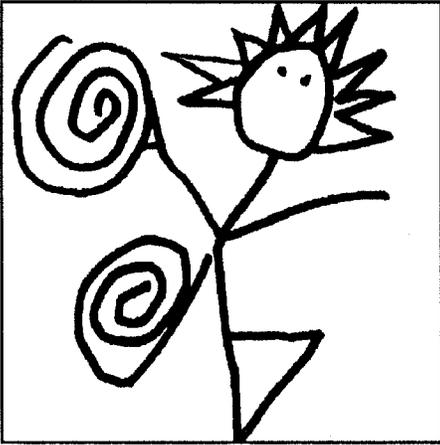


SYD'S JOURNAL

February 2, 1990



PETROGLYPH #1 GREENWOOD, 1990

On the Importance of Listening to Small Persons

It's the morning of the Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year. I'm taking a bath—one of the few peaceful moments I find during the day—and Daniel comes into the bathroom, something he's been warned stringently not to do unless it's a matter of profound importance. He says, "Daddy, I'm sad."

"Why, Daniel?"

"Because Me have to go outside and freeze."

"What in the world for?"

"Because Me not have a house to live in."

"Why won't you have a house to live in?"

"Because that man not come."

"What man?"

"You know that man who come when smoke all in our workshop?"

"Yeah." We had called a technician from the power company a couple of days earlier after an

electric receptacle had started smoking.

"Him not come."

"Why should that man come?"

"Because smoke all in our kitchen. Our house burn up." I come out of the bath tub like Flipper doing a somersault and race down to the kitchen. Sure enough, a dense cloud of acrid smoke hangs in the kitchen, but it doesn't smell like wires and wood. It smells like burning food. Then I notice that the microwave is running. I open it and find, to my immense relief, an aluminum measuring cup with the charred remains of something organic, now completely unrecognizable.

I come out of the bath tub like Flipper doing a somersault.

After some petulant daddy interrogation, I learn that Daniel has taken it upon himself to bake a cake. He has mixed peanut butter, grape jelly, and honey in the cup and popped it into the 700 watt microwave at full power set to run for about an hour.

At least I had the presence of mind to affirm his wisdom in reporting this culinary melt-down to me in a timely fashion. Had I not been wet, cold, naked, angry and scared out of my wits, I might not have scolded him at all, but I did. Maybe tomorrow I will tell him that I think it's neat that he mixed up his favorite things and tried to bake a cake—no doubt

imitating my efforts at learning to cook in the past few weeks. In a way I'm proud of him for observing things that well and getting that far. The control panel on our microwave is more complex than most automobiles, and he got it going—not bad for a two-and-a-half-year-old. And, had it been a fire, he would have been a hero, saving the house and perhaps our lives.

I think of all the times I've been busy and distracted and he's come at me with his busy baby babble and I haven't really heard. I wonder what I've missed. I think of the disaster that might have occurred had it been a fire and I hadn't listened to his alarm. It's important to listen to small persons.

PHONE TAP

Telephone ring.

"Ola?"

"Hello, Manuel. This is George."

"You dead meat, Paco."

"Manuel, I understand how you could be upset."

"Upset? UPSET?!!! Cabesa pendejo."

"Now, Manuel, you know I don't understand Spanish."

"Thees is the understatement of the the year, gringo."

"Is there anything you need to make you more comfortable?"

"Si, you can get me out of this steenking jail."

"You know I can't do that."

"You got me in here, Jorge. You can get me out."

"Well, that's going to take a bit

of finesse...and time."

"I got no time. Your stinking cowboy Marines took my Heetler painting."

"I'm sorry about that."

"What if I send some of my boys over to your place and trash your Roger Rabbit poster."

"Really, Manuel, this threat thing sort of makes me uncomfortable. I called to let you know that I really care about your feelings. This whole invasion thing has been an enormous hassle for me, too."

"I hassle you. I hassle you til you don't know your burrito from a whole in the ground. I got pictures, you know. I got pictures of you playing horse shoes with Khomeini and keesie-face with Margaret Thatcher. When I get done with you, you wish you in this steenking jail 'stead of me."

"Well, now that you mention it, that's kind of been on my mind, too. The Marines couldn't seem to locate your picture album. Do you remember where you left it?"

"Wouldn't you like to know, you steenking yankee weemp."

"You might still have your job if it weren't for that word, Manuel."

"WEEMP, WEEMP, WEEMP, STEENKING GRINGO WEEMP."

"Well, I can see you're not in the mood to talk business. How's your supply of nose candy holding out."

"'bout out."

"Well, I'll call you in a couple of days. Maybe we can work out, well...an arrangement."

"Mega-creep."

"Sticks and stone may break my bones..."

"Picture get your tail. I'll talk. I'll tell everything. I'll tell Mikhal what you said about his birthmark."

"Nobody will believe you."

"They believed you, didn't they?"

Click.

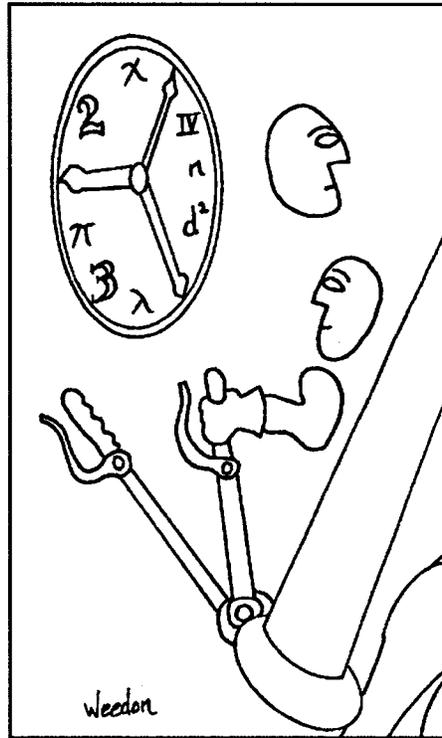
Beep, beep, beep, beep....(touch tone dialing sound).

"Hello?"

"Gordon, this is George."

"Yes sir. Do you want to see the hand burning trick again?"

"No, Gordon, I'm afraid it's a more ticklish matter. How are you at jailbreaks?"



FREE CHRISTMAS

'Twas the night of Christmas and all through the world freedom was breaking out all over the place, and no one knew quite what to make of it. Nicolai Ceauscescu (I hope I misspelled the slime ball's name) went down before a firing squad of his "worms" with his wife, Elena. A radio announcer said, "The Antichrist died on Christmas Day," and regardless of your feelings about old Nick, that's one of the most twisted statements I've

ever heard. (No, pal, your petty tin-horn dictator isn't the Antichrist.) Manuel Noriega, the ultimate merry prankster, turned himself in to the Vatican after his Brazilian witches could no longer protect him. Now that's delicious--a true stroke of evil genius--turning his two most potent enemies, the Vatican and the U.S. government, into adversaries to battle over who gets to keep him. You've got to hand it to the guy. He's got a gift. Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and East Germany are suddenly, ostensibly democratic states. And in Russia, Stalin's on the run--another total historical revision in the works. Moramoron Kadaffy has placed Abu Nidal under house arrest and Leona Helmsley is going to jail. It's been quite a month for the white hats. If we're not careful, we're going to run out of things to bitch about.

Where's the world I grew up in? It seemed to evaporate on the evening news right between the extended forecast and the football scores. Feels weird. What are we going to do without the Cold War? I'm a child of the Cold War. I'm one of those kids who learned in school to get under my desk, put my head between my legs, and kiss my ass goodbye. Now there's a couple of huge voids in my psychic landscape which used to be occupied by "Instantaneous Destruction by Thermonuclear Device," and "Bolshevik Bad Guys." Few living people have ever had to deal with this. Not that I mind all that much. It'll mean more money to go around. Ballistic missiles may rot in their silos. What are we going to do with the armies, the spies, the super snooper satellites, and all the rest? Scares the oat bran out of me if you want to know the truth. This is either the realization of the dreams of countless generations of people all over the world or the beginning of a

nightmare. Toss a coin. Your guess is as good as mine. But one thing is for sure: It's a brand new world. It's a world that none of us have ever lived in before.

I was struck by how we expedited our Christmas as if nothing had changed. We ate our traditional foods, gave our presents to the people we usually give them to, and generally seemed oblivious to the awesome human upheaval going on in the world around us. I guess that's all we really could do. I wasn't in the mood to fly to Romania and help check ID's. And yet, the entire course of human history seems to be turning under our feet. It would seem that we should do *something*. This could very well be a "golden age" of human civilization, and if it is, virtually everything that we think, say, and most of all, *do*, is profoundly important.



BIRDMEN

JIM GREENWOOD '90

SHORT STORIES

Slushy day. Snow fell in sticky globs last night. Spent the day drawing little pseudo-Aztec icons. No reason to go out--have everything I need--a rare treat. The sky knows that I am indifferent to its ceremonies so it carries on its

business without guilt. I am occupied in the way that I usually am--searching for the voice that I mislaid a few days ago.



I will tell you a story: A woman was born and grew up solitary and wild. Her thoughts were singular and utterly distinct. The preacher said that "if anybody was going to be a witch, it would be her." My good-ol-boy partner said, "The girl's got snakes." She fell in love with a man, just one man. He came to her in different bodies from time to time, but he was always the same--a runner, enticing, slightly magical, and always just out of reach. He was faithful in his own way--just never there. She loved only him.

•

I'll tell you another story: A man was born with a sense of destiny. He often wondered if the Bible-belt head games of the sweet buy and buy made him think and feel that way. He'd been fed a shit-load of it as a kid, and he knew that his reasoning would never be completely safe from it again. But, knowing that his brain might well be damaged, he nevertheless felt a sense of destiny--that his life made sense and it was moving toward something important. And he waited.

•

Once more, another story: A child was born with magical powers. Once, a little girl saw him pull a puppy in from the shadow world and it frightened her so badly that she never spoke again. He learned to keep the gift a secret. He would use the power only when things were very bad, when no one was looking, frightened as they were by the terrors they saw. He could see how to grab a little fold of reality and give it a tug, making the rippling wave of

experience break just a little to the left. No one ever caught him, but as he completed his second score of years he began to notice that he wasn't getting older like his family and friends. Another score of years rolled by, and he knew that standing out too much could be a problem. He packed his things, wrote a note to his wife, and left for the forest where time moved at a pace more like his own. He lived there five hundred more years until one spring when he slipped into what the deer call, "The Sleep From Which There Is No Waking."



witchin'

wooden

But I was telling you the story of my day before it got tangled up in fantasies. Warm. The season of the witch. The mental hospitals are doing a land-office business on a flood of souls who have gotten bogged down and scared. I slept and ate some. I insulted the snow. I waited for the army of fixit people to descend and make their magical passes, pronouncing the gas and electricity whole again. Our natural gas line took on some water, making the flow of gas surge, and knocking out the furnace. We had power company people digging a hole in our front yard in the dark. They're coming back tomorrow because it's still not right. I walk down into the basement sniffing for the rotten egg smell. I get nervous about lighting a cigarette because the house might go up like a hydrogen bomb. The furnace man and the gas company man were smokers and they were old. I didn't know you could get old being a smoker and working with gas. I guess that's a fourth story, this time true.

•

Alex and Daniel are engaged in a ferocious gunfight with their cap pistols. Alex is chasing Daniel around yelling, "I'll get you, Dummy." I stop Alex and ask him what he's calling Daniel. No mistake, "Dummy." I tell Alex that Daniel's not a 'dummy' and not to call

him that. Daniel strides over, looks up at me with a great degree of sincerity in his big blue eyes and says, "I am too Dummy," and with that they resume the gun fight.

•

LORD RELIX ON THE PLANET OF VEGETABLES

by Ralph Roberts

"Ha!" said the giant cucumber, warrior-leader of the sentient vegetables. "Your laser's charge is depleted. Your death is at hand!"

"Not so," said young Lord Relix, drawing his sword and hacking large slices from his foes.

"These are after all," he said between swings, "my salad days."



I, Nervous Wreck, do hereby declare that I found this dog story posted on a public bulletin board (the cork kind). I thought that it may be of interest to all the dog lovers out there.....

Nervous Wreck, 11 May 1986

WHAT NOT TO NAME YOUR DOG

Everybody who has a dog calls him "Rover" or "Boy". I call mine "Sex". Now, Sex has been very embarrassing to me. When I went to City Hall to renew his dog license, I told the clerk I would like a license for Sex. He said, "I'd like to have one too!" Then I said, "But this is a dog." He said he didn't care what she looked like. Then I said, "You don't understand. I've had Sex

since I was nine years old." He said I must have been quite a kid.

When I got married and went on my honeymoon, I took the dog with me. I told the motel clerk that I wanted a room for my wife and myself and a special room for Sex. He said that every room in the place was for Sex. I said, "You don't understand. Sex keeps me awake at night." The clerk said, "Me too."

One day, I entered Sex in a contest, but before the competition began, the dog ran away. Another contestant asked why I was just standing there looking around. I told him I had planned to have Sex in the contest. He told me I should have sold my own tickets. "But you don't understand. I had hoped to have Sex on TV." He called me a show-off.

When my wife and I separated, we went to court to fight for custody of the dog. I said, "Your Honor, I had Sex before I was married." The judge said, "Me too!" Then I told him that after I married, Sex left me. He said, "Me too!"

Last night, Sex ran off again. I spent hours looking around town for him. A cop came over to me and asked, "What are you doing in this alley at 2 o'clock in the morning?" I said I was looking for Sex. My case comes up Friday.

•

FROM - ANIMALE
SUBJECT - ANN LANDERS
TO - ALL

--Tom Browning, 1990

Dear Ann Landers,

I have two brothers. One is a programmer and the other was sentenced to the electric chair for murder. My mother died in an insane asylum when I was three years old. My two sisters are prostitutes...My father sells narcotics to high school students. Recently I met a girl I want to marry. My problem is this: If I marry this girl should I tell her that one of my brothers is a programmer?

ANIMALE



ah majestic sky
trees line arctic mountains
they grow slower up here
I can hardly breathe
push or push on

toward the pole
top of the world
It's hard to see snow
when it's all around you

all the dogs are gone
as my snow sled
idles near an
ancient iceberg
frozen for eternity
in an ocean of ice
everywhere
cold becomes less
threatening and I fall
asleep
I dream of wooly mammoths
and the great hunt

fire works whenever I can breathe
warmth must not leave
push or push on

towards the pole top of the world
I dream of a nice
warm place like Kansas

*GEORGE BUSH:
VEGETABLE
OR
NOXIOUS WEED?*

The Edifice

By Robert A. Akins

A pair of boots, a pipe,
And a wrinkled newspaper
Sharing the same space,
Yet remote, intensity of light
Carving into the darkened room,
Magazines disorganized into little piles,
A litter box, a crumpled note,
A lingering scent of disillusionment.

Shingles missing near the peak,
Rust devouring
Long stretches of the side,
Memories piled in erratic stacks
Of debris line the edifice's rear guard.
Twilight lingers for a brief respite
Before the pending drop of darkness.

In that last hurrah of light,
Trees bend against
The dreaded onslaught;
Tempest threats give way to promise,
Vacated junk automobile seems to glow,
A rumble, a space of silence,
Reddened darkness
With raptures of shrills.

SYD'S JOURNAL Writers Guidelines:

In the last issue of the JOURNAL I mentioned that I was open to submissions from other writers. People asked about what kind of material I was looking for. Reasonable question. The complete writer's guideline sheet, including rights purchased and payment is available on request accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. The following are excerpts:

...writing personal and real...like a letter to a close friend...don't care too much about subject matter...prose that reads like fiction...straight-out journal entries...very short fiction...concise nonfiction...variety of subjects: freedom, art criticism, guerilla capitalism, book reviews, cultural trends, the art and craft of writing...space is weighted toward prose...like B&W graphics a lot.

What matters is the feeling conveyed and the connections made...something

real, truthful to itself and to where you were at its writing...a sense of intimacy...fun.

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SYD'S JOURNAL is published quarterly by The WordWorks. All writing is by Syd Weedon, unless otherwise noted. Contributions to this experiment in literary authenticity are eagerly accepted. Submissions and other inquiries should be sent to Syd Weedon, P.O. Box 4817, Louisville, Kentucky, 40204, and be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

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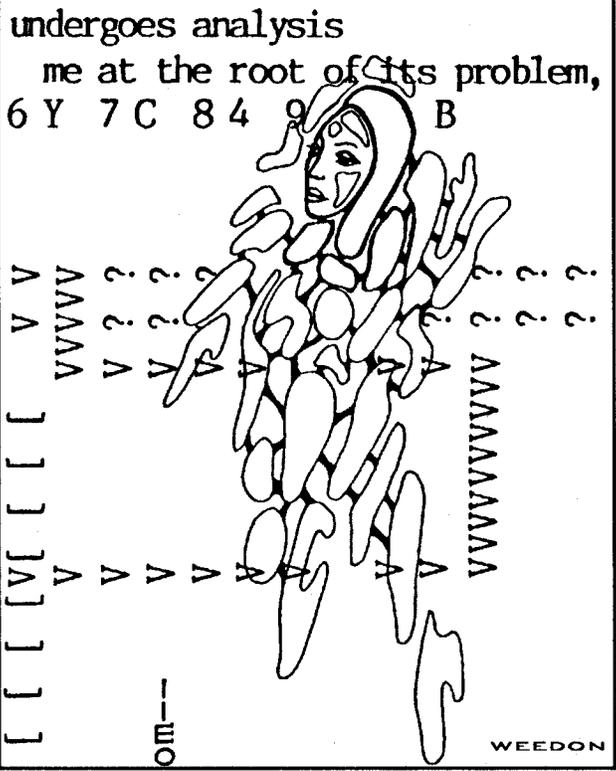
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Techno-lust.
 I am the machine's
 unconscious,
 the reason to live
 it can't remember.
 If it ever undergoes
 analysis,
 it will find me
 at the root of its problem,
 manipulating the keyboard,
 its most vulnerable extension.

SDW

