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This issue of Klipsun is dedicated to
Gerson Miller.

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IF YOU'VE DONE MUCH WALKING around campus this school year, you probably have become familiar with a distinct sound. It begins like the buzz of an insect, growing to resemble a chainsaw's whine as it approaches.

About the same time a brightly painted two-wheeler half the size of a small motorcycle puts into view, often commandeered by an equally brightly clad student.

With names like "Spree" and "Elite," and sporting a variety of fashionable colors, the new generation of motor scooters has attracted a number of fashion-conscious students willing to fork out up to $2,000 to cruise to class in style while saving gas money.

The scooter phenomenon is not entirely new, however. Shuffling through old photographs, you may unearth a picture of mom or dad in younger years riding along on an odd-looking predecessor to today's streamlined scooter. It might have been a Honda Cub 50. Or maybe an Italian imported Vespa. Or a Lambretta.

But that was in the '50s, and upon reflection they looked weird. Today, offspring of those archaic ancestors are thick on Bellingham's streets. The scooter, most often piloted by a student, has returned full force.

"We sell about 65 percent of the scooters to students—high school and college," Rob Brigge, salesperson at Northwest Cycle, said. "It's the trick thing to have. If one person has it, they all have to have it."

Bill Thompson, salesperson at Yamaha Northwest, agreed students make up a large percentage of scooter owners. He added the other group most likely to buy scooters is retired couples who use them for recreation.

"Older people, retired folks, put them on their motor homes. They park their motor homes so they can run to the store or whatever. Maybe we sell more (to this age bracket) in Bellingham than other parts of the country because there are a lot of retired people here," Thompson said.

With an average 90 miles per gallon, economy is one reason for the scooters' popularity.

"It beats the cost of driving anything else," Thompson said. Most students who own scooters purchased them at least partly to save gas, but they haven't gained popularity solely on their appeal to the frugal.

"We tried to sell motorcycles on their economy for years and it didn't work. Economy by itself doesn't sell—you have to sell fun, too," Thompson said.

And indeed, scooter advertisements emanate "fun." Honda's brochures tout the scooter as the stylish youth's path to vehicular nirvana. Splashed with bright yellow and swirled with hot pink, the ads claim "Uptown. Downtown. Honda Scooters and Hondaline Accessories get you there in style."

Blondes in Reeboks, guys in glasses, even a business-woman packing a pink flamingo into a carrying case flaunt their scooters. Ad campaigns boast notables such as Jim McMahon, Grace Jones and Adam Ant. Yamaha's ads, too, portray the "good time" image, complete with after-school gang and pony-tailed cheerleader.

"They're definitely being pushed (in advertising) as the 'in' thing," Brigge said.

Back when Mom and Dad were in the market for fun, Honda advertised its Cub 50 in a similar fashion. Happy college students toting books breezed by on scooters under the slogan, "You meet the nicest people on a Honda."

The ads appeared in Life, Look and Collier's rather than biker's magazines, and the scooters sold in hardware and department stores instead of bike shops.

Those scooters' engines were similar in size and power to today's, which range from 50 to 250cc. Approximately 90 percent of the scooters sold are 50cc, Brigge said.

Anything larger than a 50cc requires a motorcycle license. Depending on the motor size, scooters reach speeds up to 55 mph. Most scooters get about 90 miles per gallon, weigh between 90 and 340 pounds and range in price from $500 to $2,000.

Scooters are so compact they seem to squeeze into any slice of space between cars. On a weekday morning, for example, one can see scores of them tucked between bumpers on Garden Street.

"You can stuff them anywhere and everywhere," Brigge said.

On campus, however, the motorcycle lots have become overstuffed with the mini-motorcycles, creating a problem. Scooters are motor vehicles, so owners have to buy motorcycle permits to park on campus.

"Last fall there was a sudden increase in the number of scooters and we had to stop selling permits because we ran out of room," Dorothy Telles, parking manager, said. "I'm afraid the
problem will increase in the spring. We've already enlarged two lots, and we're going to build another."

Some people have parked their scooters near bicycle racks, but this is a violation of safety code. Because scooters use gasoline and are flammable, they must be kept away from buildings, University Police Sergeant John Browne said.

"They (scooter owners) want to keep them safe by keeping them close to the dorm, or whatever, but there are other precautions they can take to protect them," Browne said.

He suggested locking the scooter to a nearby post and keeping it registered and licensed where the scooter is stolen. (During winter quarter, four scooters were stolen and only one has been recovered.)

Susan Falk, a sophomore, purchased a Honda Elite 80 because she planned to live off campus this year. "It's good to toot around in the sun, and they're popular," she said. "I like to stay with the fads."

Faddish or not, scooters have not always been kind to Falk, who has been dumped by hers several times. "I wasn't sure where the controls were, and gravel is a thing to watch out for. Once I was on a hill and tried to start it up with someone on the back," she said. "I was trying to balance it and be cool at the same time."

It didn't work, and she and her passenger soon met the pavement. Injuries, fortunately, were minor.

To increase safety, scooters should not be overloaded. The Honda Spree, for example, has a maximum load capacity of 180 pounds.

"You see people with little Sprees trying to fit two people on it. One, it's a hazard because the vehicle may not have the engine size and power to deal with that, and two, it's a violation of the law," Browne said. A scooter must have an additional set of pegs for a passenger's feet or it is illegal to ride with a passenger.

The law requires anyone operating a motor driven vehicle to wear eye protection. Upon being cited, unfortunate scooterites can expect a $47 fine.

Though not required by law, wearing a helmet also increases chances for a safe trip. Brigge estimates 50 percent of scooter owners also purchase helmets.

While the scooter can be made safer through precautions, no person can write off the possibility of an accident. Don Long, senior, disputes the theory that the scooter is "as safe as the person driving it." Long's Honda Elite 80 met an untimely end when he and a woman in a car drove up to adjacent stop signs.

"I saw her stop, so I figured she knew I was there. I was just getting ready to go and she pulled right out," he said. "She looked and saw me and slammed on her brakes. There was nothing I could do. I couldn't avoid her or anything. I put the brakes on and just slid into the side of her car."

Long escaped with pulled ligaments and a bruised body. "I was really lucky I didn't fly up in the air and crunch into the road," he said. "I wasn't wearing a helmet which is really dangerous. My mom is always telling me 'Wear a helmet when you drive.'"

The scooter was destroyed in the accident and Long admits he misses it. "But I feel more comfortable without it. Now that I have a car, I feel like I have more protection. I used to think, 'Oh, I don't need a helmet, I'll just be really defensive.' And I really was precautious. But there was nothing I could do when that car pulled out in front of me."

Scooters may not be the ultimate in safe transportation, especially for those who loathe a helmet's effects on their elaborate coiffures. But with the approach of warmer weather, and scooters' reputation for fashionable fun, their style-conscious owners will surely be a force to be reckoned with on the roads this spring.

"It's the trick thing to have. If one person has it, they all have to have it."

--Brigge
SURFING IS A DEMANDING sport. The stereotypical surfers most of us have seen on TV or in pictures have a sort of lean, wild look to them. They also invariably are pictured in sunny, sandy settings.

The Northwest breeds a different kind of surfer, one braving elements harsher than many care to face, even in sunnier climes. Each time the Northwest surfer goes out, she is reminded of the ocean's power, and its refusal to surrender to man's will.

Stephanie Greene, a 22-year-old Western student, has been learning how to surf for the past year. She and her surfing companions sometimes drive hundreds of miles just to find out if conditions permit them to ride some waves.

Greene considers the relatively tiny number of surfers who practice the sport in the Northwest an advantage.

"It's not popular in the Northwest, but that's what makes it great because it's not crowded. You can find more spots that are untouched because a lot of people aren't willing to get out into the freezing water and freezing weather," Greene said.

Greene started surfing a year ago after she tired of watching her boyfriend and his friends from the shore.

"I watched them surf a lot. I love the ocean. It's one of the most beautiful settings and it's fun to play in the water," she said smiling.

The sport of surfing, however, requires more than playful curiosity and interest. Surfers must be physically fit and learn to respect the untameable force of the ocean.
"Surfing is a highly, highly mental sport. Not only does it take motivational factors like determination, commitment and endurance to get out, you have to learn to read the waves. It's really difficult. There's a lot to think about."

Greene learned by watching her friends surf. Then she bought a used surfboard and wetsuit from a surf shop on the Oregon coast and hit the beach with her male companions.

The only equipment necessary to begin surfing includes a board, which costs around $300, and a wetsuit, which goes for about $200. From then on, Greene said, it's pretty much just paying for transportation.

Greene said women may be intimidated by surfing partly because they see so few other women doing it, but it's definitely something they can learn to do as well as men.

"I want to see more women getting into it," she said. "It's been a male-dominated sport because it does take upper body strength. But I'm not that big and I'm doing it."

Greene is majoring in Exercise Science and also teaches an adult fitness class at Western. She stays in shape for surfing mainly by running and cycling. Surfing, she said, is physically demanding and can be even more dangerous if a person isn't prepared.

"The bigger the wave, and depending on the way it breaks, the more experience and skill you have to have."

"There's a lot of factors involved in how to catch a wave. You have to know the type of wave. Whether it's steep, fast and tall or slow and rolling."

Steep, fast waves generally are easier to get up on because of their strength, but require timing to catch properly, Greene said. Slower, rolling waves take more hard paddling to catch up to them and to gain enough speed for the surfer to get up.

She mentioned, however, conditions other than a wave's speed and size contribute to its overall character, and all must be taken into account for a good ride.

Beginners usually start by staying close to the shore and riding the white water, waves which already have peaked. Here the beginner gets a feel for the board, and for being propelled by the moving water.

After learning to jump onto the board and riding enough white water, some are ready to try paddling through the water to the outside.

"That's real thrilling because all of a sudden you're not getting constantly hit by all this white water," she said.

Greene catches a wave...

struggles to gain her balance...

While on shore, surfers determine whether the waves break uniformly or erratically. Then they look for a calm spot where they can paddle to the outside, the point beyond where the waves break.

After making it to the outside, surfers account for the different factors contributing to the wave's character. Then they jockey themselves into position before the wave reaches them.

"It's calm and you're out there relaxed on the ocean watching it all break in front of you. That's a high."

"When you're first learning, it can be very frustrating because it's so diff-
cover new, isolated spots.

"It's special in the Northwest because we don't have thousands of people trying to catch that same wave. It's much more serene," she said.

Greene surfs year-round, but enjoys it more in the spring and summer. Winter waves can terrify even the most steadfast Northwest surfers.

"In the winter, Seaside can have incredibly huge waves and it frightens me. They're so huge that a lot of times none of us, not even my guy friends, can make it to the outside because they're too powerful and there's too much stuff coming and you get worn out before you get out there."

"Then if you get out--if you're one of the few or the lucky or the brave--then the waves are just unbelievably huge! You have to know what you're doing or you're going to tumble and fall. It's dangerous. Waves have a lot of power and a lot of force. You get real humbled."

Surfing's natural dangers warrant a watchful eye and common sense. Rocks, tides and undertows can pull surfers out to sea easily, quickly spoil ing a fun day at the beach.

"You have to be aware of all the possible dangers when you find a new spot," Greene warned.

Sharks are another natural danger sometimes posing a threat to Northwest surfers, although sharks are found in greater numbers in the warm water off the California coast. Greene said an occasional sighting doesn't worry her.

"The most we saw was a little baby shark that washed out and it was about three feet long and it was dead. We were all really happy it was dead," she said.
"We look tremendously like seals in those little black wetsuits, you know, bobbing up and down," she laughed.

Although surfers look out for one another and offer moral support, each person is on his or her own once out on the water.

Last winter, while surfing near Seaside, a strong current and churning waves forced Greene into a cove of rocks where she struggled to keep herself from being hurled against a rock wall.

Cold rain, high winds and turbulent waves made it difficult for her to get out of the water.

"The waves hit you from two different angles at one spot called 'The Triangle,'" she explained.

Several minutes passed before a man on the beach spotted her and helped her fight her way along the rocks.

"I thought I was dead," she recalled somberly.

"You really have to pay your dues in surfing for a long time. You eat a lot of salt water, you get thrown in a lot, you get tumbled, your board hits you on the head."

"You really have to pay your dues in surfing for a long time," she said. "You eat a lot of salt water, you get thrown in a lot, you get tumbled, your board hits you on the head."

"The one thing interesting about surfing that really draws certain people to it, is that it's real frightening, exciting and scary," Greene said. "It's a real independent, individual thing. It's you and the wave—you can't fight this wave, and you can't overpower it."

"It's a real harmony type sport. You have to really respect mother nature and know that she's really powerful. That's what makes it special. You can never conquer it."

-- Greene
ON A COLD ARCTIC NIGHT IN MARCH 1979, THOUSANDS of pure white harp seal pups lay on the floating ice packs in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, near Newfoundland. The afternoon before, hunters had clubbed hundreds of the helpless animals to death. Others not quite dead were skinned alive as hunters harvested their annual number of valuable pelts. The snow was stained blood-red; ice was littered with skinned carcasses.

Ironically, the harp seal pup’s one defense, its white-camouflage coat, is the reason for its bloody death. Every year the pups are clubbed to death for their snowy pelts, to satisfy the demand of the fur industry.

On this night in 1979, a group of eight men approached the surviving pups, but they weren’t wielding clubs. Instead, they began running from seal to seal, first spraying the crying animals with a blood-red dye, then bending down to rub the color in, staining the coats.

These men, members of the Vancouver-based Sea Shepherds Society, were led by founder Paul Watson. They were staining the coats to make the pelts worthless to hunters who would be out on the ice the next morning. They moved quickly, for when dawn came, officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) would come to arrest them for interfering with hunters’ activities.

When the sun rose, the RCMP, brought in by helicopters, rounded up the members - roughly. Watson was hauled handcuffed onto the deck of a Canadian Coast Guard ship and with kicks to his body, the RCMP were able to extract from him a promise never to return to the hunts. Lying exposed on the deck for two-and-a-half hours, Watson’s wet clothing froze in the cold air. Later, he and the crew were served seal meat, compliments of the RCMP.

All eight men were charged with resisting arrest, assaulting police officers, obstructing justice and breaking the Seal Protection Act.

Watson soon broke his promise to the RCMP, however. The Shepherds returned in 1981 and 1983 to protest the hunts. By 1983, the Canadian-Norwegian seal hunt was shut down for good. That year, the Sea Shepherds blockaded the Gulf and worked with other animal protection groups to organize a European boycott of Canadian seal pelts.

Watson, a former member of the environmental group Greenpeace, founded the 8,000-member Sea Shepherd Society in 1977. The society makes aggressive nonviolence the staple ingredient in its global campaigns for animal rights, especially for the protection of whales. The Shepherds’ object has been to protect these rights by creating financial hardship for the human beings they believe are exploiting the environment.

“We meant to be activists in the strongest sense of the word.”

- Watson

about dollars and cents. So therefore once you defeat them economically, they remain defeated,” Watson says, sitting in the living room of his condominium overlooking a Vancouver, B.C., harbor. “They’re not going to take a moral stand on the issue - they can’t afford to do it. And they’re much too prac-
tical a bunch of people. That's why they're involved in this exploitation of marine resources - because they're very practical.*

Since 1977, Watson and his group have used their ship, the Sea Shepherd, to ram whaling vessels and have sunk other whaling boats with explosives. They also have placed themselves in the paths of bullets during gray seal rifle-hunts in Ireland and in 1982 negotiated a halt to the Iki Island dolphin slaughter by promising to stop harassing the Japanese fishermen. To the outsider, their methods may appear violent, but Watson and his crew call their tactics "aggressive nonviolence," inspired by the protest methods of Mahatma Gandhi.

"I've got all Gandhi's works up there, you know," Watson says, pointing to a book-crammed shelf. "I've used a lot of his philosophies in what we're doing...Gandhi said there are two different forms of nonviolence. He calls that the philosophy of 'Ahimsa,' and says it is both positive and negative and both of those are acceptable. Positive nonviolence means you don't do anything, really, it's almost passivism."

Watson, 35, shifts in his chair. He speaks with quiet conviction. Thick black hair, speckled with gray, accents his tanned, somewhat chunky face. Dark, deep-set eyes give him a perpetual brooding look.

"Negative nonviolence is still acceptable (in Ahimsa.) For instance, if you go and damage property in order to save a life, as long as that is motivated out of good intent, it is justified. For instance, when we went to Iceland and sank whaling ships and destroyed a whaling factory, it was because we wanted to save lives and that was a way of saving lives. It was motivated by good intent, not because of any animosity towards the Icelandic people."

The Shepherds especially are opposed to commercial whalers, who are globally destroying the blue, humpback and sperm whale populations globally, as well as having completely exterminated the Korean gray whale.

In 1985, to preserve remaining whale stocks, the International Whaling Committee decreed commercial whaling would be illegal in 1986. Iceland, Japan, Korea, the Philippines and the Soviet Union disregarded the moratorium and whalers sailing under the flags of those nations continue to hunt the creatures. The Sea Shepherds are attempting to enforce the moratorium, calling these whalers criminals.

Last November, in Iceland's Reykjavik Harbor, two Sea Shepherd members sank two of the nation's four whaling ships, the 434-ton Hvalur 6 and the 427-ton Hvalur 7. Using sledgehammers, the members also destroyed Iceland's only whale-oil processing plant, causing an estimated $1.8 million damage.

"The ships were minor. They were the most dramatic visually," Watson says. "It was the processing plant that caused the problem (for the Icelanders.) It's gonna take a year to rebuild that."

"And not only that, the whaling industry makes a profit of $3 million dollars a year, but the destruction of the boats was $2.8 million and the destruction of the plant was $1.8 million. But even worse than that - what was in the plant was 2,000 tons of whale meat and the (Sea Shepherd members) opened up the freezer doors and exposed it for three days before it was discovered.

"Iceland refroze it and went ahead with the sale. We got in touch with the Japanese embassy and informed them the meat had been refrozen, which cancelled the sale, which meant another loss of four million dollars. So that's a total loss of nine million dollars, which works out to about three year's profit for a dying industry."

Further, because sabotage is considered an act of war, the whalers would not receive any insurance for the downed boats, because insurance coverage does not include damages from acts of war.

According to an Associated Press release, Iceland has issued arrest warrants for Rod Coronado of Long Beach, California and David Howitz of Great Britain, the two members allegedly responsible for the sabotage. If arrested, they could be prosecuted under Iceland's tough new anti-terrorist legislation.

But Watson sees the sabotage of the Icelandic whaling industry as a success. "There were a number of things achieved by that. The actual physical destruction of the ships was the lesser achievement...Everybody had been led to believe that because there was a moratorium on whaling that the whales were saved...But the problem was that it was continuing and therefore the most important thing was to somehow create a dramatic incident so as to let the world know that whaling was continuing, and that was the most positive thing - it was embarrassing to Iceland."

Watson leans forward in the pale twilight of the unit living room. Behind him, a pitted whalebone vertabra serves as a very oversize paperweight on a filing cabinet. A large oil portrait of the Sea Shepherd adorns a wall, as well as photographs and paintings telling stories of Sea Shepherd campaigns and of Watson's past - the two are interconnected.

Watson, formerly a merchant seaman, comes from the Canadian fishing village of Passamaquoddy Bay, New Brunswick. He has been involved in animal protection since the age of eight, when he was a member of the Kindness Club, an animal rights organization for children.

By the time he was 11, Watson already was exhibiting his activist tendencies. He would sabotage hunters' traps in the woods and harass duck hunters by distracting their dogs with whistles and flying hawk kites to scare away the birds.
At age 19, in 1970, Watson joined forces with three Quakers and started the "Don't Make a Wave Committee" in Vancouver, B.C. This group later called itself Greenpeace, and from 1972 to 1977, Watson helped lead expeditions protesting Soviet whaling and seal hunting. Watson often piloted small rubber Zodiac rafts filled with Greenpeace protestors in between the whalers' harpoons and the herds they were pursuing.

A break between Watson and the Greenpeace society came when Watson's tactics began to digress from Greenpeace's conception of "nonviolence." During one seal hunt protest, Watson grabbed a club from the hands of a seal hunter and tossed it into the water. In 1977, calling him a "one-man vigilante squad," Greenpeace members voted Watson out of the organization.

"It was a case of personal disagreement," said Bev Pinnegar, media and research spokesperson for Greenpeace in Vancouver, B.C. "Paul wasn't willing to go along with the plans of the others. His way was the best."

After his ties with Greenpeace had been severed, Watson began work on another conservation society in June 1977. First known as Earthforce, it later became known as the Sea Shepherd Society.

"We meant to be activists in the strongest sense of the word," Watson wrote in his biography, Sea Shepherd. "We sought to bring about international commitments to preserve the habitats of wild animals and to foster deeper public understanding of the delicate inter-relationship that binds all life together...a society of direct actionists."

Watson calls Greenpeace and other large environmental organizations "self-perpetuating bureaucracies.

"I don't have much use for them, because I don't think they accomplish a helluva lot. I know for a fact that Greenpeace accomplished more between 1970 and 1978 than it has from 1978 to 1987 because it's just too top-heavy with bureaucrats. The people who originally were part of Greenpeace - most of them are involved with smaller organizations now."

"There are two different types of groups - there are the groups that are more stifled by bureaucracy and then there are groups like Earth First that are becoming much more aggressive. I think that's a positive development as long as that aggression can continue to be nonviolent - nonviolent in the sense that it doesn't cause harm to any living things." He explained the difference in the philosophies of his organization and those of Greenpeace.

"If you take a rifle out of a hunter's hand, to us (Sea Shepherds) this is an act of nonviolence. To Greenpeace, this is a destruction of property and therefore unjustifiable."

Greenpeace, which was founded on Quaker principles, advocates the use of peaceful protesting - "complete nonviolence," Pinnegar said.

What Watson is doing, she said, is "inviting the use of violence. That's not what we (Greenpeace) want...Paul's escalating the problem to something it isn't."

"What happens the next time he goes out on his ship? He could be fired upon. I wouldn't like to see it happen."

Watson doesn't believe his actions are escalating tensions between environmental groups and "exploiters."

"Well, there's already been bullets fired, and everything like that, but you've got to take the moral high ground yourself. You know, you're violent in that sense yourself, (but) you're morally at a higher level."

He also says environmental activists should expect to face danger, considering their opposition.

"Well, they should be having trouble right now. I mean, we're taking on incredible opposition here - they shouldn't even get involved in the business if they don't expect trouble...I mean, we're dealing with people who have absolutely no conscience at all. They'll...take down all the trees, destroy the rain forests and take everything out of the ocean and pollute the air. I mean, these people are not nice people, so if you're going to put yourself in opposition to them, you're going to have to expect trouble. Anybody who thinks they're not going to get trouble is pretty naive."

Watson and the Sea Shepherds have had their share of trouble.

"We've had a couple of sabotage attempts. On three occasions we caught them. We're much more security conscious now," Watson says, nodding.

He and other Sea Shepherd members have spent time in jail for their activities.

"I was arrested in '83 along with the crew - there were 20 of us arrested all together - and we were charged with conspiracy - breaking the Seal Protection Act by approaching within a half-mile of a seal hunt without permission from the Minister of Fisheries. Doesn't sound like a very serious crime. Every crew member - none of them had criminal records - received a $3,000 fine...I received 15 months in prison for conspiracy to break the Seal Protection Act and $5,000 or six months for breaking it."

Watson spent only nine days in jail before being released on appeal. "The great thing about the system is if you can afford the lawyers you don't go to prison - the equality of the law - it cost us $100,000 to stay out of prison. I was doing time in a French-Canadian prison, where, as an English Canadian...I was not allowed access to reading material in English - there was no English material allowed in this prison. They don't even do this in the Soviet Union, for damn's sake."

The only laws Watson claims deserve respect are those of nature.

"The law is a joke," he says, leaning forward in his chair. "Forget the morality. The law is designed to protect vested interests."

"The only laws that anyone should have any respect for are the natural laws. And the problem is, human law has been established to justify the violation of all natural laws, so it's a war between natural laws and human laws and I have no respect for human law."
INSIDE BELLINGHAM'S CHURCH OF Divine Man, nobody was reading the bible. No crosses hung from the walls. The chapel was empty of people. Instead, the religious assemblage resided in the basement of the church where they perform psychic readings and healings.

I had come for a psychic reading. To earn this privilege, I had to become a member of the church and sign a form acknowledging my mental stability. Although I was encouraged to make a monetary donation, I did not.

A female minister led me away from the empty chapel, into a small, humid room where two men were waiting.

The men who were going to practice their psychic skills on me were training to become ordained ministers of the church. The bearded men sat on metal folding chairs. They greeted me as I sat facing them on a chair with a flower-printed pad.

Mark, a man with light-brown hair, asked me to separate my legs and arms so he could read my aura more easily. Otherwise, he said, my aura would spin and he would be unable to read me. Mark wore a vanilla-colored sweater, blue jeans and dirty tennis shoes. When he smiled, a gold tooth deep inside his mouth flashed.

Jim, an older man with graying hair and glasses, nodded approval when I followed Mark's instructions. He sat stiffly in his chair, his large belly hanging over his faded Levi's like Jell-O sliding out of a bowl. His blue-jean shirt, with colorfully embroidered shoulders, was tucked tightly into his worn jeans. His feet, tucked into a pair of Brooks running shoes, were planted firmly on an orange rug.

The men explained they were about to begin my psychic reading, then closed their eyes and slowly lifted their hands into the air. Waving his arms in short circles, Mark recited a prayer.

"May it be with the blessings of the Supreme Being that anything that happens during this meeting will benefit each of us in our own spiritual growth, and awareness and understanding."

After the prayer, the only sound in the room came from Jim's breath passing through his nearly closed lips. With his eyes closed, Jim slowly turned his head from left to right. Suddenly his eyes opened under his glasses and he began the "rose reading."

"Each part of the rose tells a little story," he said. "How open it is, which direction it's pointed, how many leaves it's got. The rings on it are gonna be associated with past lives. First I'm gonna sorta describe it. Let me have a minute and
"You were in the Sherlock Holmes time period," Jim said.

Eyes shut, head slowly moving, arms in the air, Jim described a rose while Mark drew the flower on a piece of paper with blue and yellow crayons.

"The stem is sort of a timeline, Dave, which has to do with how long you've been coming to the planet, and it looks like you've been coming to the planet for a long time, which shows that you're one of the originators," Jim said in a monotone.

He proceeded to tell me about three of my previous lives.

"You were in the Sherlock Holmes time period. What is that, the 1760's?" he asked Mark.

Mark laughed. "I think Sherlock Holmes was supposed to have lived in 1895," he said.

Jim mumbled a few incoherent sentences and continued by telling me about my former life as a French musician.

"You were a very dignified aristocrat, a musician. It looks like sort-of-a bass instrument," he said with a yawn. "It looks like you're drawing on a love of creativity."

During medieval times I was a Spanish crusader, Jim explained.

"Your next life is medieval. Old fashioned armor, very short. It looks like you were just involved with going on a religious crusade. The reason for your wearing the armor...has to do with a religious battle." He paused for a moment. "And I'll call that a rose reading."

'Sometimes, as a spirit, you're out there floating around. Your body is not really aware of what's happening.'

--Mark

Both men yawned, but assured me it was not related to boredom. They said it is a good way to release their energy. Leaning back in his chair, Mark looked at me closely. Rubbing his forehead with two fingers, he looked at the ground, lifted his arms and closed his eyes. He was preparing to perform the final part of the reading--my aura reading.

"I'm going to look at the layers of your aura," he explained. "What I'm going to do is talk about things I see in specific layers. Basically, things that you're putting out of your aura to look at: that you want some feedback on. And I'm gonna assign colors to the different layers, and the colors are a way of separating the layers. It's a symbol we can use to represent the energy."

While Mark read my aura, Jim drew the colors Mark assigned each layer with crayons onto a human body outlined on a piece of paper. Jim reached for a pen, scratched his ear with it, picked up the crayons and began drawing.

Mark told me my aura showed frustration toward my parents because they were forcing me to go to college. "There is a little bit of a slight anger on your part because you feel like you're there more for them than for yourself," he said while his partner meditated.
Mark said a foreign force was dominating my actions. He explained that a cord attached to the back of my body represented a female trying to control me. A person who, no matter what I said, would not let me go.

"I'm seeing a cord in your back, which is an energy connection between someone else and you. Someone is trying to control the way you feel about yourself through this energy. And they're putting it in the back rather than the front because they would rather you were not aware. If you want we could remove that?" he offered.

I asked him to remove the cord.

After removing the intruding energy connection, he described it physically. His account closely resembled a girl I had dated for three years.

Mark told me the female recently had given up on any reconciliation. In fact, my ex-girlfriend recently married.

When I told them about the similarities between Mark's vision and my actual experiences with my ex-girlfriend, they nodded their heads and smiled while raising their eyebrows.

The psychic reading took one hour. Then the men told me to take a 30-minute break before discussing the meaning of my reading. As I walked to the door, the men stayed in the chairs. They were going to meet me in the recreation room, they said, after they had cleaned up the energy in the reading room.

In the recreation room I found about ten men and women talking and drinking coffee. Everyone was smiling. When I walked in, I felt as if I was entering a party to which no one had invited me. No one acknowledged my presence.

Sitting in a chair in the bright room, a gaunt, pale-faced woman with sunken facial features asked a man in his mid-fifties to heal her. She was not sick--she only wanted help changing her "personal energy," she said.

The man she was speaking to had a gold chain with a crystal the size of a large Brazil nut hanging from his neck. The woman remained in her chair; he dropped to his knees. He began waving his arms slowly around her body without touching her. Occasionally, he flicked the air around her.

While the man healed her, he talked about Tony's Coffee and Tea shop in Fairhaven. She responded with a big smile. Without a break in the conversation, the healing continued.

Rather than an intense mental-healing allowing no interruptions, this process continued above the noise of the cheerful crowd. Nobody stopped talking. The rest of the group ignored the healing.

At 9 p.m., I returned to the room where Mark and Jim were waiting for me in their chairs. They placed their hands on the floor to "ground" it so our personal energies could flow safely in the room, they said.

We discussed the readings and I left. Again, Mark and Jim stayed in the room to clean up the energy.

As I left the church, I noticed a variety of pictures depicting roses hanging from the walls. Climbing the stairs, I looked up at a stained-glass window. After I walked outside, I peered back into the colorful window and I thought about what Jim and Mark had said. Do I really have a spirit?

As I walked to my car, some of Mark's words came back to me.

"It looks like you have an awful lot of experience leaving your body," he continued. "It looks like sometimes this isn't quite brought in...so you can see it. You're not always aware that you're doing it. Sometimes, as spirit, you're out there floating around. Your body is not really aware of what's happening."
ROB ANGEL HAS A PICTIONARY game, but he doesn't play it very often. He says people mistakenly expect him to be an excellent player just because he invented it.

"They think if I'm on their team it's going to be an advantage, but believe me, it's not. I did the work but I'm terrible at sketching.

"People who know me won't have me on their team," he says. "I don't think I've ever won."

The Western graduate is not the only one who can claim the distinction of never winning a Pictionary game. His dismal record at the game, which combines aspects of charades with sketching ability, is worthy of note because Angel himself created and marketed Pictionary.

Pictionary recently swept the country with a mania not seen since Trivial Pursuit.

People work in teams, advancing from start to finish on the board by sketching clues for their partners, who must guess a designated word or phrase within a time limit.

The words come from a box of cards, each with five categories, and the sketcher is not allowed to use any universally known symbols such as letters or numbers.

The winning team is the first to reach the final square and have the guesser correctly identify the sketch. This is made more difficult because the last square's category is "all-play," when all teams compete for the answer and the first to get it picks the next card.

Angel says he entertained friends with a rudimentary version of the game long before he and his partner Terry Langston marketed it.

"Pictionary was something I used to do at parties. I'd get a dictionary, point to a word, and say, 'You do that, and you do that,' and have people sketch it and goof around with it, basically.

"People would go crazy and I'd wind up taking over parties. It was just too much fun," he recalls.

Angel began developing Pictionary into a marketable product after graduating from Western in 1981 with a degree in business administration.

Today, Angel has left the "psycho ward," as he calls the wing of Kappa Hall he lived in, far behind. He operates from a new office on the shores of Seattle's Lake Union. Cardboard boxes are stacked around the room and the inevitable Pictionary game sits in the middle of a conference table. A Diet Coke within easy reach of Angel's hand looks a little out of place at 9 a.m., but it seems to agree with him.

Angel's desire for "just something" to make himself successful started long before he opened the dictionary and created a game.

"I'm the proverbial dreamer. I could never work a nine-to-five job. Never have except in high school. I've always had many ideas. This is the first one I followed through on and did anything with.

"This one happened to be the right idea, fortunately. I didn't set out the day I graduated to start a business but in the back of my mind I knew I would." Pictionary first hit the stores in June, 1985. It was fairly successful to
"So yes, I'm looking for something else. I have a couple ideas for new boardgames," he says.

So far, Angel's celebrity status hasn't produced any dramatic changes in his private life. He says, "My friends will introduce me to someone they know and they'll think it's pretty neat. I don't go around wearing a Pictionary hat or sweatshirt too often.

"People don't really know who I am, so I don't get a lot of the gold diggers, the women coming after me. A lot of people know that the guy that did Pictionary is from Seattle but they have no idea where."

It is obvious Angel is beginning to reap financial benefits from Pictionary's tremendous popularity, but he keeps silent about sales and profits. He says he knows the exact number sold but doesn't release it.

"If people know how many games we sell then people make their own conclusions on how much money we've made. It also lets the competition know how well you're doing."

"If Milton-Bradley is thinking of coming out with their own game, which they very well may be, because they flew us out there six to eight months ago wanting to license us and we turned them down--we turned down Milton-Bradley--it lets them know how we're doing," Angel explains.

If a company learns how many games Pictionary has sold, they'll either decide the market has room for competition, he says, or they'll figure Pictionary has cornered the market and their advertising dollars would be better spent elsewhere.

"So we would rather let them worry and wonder about it, unless we lie and say we've done five million games."

As Pictionary continues selling out in the stores, Angel is working on a new set of cards for possible release in the fall.

"I've read every word in the dictionary," he says. "I've also got a thesaurus and an almanac and anything else I could find.

"I came up with 9,000 words (for the first set of cards) of which only 5,000 were usable. Four thousand were what I would call uncomplicated, you know, like astrodynamic physics, things that I thought would be usable that just were not."

For the second edition of cards, Angel needs "500 more. I'm going through the almanac, I have a business dictionary, and I just bought four new books.

"Cliches," he adds. "You'll see more cliches like 'I love you.'"

Before Pictionary reached its current level of success, Angel says, it required much more time than it does now.

"It used to be a 24-hour-a-day job." Now, "Some days I'll work only five hours, another day it might be 15. If I think of a word at home, sure, I'll write it down. But now I come into the office and think 'word day' and I'll get to work."

With more spare time available, Angel has begun to pursue other activities. Cooking lessons are one thing he recently began.

"I can't cook. Before I used to work in restaurants and then I had a girlfriend; now I have neither."

Angel also plans to take scuba lessons starting this spring.

"I'm going to be a student again. Not a college student, but I want to be a professional learner. I want to enjoy myself."

"I've never had more fun, whether it's learning or working 16 hours a day," he says. "I think Pictionary is going to be successful enough that I don't have to work 16 hours a day unless I want to."
AS THE THOROUGHBREDS BROKE FROM THE starting gate for the Olympia Handicap, on November 2, 1986, the crowded grandstands at Longacres reverberated with the screams of thousands of horseracing fans.

Lenore Brant recalls the race, when a three-year-old filly named Firesweeper attempted to break the Longacres' record of wins in stakes races.

"She was really like the great big deal last year. It was Firesweeper this and Firesweeper that," Lenore says.

Lenore and her husband, Bill, work as a training team at the Renton oval.

Although Firesweeper was the bettors' favorite to win the handicap, another filly proved to be worth some consideration -- Popcorn Patty, trained by the Brants.

The day of the race, when Lenore took Popcorn Patty to the receiving barn just before the race, she recalls, "It was just me and little Patty and everybody was talking to this girl who had Firesweeper. The girl was so confident.

"Then as the race was going, Patty went around Firesweeper through the turn and just drew out," Lenore says, her eyes widening as she remembers the rush of watching the race.

"Patty beat her. No, she didn't beat her, she blew her away. It was really a thrill. That was probably the best race
I've seen. We have films of the race and we've watched them over and over and over," she says, tilting her head back and laughing.

For racing fans, watching that race was exciting, but for the owners, trainers and exercise riders, Patty's win was the product of long hours and a rigorous daily routine.

The success rate of those who train thoroughbreds is calculated by the number of wins they produce. Since there is no set formula for training a successful race horse, the only things that guarantee success are hard work and determination, although a little luck never hurts.

At 6 a.m. every day from February to October, the Brants pull into the unpaved parking lot on the backside of Longacres' track. On this early February morning, they enter through the east gate, exchange hellos with other early arrivals and hurry for barn #19.

Six anxious thoroughbreds whinny greetings to the couple as they begin their morning routine.

"Good morning, Patty," Lenore says to the star of the barn as she ducks under the webbing of Popcorn Patty's stall.

"Did you want to take her first?" she asks her husband.

"Yeah, I'll take her first and then Sneaky," Bill replies, heading for the tack room where the equipment is stored.

While Bill trains the horses out on the track, Lenore grooms, cleans, feeds and bathes horses returning from the track and readies the next to go.

"What this game takes is a lot of work - heavy work," she says, lifting a tub of water.

"It's hard work. It's really a man's job, but the man in this barn hates to work. He's lazy. But he's an excellent trainer," Lenore adds.

Bill's morning is spent with stopwatch in hand, walking from the barn to the track and back, checking the progress of this season's hopefuls. At 11 a.m. he will leave Longacres for Reber Ranch, located on the east hill in Kent, where the Brants keep five horses that weren't granted stalls at the track.

Winning horses from the previous year are granted stalls, but horses that have never won a race must be boarded elsewhere. Once the Brant's horses at Reber Ranch are in racing condition, they can be moved to Longacres to race.

The Brants have worked together through five Longacres racing campaigns. They met at Diamond Lil's Restaurant in Renton eight years ago when both were working in the card room and married shortly after.

"When we met, I didn't know if he knew one end of a horse from another," Lenore quips. "He mentioned one night that he worked at the racetrack."

Bill began in 1959 as a "hot walker" at Longacres. After exercising, a "hot" horse must be walked in order to cool down. After mechanical hot walkers eliminated Bill's job, he began to gallop horses. In 1971, after returning from the Navy, Bill became an assistant trainer. After several years of working with other trainers, Bill began to train on his own.

"I was a racing fan even then, but for years I went to the horse races and I didn't even know where they came from," Lenore says. "All I knew was that they ran and they were led off somewhere. I never knew to where. It had never occurred to me. Now I know."
Lenore Brant takes Popcorn Patty off of the hotwalker.

The key to running a successful barn, she explains, is consistency.

"These guys are really animals of routine. They love routine and schedule," Lenore says as she collects empty feed tubs from the stalls.

"Yeah, they really get into habits," Bill adds, adjusting Patty's halter. "Like when we walk into the barn they are anticipating what's gonna happen. It's like a clock in their head.

"If someone else was to come in the barn they wouldn't do nothing, but when I or Lenore come in, they know they are gonna get fed and they start talking to us. That's why I think it's really important to feed them at the same time every day and train them at the same time every day, so it turns into a pattern."

"Hi, Kenny," Lenore says to a man entering the barn. Kenny Oliver, who has exercised the Brant's horses the last three seasons, arrives for his first assignment of the morning.

"I want to jog her a mile today," Bill says to Kenny.

Kenny began working on the track in 1973, with hopes of becoming a jockey. An age limit at the time would not allow him to pursue this goal, Kenny opted to become an exercise rider.

Lenore grabs the exercise saddle from the tack room and begins to prepare Patty for her morning exercise.

"Bill goes to the track with every horse. He knows if they're having problems with a knee or an ankle or just a headache or a pain in the ass.

"I like to work and he doesn't. He is working really hard this year, but he's sure whining about it," she says, laughing and cinching Patty's girth.

"This is a tough time of year. Trying to get the horses conditioned takes quite a while. They are just like human athletes, they have to go out and run every day and get fit," she continues.

It usually takes about 60 days to prepare the horses for racing, the first 30 being spent just galloping them. "After that, if there are no problems, they start working," Lenore says, watching Bill give Kenny a boost up onto Patty's back.

"That's after they know the ropes if they're an older horse, but you gotta teach a two-year-old, they don't know nothing," Bill interrupts as he reaches for his stopwatch.

"The older horses already know what runnin' is, what the starting gate is, and they just come in and run. Besides getting a two-year-old fit for the first time, you gotta teach them how to be around other horses," Bill says, leading Patty out of the barn to the training track.

"The only thing they're born with is a natural competitiveness," he explains. "Your better horses are more competitive. Some aren't at all. I've had horses that gallop in the morning like they aren't any faster than me, but they run real good races. Then you have others that train real good, but when
they race they couldn't outrun me.
"I had one last year that was the fastest horse I've ever
trained. She won second time out and won easy against good
horses. After that, she just decided she didn't like the
racetrack. Yup, Cindy Sue's Fortune. She was just short of
being mentally ill anyway," he says with a chuckle, remember­ing
the disappointment.

'They are just like human athletes,
they have to go out and run every day
to get fit.'

--Lenore Brant

"That Cindy Sue was the worst," Kenny adds. "We put up
with all her little bitchy habits because she could run so fast
in the mornings. Then she turned out to be a slug," he says,
adjusting his feet in the stirrups.
"She was the type that would try a little bit, but her nerves
took so much away from her. She would anticipate running but she
just couldn't handle it."

Bill explains Cindy Sue would run well in the morning,
when he took her right from her stall to the track. "She would
blister the track during her morning works. The problem was,
she had a ton of ability but no heart.
"Other horses thrive on the pressure. Some won't run at all
in the mornings, but when you get them out in front
of the crowd, they're monsters. It's like playing pool. Some
people win when it's free, but, if you play for $20, they can't
make a shot. That was her case, more or less, with running."

Because of the routine, Bill says, veteran horses pick up on
certain cues when they are about to race.
"The thing that really lets the horses know when they're in
is they don't have their straw," he says, handing Kenny the
reins. "Just jog her easy," he directs.

Bill heads to the right side of the track, where the trainers

'A horse will tell ya the way they
want to be treated.'

--Kenny Oliver

have the best view of their charges. He looks quizzically at
Patty and Kenny as they round the far turn.
"She looks a little stiff in front," he mumbles.

After another lap on the track, Kenny and Bill meet up.
Bill asks Kenny about his suspicion. "She looked like she was
going a little off. How'd she feel to you?" he asks.
"Yeah, I noticed that too. It felt like the front right to me,"
Kenny says, looking down Patty's shoulder to her knee.

Walking back to the barn, Bill says he always asks Kenny's

opinion. He says some trainers base decisions strictly on the
viewpoint of the exercise rider, but Bill refrains from making
any decisions based only on one opinion.

"A lot of times the exercise rider can be wrong. He may
say, 'I think he's off on the right leg' and I say it's the left. I
just kind of weigh his opinion with mine and Lenore's. She
has a different opinion, mostly about their mental attitude,
since she's around them all day," Bill says as he as he enters
the barn and yells to his wife.

"A horse will tell ya the way they want to be treated,"
Kenny says. "If you listen to 'em, they'll tell ya. Bill listens to
them. Instead of just drillin', drillin', drillin', he watches how
they're acting. If they're feeling bad, he lays off for a few
days."

Bill says a successful trainer treats all his horses as individ­
uals. "Like any sport, you have a basic plan. If the basic plan
doesn't work, if you have a horse that's sore, then you have
to alter it."

As Lenore fills up a bucket of warm soapy water, Bill
removes the saddle from the sweaty horse. Steam rises off
Patty's back as Lenore quickly maneuvers around her, spong­ning her down. A voice comes over the track's intercom sys­tem, and Patty jerks her head around to the speaker behind her.

"They love hearing that loudspeaker echoing over here.
They get excited even before the race day starts," Bill says.
The Brant's barn is close to the main track, and a speaker
above it makes it easy for the horses to hear what's going on
at the track.

"While the races are going on they really get pumped up.
The first day of the meet, when they see all the races going
by and they hear the race announcer, they really get excited,"
Bill says. "I usually come down here and stay with 'em.
"Sometimes I have to tranquilize them. It's like giving
them a Valium so they'll mellow out," Bill says, as he ducks
into the stall of Sneaky Bill, a tall, wide-eyed six-year-old
gelding.

"How's the Sneaker today?" Bill asks as he pets Sneaky
Bill's nose.

With pride in his voice, Bill explains Sneaky won the first
stakes race for the Brant barn when he was just a youngster.
Lenore says, "He was a two-year-old when we got him.
The next year he won us our first stake. But he developed
some problems. We own half of him now."

"Yeah, I made a deal with the owners. They were kinda
getting disappointed in ol' Sneaker," Bill says.
The deal included the Brants paying Sneaky Bill’s expenses through the winter and spring, until his first race this year. Ordinarily, owners give their horses to the Brants to train and pay them $30 a day.

“I think I can still do some good with him. He always runs good for a couple races and then his problem surfaces. We never did figure out what was wrong with him. The owners were spending more money on vet bills than they were on training bills,” Bill says.

“I remember when the owners (who also own Popcorn Patty) were gonna sell him last year,” Lenore reminisces. “Another trainer was gonna buy him so he came down here to check him out. It was like he was kicking tires on a used car. It made me sick. I couldn’t stand the thought of the trainer taking him, because whatever was wrong with him wasn’t gonna get right.

“I told Billy that I couldn’t let them take him. I’m so attached, he’s like my son. I just thought it would be a senseless deal. They would take him and try to run him and he can’t run. He probably would have gotten sold for dog meat somewhere,” she says, lowering her voice as if Sneaky Bill would be offended.

The Brants explain most people who work with the horses on a daily basis cannot help becoming attached to them. Lenore says a certain perspective must be maintained as the trainer can be fired and a horse taken away. They also can suffer an injury, or break a leg during a race and be destroyed, or be claimed out of a race by another trainer.

Any horse running in a race with a claiming price can be purchased for that price during the race. An interested owner will “drop a claim” before the race starts. As soon as the starting gate opens, the horse has a new owner.

Lenore admits her attachment has caused her some grief in the past.

got claimed from us. Oh, I remember I cried and cried. I was so upset. I hated the trainer who claimed him,” Lenore says, leaning on the handle of a pitchfork.

“Yeah, Bingo was a nice horse,” Bill interjects. “I remember when we used to bring him back to the barn after he would win. We would put him on the hot walker and he wouldn’t shut up. He’d just nicker until he got in his stall. It was so funny.”

Bill says horses know when they have won a race. He says they know even better when they haven’t. “They don’t like getting dirt kicked in their face when they are trailin’.

“Some horses don’t give a shit if they win. Sneaky here cares. Your good horses - they care,” he says, patting Sneaky Bill’s shoulder.

“And after all,” he continues, heading for the tack room, “that’s why we’re all here - to get these guys fit and get ‘em into the winner’s circle.”

“Yup,” Lenore says gazing at Patty. “We don’t get there as much as we’d like, but at least we do get there.”
RECENTLY CAUGHT MYSELF standing in the store for at least 20 minutes comparing the merits of TDK SA and Maxell UD XLII cassette tapes. This frightened me when I realized its implications.

In this age of convenience and luxury, the amount of time I spend memorizing useless data in order to choose between horrifyingly similar alternatives is maddening.

Much of my time seems to involve remaining up-to-date on the latest techno-wizardry. I can’t imagine life without being able to listen to a crisp, flawless recording of Dire Straits on compact disc, pop a flick into a video cassette recorder or complete assignments on a computer disc.

But in the Dark Ages (pre-1975) none of these things were conceivable to the average American. Now most of us have learned how to operate these wondrous gadgets, and even to prefer one brand over another.

Here in America we have this great abundance of THINGS, things which our whole society seems to revolve around. Therefore, keeping them new and exciting occupies a great deal of our time.

I believe this perpetual consumption binge endangers our society in two ways. First, the preoccupation of the American mind with the banal but abundantly offspring of capitalism creates in many of us a false sense of being informed. Also, capitalism historically seems to require a high percentage of “have-nots” as those with power take what they can get. Unfortunately, enough disgruntled have-nots inevitably demand change.

When people accept “knowledge” about things particular to our society as ultimate truth, they cheat themselves of the chance to learn from other cultures.

This isolation is cultivated through stereotypical treatment of other ways of life in our media, schools and government. We usually are offered incomplete, ethnocentric information on the few cultures deemed worthwhile for us to study while in school. We certainly don’t learn how U.S.-based multinational corporations end up reaching throughout the world, or anything of their role in the continued domination of those serving “our interests.”

Anything we do learn about other countries usually centers around their contributions to the American way, such as El Salvador’s role in providing our daily dose of caffeine.

The popular media also perpetuate our ignorance of what is really happening in the world. In addition to concentrating mostly on trite garbage like whether or not Sly Stallone is losing his image, the bits of international news reporting we get are often too patchy to comprehend.

A two-inch story about Afghanistan above a three-quarter page ad for a fur sale at Frederick and Nelson’s is a typical example of our priorities.

On the tube, we get a half-hour (minus commercials) of news every night, while we get 14-and-a-half hours of glossy schlock about what it would be like if those evil red bastards took over “America.” And we phase out Captain Kangaroo so our children can watch animated robots destroy each other, inducing the kids to pester us to buy them the “action toys” that go with the shows.

In the White House we have a man who, though I don’t know what TV shows he watches, is continually pestering Congress to buy him more action toys for his personal collection.

Ronnie clearly exemplifies our attitude toward difficult situations. If we divorce ourselves from reality, these little inconveniences will disappear.

“Irangate” has proven a thorn in the administration’s side precisely because the media suddenly have seen too clearly Reagan’s dangerous lack of intellectual capability.

Reagan has succeeded in alienating most of the Western world with his gunboat diplomacy, which he insists is making the world a safer place. Maybe so, but personally I find myself feeling less safe each time we send the 6th Fleet somewhere to reaffirm our military superiority.

Maybe we want someone like Reagan to send us down the garden path. His presidency certainly has provided us with enough diversions to ignore the affects of his policies on the rest of the country and the world.

Occupied by IRAs, MTV, the NFL, VCRs, CDs and fuel injected RX2000, 1.5liter super-turbos, who has time to learn or care about what’s going on in the rest of the world.

Our heritage hails the value of open competition, and it’s just too bad for those who fail to make it. We can trace this attitude back to America’s first white settlers.

People were here already, but at first they would not adapt to our system, for their beliefs were different than our own. When they realized they had to, they could not adapt.

And as we’ve done with every culture we use and discard, we created our own distorted version of our relationship with the native Americans. It certainly wasn’t our fault they didn’t adjust to the proper way of life.

Back when we were colonies and began tiring of Britain’s policy of “taxation without representation,” Thomas Paine noted that the legitimacy of laws depends on the consent of those they govern.

We make the laws now, and the majority of those we govern aren’t consenting. We don’t know this because we don’t ask them and we refuse to look outside Happytown, U.S.A.

We also claim authority over nature. But as she reminds us every so often, this authority too relies on consent, and is best exercised with prudence and consideration of nature’s awesome capability for destruction.

How many rivers must be destroyed and species exterminated before we realize that to destroy the earth is to destroy ourselves?