6-1988

Klipsun Magazine, 1988 - June

Jesse Tinsley
Western Washington University

Follow this and additional works at: https://cedar.wwu.edu/klipsun_magazine
Part of the Higher Education Commons, and the Journalism Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
https://cedar.wwu.edu/klipsun_magazine/97

This Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the Western Student Publications at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in Klipsun Magazine by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact westerncedar@wwu.edu.
Touchtone Titillation

page 9

JUNE 1988
From the Editor

Sex. Drugs. Rock 'n' roll. That is what I told the Klipsun staff to write about for this issue. Although these are not at the top of the list of journalistic news values, I hoped for a different attitude toward Klipsun. And we did it.

Our cover story this issue involves a Western student who takes obscene phone calls as a part-time job. As we were preparing the article for publication, the staff and others who read the article expressed a variety of opinions.

"You're not going to print that, are you?" asked one friend, a woman, who was completely repulsed by the thought of phone sex. I told her we were, and she insisted that we give space in the magazine to those who are against such services.

"Whoa, dude!" was another reaction, obviously from a man who thought the story idea was totally rad. I described to him the feelings of the woman who was repulsed, and the guy said she should loosen up.

"Really? A student does this?" was a more common and less polarized reaction to the story.

Daniel C. Webster, a journalism senior, brought in the story pretty much as it runs in this issue. We also asked him to reconstruct a typical conversation which runs on page 11. We elected to cut off the conversation before some of the more graphic parts, simply because we are sure that readers will be left with little doubt as to what is going on after reading what we have finally decided to print.

We commissioned a cartoon to run in the space which this editor's column now inhabits. The artist is a very talented and creative local artist and he came up with an interesting comment on phone sex. Besides the obviously silly portrayal of a man involved with his telephone receiver and a moral contradiction, it graphically depicted masturbation, which, while it may or not be offensive, is an integral part of sex by phone.

We made an editorial decision, without pressure from adviser or faculty, to not run the cartoon. Although many thought it was funny and others were nauseated, I can only hope it was the right decision. Klipsun has no desire to censor itself or to deny truth, but we did not want to interfere with the readers' enjoyment of the other material in the magazine by offending someone. Fair enough?

To flesh out the drugs and rock 'n' roll theme, we present a trip to the Grateful Dead concert in Eugene, Ore. The writer is more than a little biased because she is a fan, but then, in these days of tie-dye and neo-activist attitudes, who isn't?

Our first article in this issue presents the direct quotes from men and women as they discuss each other. Although many things haven't changed in the relations of the sexes, it seems that the modern cult of me-ism is a predominating influence. The disappearance of traditional values of family and stability is a force to be reckoned with in modern relationships.

The picture story starting on page 24 is the culmination of an extended project by Bill Gregersen-Morash, our photo editor. He has become something of an expert on the Skagit Flats and spent many morning and twilight hours hiding in blinds and behind bushes with his camera. We hope that you enjoy the results. We hope to tell many more stories with pictures in future issues.

Writer Mark Watson contributed the story on page 6, which describes an interesting character he met a few months ago. The man is real, but Watson only met him once and wrote the story from the memory of the conversation. He told "Curley" that he was a writer and the man told Watson it would be all right to write about his story. We don't know whether the events which "Curley" talked about actually happened, but we present the story as a faithful retelling of his story.

If you have reached this point in the editor's comments, then I commend you for your RDQ, your reader durability quotient. Because you have proved yourself, grasshopper, I invite comments on the magazine, stipulating only that comments be civil, and that you not physically attack me.

Jesse Tinsley
Editor

Klipsun magazine is printed by the WWU Print Plant and is published twice-quarterly out of College Hall 137, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA 98225, (206) 676-3737. Klipsun is supported by student fees and is distributed free.

On the cover: Alexander Graham Bell never realized what his invention would be used for. Our cover story is about a Western student who sells erotica and advice to the lonely. She tells about reaching out to touch someone on p.9.

Cover Art by Byron Mucke.

Special Thanks to contributors Due Pham, Byron Mucke, Brennan Linsley, Kathy Tucker, Jerry Tegarden and Dale Seachord. Thanks also to the WWU Print Plant staff.

Klipsun is a Lummi Indian word meaning "beautiful sunset."
On the Cover: Aural Sex

One Western student is working her way through school with an unusual part-time job: telephone erotica. She says it's just a service, "like being an Avon lady." ................................................................. page 9

Taking Aim at the Opposite Sex

An informal survey shows that little has changed in the way men and women view each other. ........................................................................................................... page 4

Everyone Dies

A chance encounter with a stranger uncovers the scars of war. A true story................................................................. page 6

Life Behind Bars

A veteran bartender tells aspiring mixologists to think again ................................................................. page 12

Mexico

Spring break in a Mexican coastal town is a slice of life in the Third World................................................................. page 14

Two Moons Over Fort Nelson

A trip to Ft. Nelson, British Columbia, offered a peek into nightlife in logging country. Ducking flying beer bottles can be a useful skill................................................................. page 18

Remembering the Dead

Hippies and yuppies groovin' together. Musical and chemical euphoria create the completely unique experience of the Dead live................................................................. page 21

Skagit Flats

The camera brings us a look at one of Washington's few remaining estuaries................................................................. page 24

Learning to Walk

Explore the principles of perambulating with a sauntering sage ................................................................. page 30

STAFF

Editor Jesse Tinsley  Staff Tim Cappoen  Wendy Staley
Associate Editor Wendy Sawyer John Chandler Alycien Van Droof
Jeremy Meyer Eric C. Evarts Kristi Warren
Photo Editor Bill Gregersen-Morash Theo Gross Mark Watson
Production Editor Pete Walendziewicz Jane Henry Daniel C. Webster
Adviser R.E. Stannard Jr. Herb Reich Rich Royston
Our society has struggled over the decades to achieve equality among the sexes, to break tired stereotypes and achieve a mutual understanding and respect between men and women. Most of us are aware of the progress being made in this direction. Yet a sampling of opinion shows how little things change.

"(Women) are power hungry. (They) probably need a swift kick in the ass to bring them back to reality."

"(Men) aren't home when they tell you to call. (They) have big egos (and) can't admit when they're wrong."

"(Women) have an inability to keep things to themselves."

"(Men) are bigoted. (They) think they are superior over women (and are) poor listeners and egomaniacs."

The preceding comments, taken from an informal survey of Western students, reveal some of the astonishing

**Western men have a sense of humor, some form of intelligence, and are honest.**

-Angie, age 20

and not-so-astonishing opinions men and women have about the opposite sex. Western men and women were asked: "What are the qualities you like in the members of the opposite sex you've encountered while at Western?"; "Their shortcomings?" And then each participant was asked to evaluate the contemporary man or the contemporary woman.

Here are some of the sugary observations Western women had to say about Western men:

"Men at Western generally have a good sense of humor, are at least moderately intelligent, adventurous, aware of world events, and nice looking."

Kathy, age 20, wrote.

"(Western men) have a sense of humor, some form of intelligence, and are honest," Angie said, also 20.

"(Western men) are fun, have an easy-going personality, and a sense of humor," Dawn, 25, insisted.

"(Men) are friendly, polite," Lynne, age 20, wrote.

Reading these responses one might think Western is the breeding ground for would-be comics and Boy Scout leaders. It's nice to know this campus is not the home to grouchy, humorless men.

These glowing assessments of character aside, Western women did notice some imperfections in the men here.

Obnoxious drinking was one gripe Western women repeated.

Western men did not have the same problems with female alcohol consum-

T hey need to realize that women are people, too, not slaves.

-Debra, age 19

-Debra, age 19

and not-so-astonishing opinions men and women have about the opposite sex. Western men and women were asked: "What are the qualities you like in the members of the opposite sex you've encountered while at Western?"; "Their shortcomings?" And then each participant was asked to evaluate the contemporary man or the contemporary woman.

Here are some of the sugary observations Western women had to say about Western men:

"Men at Western generally have a good sense of humor, are at least moderately intelligent, adventurous, aware of world events, and nice looking."

Kathy, age 20, wrote.

"(Western men) have a sense of humor, some form of intelligence, and are honest," Angie said, also 20.

"(Western men) are fun, have an easy-going personality, and a sense of humor," Dawn, 25, insisted.

"(Men) are friendly, polite," Lynne, age 20, wrote.

Reading these responses one might think Western is the breeding ground for would-be comics and Boy Scout leaders. It's nice to know this campus is not the home to grouchy, humorless men.

These glowing assessments of character aside, Western women did notice some imperfections in the men here.

Obnoxious drinking was one gripe Western women repeated.

Western men did not have the same problems with female alcohol consump-

-Debra, age 19

and not-so-astonishing opinions men and women have about the opposite sex. Western men and women were asked: "What are the qualities you like in the members of the opposite sex you've encountered while at Western?"; "Their shortcomings?" And then each participant was asked to evaluate the contemporary man or the contemporary woman.

Here are some of the sugary observations Western women had to say about Western men:

"Men at Western generally have a good sense of humor, are at least moderately intelligent, adventurous, aware of world events, and nice looking."

Kathy, age 20, wrote.

"(Western men) have a sense of humor, some form of intelligence, and are honest," Angie said, also 20.

"(Western men) are fun, have an easy-going personality, and a sense of humor," Dawn, 25, insisted.

"(Men) are friendly, polite," Lynne, age 20, wrote.

Reading these responses one might think Western is the breeding ground for would-be comics and Boy Scout leaders. It's nice to know this campus is not the home to grouchy, humorless men.

These glowing assessments of character aside, Western women did notice some imperfections in the men here.

Obnoxious drinking was one gripe Western women repeated.

Western men did not have the same problems with female alcohol consump-

-Debra, age 19

and not-so-astonishing opinions men and women have about the opposite sex. Western men and women were asked: "What are the qualities you like in the members of the opposite sex you've encountered while at Western?"; "Their shortcomings?" And then each participant was asked to evaluate the contemporary man or the contemporary woman.

Here are some of the sugary observations Western women had to say about Western men:

"Men at Western generally have a good sense of humor, are at least moderately intelligent, adventurous, aware of world events, and nice looking."

Kathy, age 20, wrote.

"(Western men) have a sense of humor, some form of intelligence, and are honest," Angie said, also 20.

"(Western men) are fun, have an easy-going personality, and a sense of humor," Dawn, 25, insisted.

"(Men) are friendly, polite," Lynne, age 20, wrote.

Reading these responses one might think Western is the breeding ground for would-be comics and Boy Scout leaders. It's nice to know this campus is not the home to grouchy, humorless men.

These glowing assessments of character aside, Western women did notice some imperfections in the men here.

Obnoxious drinking was one gripe Western women repeated.

Western men did not have the same problems with female alcohol consump-

-Debra, age 19

and not-so-astonishing opinions men and women have about the opposite sex. Western men and women were asked: "What are the qualities you like in the members of the opposite sex you've encountered while at Western?"; "Their shortcomings?" And then each participant was asked to evaluate the contemporary man or the contemporary woman.

Here are some of the sugary observations Western women had to say about Western men:

"Men at Western generally have a good sense of humor, are at least moderately intelligent, adventurous, aware of world events, and nice looking."

Kathy, age 20, wrote.

"(Western men) have a sense of humor, some form of intelligence, and are honest," Angie said, also 20.

"(Western men) are fun, have an easy-going personality, and a sense of humor," Dawn, 25, insisted.

"(Men) are friendly, polite," Lynne, age 20, wrote.

Reading these responses one might think Western is the breeding ground for would-be comics and Boy Scout leaders. It's nice to know this campus is not the home to grouchy, humorless men.

These glowing assessments of character aside, Western women did notice some imperfections in the men here.

Obnoxious drinking was one gripe Western women repeated.

Western men did not have the same problems with female alcohol consump-

-Debra, age 19
honesty, things like that," Lynne noticed.

Debra, 19, said she believes men are still too involved with themselves. "They need to realize that women are people too, not slaves," she wrote.

It appears there is a lack of communication here, but it wouldn't be the first time in the history of male/female interaction. Situation comedies revolve around this sort of thing.

"I hate always having to guess what (men) are thinking or feeling," complained Kathy. Men feel the same way about women.

It also doesn't appear Western women like the way relationships are handled here.

"(Men) don't ask girls out on dates anymore," Raeann observed. She said she believes men just like to pick-up girls, rather than take them out. Men, Raeann said, like to give girls a line rather than the truth sometimes.

Mary, 21, found a lot of the men to be, in her opinion, materialistic.

"Rather than the traditional goals of finding the 'perfect girl,' settling down and getting married, they want careers, nice cars, lots of women, and then have a family. They're working to gain more status and things rather than fighting for a cause or what they believe in," she wrote.

That comment may be true for some men, (okay, a lot of men), but it is

The answer might lie with the following observation by Mark:

"Ask someone out for an evening and they immediately think you want them, (or) have a crush (on them), etc.," he said.

Rich, 21, offered another reason why students avoid relationships. He said he felt too busy to have a girlfriend because if he couldn't give one hundred percent to a relationship, then he wasn't being fair to either himself or the girl.

Okay, fair enough, and a lot easier to handle than the thought that women

---

**Times have changed, and continue to rapidly do so. Women are caught in this turmoil, trying to find where they, as individuals, belong.**

-Chris, age 22

---

Ask someone out for an evening and they immediately think you want them, (or) have a crush (on them), etc.

-Mark, age 22

also true for quite a few women. Why else would we spend so much time and money in college if we didn't want to get something (okay, a lot of things) in return? It is sad to think most people are not here for the pure joy of learning and experiencing life. This survey, while limited, seems to indicate most are only making the mad rush for possessions.

More to the point, why don't men and women date much on campus? Do tough class schedules keep students from romantic delights, or is there some deeper meaning under the apparent mass aversion to relationships?

The good news is that most women felt men have become more adjusted to the equality of women.

"On the whole, I really like contemporary men. They often exhibit qualities complimentary to those of women and are often supportive and encouraging," Linda, 21, observed.

"Most men are beginning to accept women for what they are, compared to generalizing that they should be housewives," noticed 18-year-old Lisa.

"Contemporary men have become more adjusted to the equality of women," Emalee, 21, noted.

Chris, 22, said he didn't admire the present situation women are in.

"Times have changed, and continue to rapidly do so. Women are caught in this turmoil trying to find where they, as individuals, belong," he said.

Anthony wrote of women: "The future world is theirs - just reach."
EVERYONE DIES

One by one the paratroopers hit the ground and scurried for cover. A few fell where they landed, killed as they attempted to untangle themselves from their chutes. Automatic weapon-fire ripped through the air, catching the members of the Army's 82nd Airborne in a murderous cross-fire.

Curley, one of the first men to land, quickly released himself from his parachute harness and rushed over to the motionless body of the captain. The marker flares strapped to the captain's ankles continued to release plumes of red and brown smoke which had served as a landing point for the rest of the troops.

Editor note: The character "Curley" is real. We cannot ascertain whether these events actually occurred, but the story is faithful to his account.

A second paratrooper, a young private, came running up and helped slide the captain's body into a bag. Before the two men zipped the bag shut, the younger soldier removed the captain's bars from the dead man's uniform and placed them on Curley's shoulders. A veteran of Korea, Curley seemed to be the obvious choice.

"What next, captain?" the private asked.

Almost 20 years have passed since that day in Vietnam. For Curley, not a day has passed without remembering the events of that day. Events, he believes, were caused by an order he gave.

Curley had walked into Jimbo's tavern in Bellingham around 11:30 p.m. An evening of drinking was evident in his walk. He looked to be in his late fifties and moved with difficulty from a past injury. Dressed in a plaid flannel shirt,
frayed jeans and dirty, beat-up cowboy boots, he appeared to have just come from a rodeo. He wore a cheap vinyl cowboy hat sporting a National Rifle Association patch from which

You're looking at a dead man," Curley said. "Though you see me walk, breathe and drink, I died years ago."

three fishing lures dangled.

He bought a beer and walked to the back of the tavern where I played a solitary game of pool.

"How do ya keep from cheatin'?" he asked. "I could never

play myself fairly." His voice was rough but friendly.

He threw a quarter on the table and challenged me to a game. He began pointing out flaws in my shooting form.

"You're shooting from the hip, boy," he said in friendly criticism. "You gotta get down and look at your shot."

Curley was the only name he gave me.

"My name doesn't matter," he said. His voice was hollow and tired.

You're looking at a dead man," Curley said. "Though you see me walk, breathe and drink, I died years ago.

"Ya know, I served in two wars and died more times than a man has the right," he said.

I hadn't asked about his past, but I saw in his eyes the need to tell. He saw my interest and continued with his narrative.

"In Korea, I was in charge of 200 men. We took a hill and
held it for 32 days. We had lost radio contact after the tenth day and on the 32nd we were confronted by six tanks coming up the valley. Ya know, we only had two bazookas," he paused, and his voice grew quieter.

"Paratroopers don't surrender. I can't tell you why. It's not your place to know," he said, as if relating a secret. "We couldn't see the markings on the tanks as they rolled toward us. We could only take out three tanks at most, but we were going to do it. I was just about to give the order to fire when a U.S. Army colonel climbed out of the first tank."

Curley's face quivered slightly as he brought his beer to his lips.

"I live watching both doors," he said, his jaw tightening. He watched the foamy residue slide down the inside of the nearly empty glass. He looked up. "My past is chasing me and it's chasing you. I've lived through things you should never have to. Those wars destroyed my life and many other men who fought in them."

He finished his beer looked at me and shook his head. He wondered if I got the message of his story.

"Unfortunately, blood is the price for peace," he said with resignation. "That is why it will probably happen again."

Curley began speaking of Vietnam and how the pressures of the fighting brought out the worst in men.

"When you know you're going to die, you resort to the basics of survival," he said. "The worst event I can recall was in 'Nam. I gave an order twice while I was there, an order I had no right to give and no choice but to give it."

"I live watching both doors," he said, his jaw tightening. He watched the foamy residue slide down the inside of the nearly empty glass. He looked up. "My past is chasing me and it's chasing you. I've lived through things you should never have to. Those wars destroyed my life and many other men who fought in them."

He finished his beer looked at me and shook his head. He wondered if I got the message of his story.

Curley put his cue stick down. "How can a person live after giving that order?"

"Tears formed in Curley's eyes as he continued. Unlike the tears of young children that run the length of their faces, Curley's just filled the wrinkles under his eyes."

large beer-belly hung over the silver belt buckle holding up his pants. His hands were scarred and a small scab of dried blood lay atop his right wrist. It looked as if it belonged there.

"We were making a jump into a valley alongside a river," he said. "Our captain wore flares on his boots to use as a marker for the rest of the paratroopers to aim at when landing.

He pulled the strings igniting the flares, and jumped. I was the next man out." He leaned forward and said in a low voice, "The captain never hit the ground. Those damn flares made him an easy target. His soul was gone before I landed."

His hands trembled only slightly as he lined up a shot on the table. He methodically cleared the table and sunk the eight ball without giving me a chance to shoot.

"My troops looked at me to take over and give the orders," he said, sitting on the corner of the table.

Tears formed in Curley's eyes as he continued. Unlike the tears of young children that run the length of their face, Curley's just filled the wrinkles under his eyes.

Curley looked up at the private who was awaiting a response. The troops had set up a perimeter and were breaking out equipment to defend themselves from the Viet Cong who had them pinned down.

"Everyone dies!" Curley yelled to his men. "If they're not one of us kill them. Make for the river."

The troops formed a line and began to moving towards the river which flowed about a mile west of their landing sight. The VC resistance was weak and sporadic. Their numbers were few against Curley's men, and their attacks subsided with a few quick rounds of automatic weapons fire here and there. But the enemy was part of the surroundings. Whether the VC disappeared into the thick tropical undergrowth or into a nearby village, Curley's men knew they were surrounded by Viet Cong.

Along the line formed by the troops, the sounds of M-16s firing at will broke the silence as the men made their way through the dense forest. Within minutes, all was quiet again. A number of dead Vietnamese villagers lay on the ground.

"Everyone dies," Curley said. "That's the order I gave my men. That order is what killed me. How can a person live after giving that order?"

"Everyone dies," Curley said. "That's the order I gave my men. That order is what killed me."

Curley put his cue stick down. "How can a person live after giving that order?" he asked.

"Our orders were to secure the river bank so we could send supply boats up the river. We were in a cross fire. I had no choice but to tell my troops to kill everyone they saw. Two days after securing the section of river, one of my men killed a villager who was walking down to the river for a bucket of water. He was one of thousands in 'Nam who had no right to die."

Curley sat with his head hung down, his face shadowed by his hat. The two of us fell silent, listening to the jukebox, the sound of video games and the laughter of customers near the bar. Curley hadn't laughed in years. Dead men don't laugh.
By Daniel C. Webster

“Are you lonesome tonight?”
-Elvis Presley

Saturday night. Tracy Allen, a Western student, slipped into a red lace negligee and turned off the lights. She struck a match to light several candles, one of which she carried to the bed. Then she lit a cigarette and slid into a comfortable leather chair, where she awaited an evening of seduction.

The room was filled with the scent of cherry incense and the sounds of soft, pulsating music. Tracy was ready for work.

The seductive silence was broken by a piercing ring of the phone.

“I want to turn you on and make you feel sexy.”

A recording, requesting the caller to key in his Mastercard number, could be heard from a two-way speaker attached to the phone.

“Please use your touch-tone phone to enter your card number now. You have reached Numbers, an adult telephone service. Please remain on the line, and one of our representatives will be with you soon.”

Allen paused briefly, took a breath and waited for the recording to conclude. She then began to speak.

“I’ve been waiting for you to call, and I’ve thought about you for a long time,” Allen said in a soft, breathy voice. “I want to turn you on and make you feel sexy. Relax, and let me make love to you like no one else can.”

Allen continued to speak as she lit another cigarette and leaned back into her chair. At times, the conversation was graphic, but she always sounded sincere. The conversation soon came to its conclusion.

As she awaited the next call, she

Author’s note: Two sources in this story, “David” and “Ross,” have requested pseudonyms be used in place of their real names.
looked around the walls of the dimly lit room.

"These guys call me, and they want the conversation to be graphic, seductive and hot," Allen said. "That's what I'm in business to give them."

But Allen said she receives phone calls from all types of people, most just want a little excitement. Allen said she enjoys making her customers feel good.

Allen, 25, works out of her home as a representative of a national telephone service that provides telephone erotica to callers.

The calls are automatically forwarded to her home after customers dial a central computer.

"It's kind of like being an Avon lady. I just sell erotica instead of lipstick," Allen said. "To me, it's just an interesting way to put myself through school."

Allen became involved with telephone erotica when she was a senior in high school.

"I was raised in a home where people didn't do things like this. Mom and Dad always thought of me as a nice church-going type. I still am," Allen said.

Allen has told her mother what she does for a living, and her mother

---

I call Tracy mainly because I get kind of lonely, and I want to talk to a woman. Sometimes she gets me hot, but usually we just talk.

- "Ross"

---

Some think I'm a tramp. Others would like a free demonstration.

- Allen

---

We have girls all over America who want YOUR phone number.

24 HOURS

MC/Visa/Amerex
seemed to accept it, but Allen does not like to tell others what she does.

"I've gotten mixed reviews, especially from the men I date," Allen said. "Some think I'm a tramp. Others would like a free demonstration."

One of Allen's customers, "Ross," said he calls Allen about three times a week, usually late on Friday night. Ross is 23 and a student at Western.

"I call Tracy mainly because I get kind of lonely, and I want to talk to a woman," Ross said. "Sometimes she gets me hot, but usually we just talk."

Ross said he doesn't want anyone to know he calls Allen because he is afraid of what people will think.

"If people knew I called places like Numbers, they would think I'm scum love my wife, and I would never want to hurt her or to be unfaithful. But one person cannot meet all my needs. It's better to call Numbers than to cheat on my wife."

The average phone call to Numbers lasts approximately half an hour and usually costs about $20. The call may last longer, but the representative will discretely remind the caller of the additional charges during the conversation.

Allen leaned back in her chair and lit another cigarette. The phone rang again, and the small speaker played the pre-recorded message. After a brief pause and sip of Coke, she seductively spoke to the caller through the two-way speakerphone.

At the end of the conversation, she bid her caller farewell.

"It was a pleasure to talk with you, sexy thing," Allen said in an endearing tone. "Call me again, stud. I'm here anytime you want a sexy voice."

I love my wife, and I would never want to hurt her or to be unfaithful. But one person cannot meet all my needs. It's better to call Numbers than to cheat on my wife.

"David"

because they don't understand why I do it," Ross said.

Allen said most people who call her just want someone to talk to and are not interested in highly erotic conversation.

"I try my best to give my customers what they want," Allen said. "Tastes and needs vary. I once talked to a guy who was into black leather. But I've talked to others who just want to know what makes a woman happy, or what to do when their wives roll over and go to sleep."

Another of Allen's customers, "David," is married and has three children. David said he is happy in his marriage, but uses Numbers because he likes the excitement he gets from talking to Allen.

"Tracy gives me a young feeling that my wife cannot give," David said.

"I think using the service has improved my relationship with my wife, because I enjoy sex more. I can have fun and try something different."

David said he has not told his wife about his calls to Numbers, because he does not think she would understand.

"I love my wife, and I would never want to hurt her or to be unfaithful. But one person cannot meet all my needs," David said. "It's better to call Numbers than to cheat on my wife."

The average phone call to Numbers lasts approximately half an hour and usually costs about $20. The call may last longer, but the representative will discretely remind the caller of the additional charges during the conversation.

Allen leaned back in her chair and lit another cigarette. The phone rang again, and the small speaker played the pre-recorded message. After a brief pause and sip of Coke, she seductively spoke to the caller through the two-way speakerphone.

At the end of the conversation, she bid her caller farewell.

"It was a pleasure to talk with you, sexy thing," Allen said in an endearing tone. "Call me again, stud. I'm here anytime you want a sexy voice."

I love my wife, and I would never want to hurt her or to be unfaithful. But one person cannot meet all my needs. It's better to call Numbers than to cheat on my wife.

"David"

Note: The conversation below is a composite of the many to which the writer listened while researching this article. The exchange is typical of many calls.

Computer-generated voice:
Please use your touch-tone phone to enter your card number now.
You have reached Numbers, an adult telephone service. Please remain on the line and one of our representatives will be with you soon.

Tracy: Hi, there. My name is Tracy. I'm here and ready to go. I just slipped into a little red lace nightgown, and I'm ready to have fun. What would you like to do?

Caller: I want to feel your body all over, to stroke you and caress you with my hot trembling hands. Oh, to hold you in my arms, as if to never let you go.

Tracy: Oh, come on stud, put your hot flesh on top of mine. I can feel your throbbing muscles. Rub me up and down, as your hot sweat pours into my thirsty body.

Caller: My muscles are pounding, and my heart is racing with passion. Oh, man, my cock is starting to get hard, and my nipples are solid.

Tracy: Come on, boy! Oh, you taste good!

Caller: Come on, baby, suck that...
Life Behind Bars

By Don Grandstrom

I have wondered on many occasions why apparently sane, life-loving people have said to me, “Gee, I'd sure like to give bartending a try.” A noble wish, I always think, but it would be safer to try snake handling, go skydiving without a chute, live in a suspected “crack house” or have your most recent sex partner give you that I-have-something-to-tell-you look.

Please don’t misunderstand me, there is an upside. My many years of holding forth behind the bar have at times been exciting and rewarding. When the scene is good, it’s really good — lots of action, fun people, contacts galore and wild stories. Insider trading? Holy shit! I’ve witnessed things kings and queens have never seen. A real trip.

Let’s go back in time, to those days that once fascinated the hell out of me. This particular spring day was the kind that would draw a "normal" person to the beach. Nary a cloud blotted the crystal-clear azure sky. The air was warm, yet still had the crispness remaining from the final frost two weeks before. Yes, life was good.

And where was I? I was confined to a windowless bunker behind the bar, waiting for a horde of parched, glassy-eyed, underworked and overpaid nitwits to “make my day.”

Glancing about the room, I determined everything to be in place. The candles were glowing atop carefully arranged tables, and music drifted from the discreetly hidden speakers in the four corners of the soon-to-be-filled “holding pen.”

I had taken three, maybe four steps, when a voice from behind me belled, “Hey, asshole, what’s been keeping ya?”

I was feeling pretty good. The past week hadn’t produced an excessive amount of trauma. My bills were paid, the car had a tankful of gas, and I had three C-notes stashed should the need to kick out the jams rise up and slap me in the face. Weekend fever.

Sauntering to the front door, no one was waiting to get in. A good sign, but it was just the calm before the storm. One click and the door was unlocked. Showtime! I turned and began a retreat to where my duties would hold me captive for the next nine hours.

I had taken three, maybe four steps, when a voice from behind me bellowed, “Hey, asshole, what’s been keepin’ ya?”

The slurred words ripped into my good mood like several rounds from a 9mm Browning high-power semiautomatic pistol.

I felt a flush of anger and disappointment at having my serenity disrupted by the bozo who was now following me. No sooner had I made it to my station behind the polished oak bar when “Bob” (not his real name) blurted his second and, unbeknownst to him or me, next-to-last utterance in my presence.

“You don’t look like a bartender,” he cackled as he landed on a barstool. “You look like my wife!” It must have been hysterical because Bob laughed loudly and threw a wad of bills on the bar and
Bill Gregersen-Morash

Although Don Grandstrom is enjoying college life, he still feels at home on either side of the "plank."

screamed, "Gimmee a double J.D.-rocks, and I don't mean yesterday!"

Well, good ol' Bob got his double all right, but not quite in the form he ex­pected. No one else had come in yet and we were still alone. So, confident no harm would be done, I recognized quick action must be taken to prevent this person from making my life hell for this shift. I im­agined my ruby-red, laser-beam stare pierced Bob's forehead, and I envisioned his entire skull beginning to melt. (I've got to learn that trick)

Grabbing his money in one hand and his shirt collar in the other with fluid grace born of experience, I escorted the intruder to the entrance, gliding carefully between the chairs and tables.

"What? Hey! What the hell ya think yer doin'?!" These were the last words I heard from "Bob" as his butt bounced off the concrete.

Satisfied, I turned, heading back to the bar. Again, words from behind.

"What's with the guy hugging the sidewalk out there," asked a friendly voice.

"Oh, just another satisfied customer," I replied. Just another night of life behind the "plank."

A bartender's lot is a mixed bag of life's nuances, however pleasant or cruel. Imagine "Bob" multiplied hundreds, maybe thousands, of times before considering a career behind the bar. And remember: gender differentiation is not required. The "Bobettes" will be there, too.

People who come into your bar expect service unavailable even at home.

"Get me...!"

"Turn it up!"

"Turn it down!"

Cigarette ashes miss ashtrays already stolen.

Vicious attacks on waitpeople.

And my favorite: "Put some god-damned booze in it this time!"

Common actions by common men and women.

Customers capable of raising blood pressure, causing instant rashes to appear without warning and pushing the seasoned mixologist to the "limit," probably are not singling you out for individual ir­ritation sessions. No, they are simply being who and what they are. Recogniz­ing attitudes and dealing with them in a civil manner is a skill that can take years to perfect.

Why do it? Why have a job capable of producing instant ulcers? The answer is quite simple. Bartending is an adventure.

Every shift is different. The people, the mood, the sights and sounds...a kaleidoscopic swirl, a maelstrom of human decadence. The rollercoaster can pull the unsuspecting to euphoric heights, and before you can say, "Gimme 16 Cuervo shooters and a ham sandwich," drop the entire lot into a bottomless pit of hissing, writhing, formless flesh.

A bartender in it for the long haul (18 years did it for me) needs thick skin, quick mental and physical reflexes, com­passion, common sense, intuitiveness and an overwhelming desire to surround him or herself with a crowd of miserable, whining, corrupt and know-it-all drunks everynight. While you remain sober.

Life behind bars. I survived the many years. The next time you think you'd like to try it, think again. You might not make it. The song says, Don't do the crime, if you can't do the time."
Surrounded by stores, restaurants and an open market, the plaza of San Blas, Mexico, is the center of town activity. In the evenings, roaming mariachi bands played in the plaza while people sang along and children ran and played. In the plaza, families chatted with friends; kids played and teenagers flirted and mingled.
A little boy sitting next to us was playing his kazoo loudly. A young British woman found the song annoying and said so. This had little affect. The boy kept piping away with songs like "Here Comes the Bride."

The small town of San Blas is on the Pacific coast of Mexico, about 200 miles south of Mazatlan. Spring break had brought us from Bellingham to this Mexican coastal city of 10,000. Traveling nonstop, we hadn't seen much except the inside of the train since we left the seedy border town of Nogales, Arizona. The atmosphere of San Blas was a pleasant surprise.

The architecture of San Blas consisted of buildings of crumbling cinderblock, which were under continuous repair. A typical structure has two or three rooms with no running water or electricity. The people are poor. By Mexican standards, however, San Blas is not as desperate as many other small towns in this third world nation.

The people of San Blas make their living from tourists and from a small fishing industry. Only a few dozen Americans, who were seeking a quieter atmosphere than Mazatlan or Puerto Vallarta, found their way to this relatively untouched beach community during spring break.
Grocery store, San Blas, Mexico.

Morning in the open market, San Blas, Mexico.
While we were eating at a local restaurant, three children approached us and demanded money. The smallest boy, whose hair was matted with dirt, had his hand out.

“Dinero!” he demanded. When we did not give him any money, he pointed to the clay necklaces which I had just bought. He could have resold them in the plaza for a few pesos. His eyes seemed to stare blankly as if we were not there. Empty handed, the three moved on.

These were the only beggars we met in San Bias. Many children there are street vendors. Children, it seemed, were the most industrious citizens of San Blas.

One 12-year-old boy who sold hammocks, bolsa bags and wooden fish approached us several times, pestering us to buy his wares. He knew we would be foolish enough to buy four bolsa bags, five fish, and several hammocks.

The four-hour siesta is a break during the hottest time of the day. It is a chance to relax in the shade or go to the beach. During siesta time, the waves were dotted with kids on surfboards. Families played soccer on the beach while others frolicked in the surf. Older people sat in the shade around the square and watched other people.

As we sat on the cramped train heading back to Bellingham, I thought about San Blas. Although I remember swimming in the ocean and walking around the town, the lasting memories will be of the people.
There's a race of men that don't fit in,
   A race that can't stay still;
So they break the hearts of kith and kin,
   And they roam the world at will.
They range the field and they rove the flood,
   And they climb the mountain's crest;
Their is the curse of the gypsy blood,
   And they don't know how to rest.

from "The Men That Don't Fit In"
by Robert Service
Jim pulled off the Al-Can Highway at Dawson Creek, British Columbia, just as the sun broke over the horizon. My stomach hadn’t forgiven me for that powdered-milk milkshake. I naively ordered it at a dumpy roadside drive-in in Fort St. John, too many torturous hours and several hundreds of miles of ill-paved roads before.

I held off the inevitable reckoning with my abused spine with residual adrenaline; I was on the way to northern B.C. with a country-rock road band, and I was excited about seeing new territory.

The only place we could find breakfast was at a huge, brick, barn-like hotel across the street from three rows of gigantic grain elevators. The four of us tumbled out of the van and walked stiff-legged through the lobby and into the restaurant hoping for a good meal and decent coffee.

The building looked as if it had been built in the 1890s during some boom-town days only it remembered. Two grizzled, bleary-eyed customers sat in one corner nursing hangovers with tomato juice and Labatt’s. From the look of them, their hangovers could have been nearly as old as the building.

We found a table we hoped would prove to be upwind of the pair and ordered four “Stockmen’s breakfasts.”

When the bored, blonde waitress brought the breakfasts, I remembered what I’d sworn, somewhere in Nebraska or Kansas the previous year, never to do again. Never order eggs any way but scrambled when you’re on the road in prairie country. Pale-yellow yolks take the spirit out of any breakfast plate. Add bland toast, greasy hash browns and weak coffee to a stomach already churning from other towns and other cups of bad coffee, and you get a combination whose only saving grace is that the burning indigestion makes falling asleep at the wheel nearly impossible.

When we left about an hour later, it was my turn to take the wheel. Jim, the singer, rhythm guitarist, leader and general guru of the band, found a spot in the back, nestled between amps, speaker columns and microphone stands, padded it with an unrolled sleeping bag, and seemed to disappear into sleep before I found my way back to the highway. We had to play the first night of a two-week gig less than 40 hours later, at the Zodiac Cabaret, in Fort Nelson, B.C., nearly 1,000 miles up the Al-Can.

I had only hired on for this date because their regular lead guitarist had fallen ill three days before they had to leave. I was no stranger to road work, and I wanted to try playing in Canada because other musicians had told me that the work was steady and the money was good, even counting the 25-percent exchange rate and 15-percent agent’s fee.

The farther north we went, the worse the road surface became. Four hours into my shift we stopped at a gas station to fill the tank and empty our bladders. Jim got into an argument with the attendant over exchange rates between our American money and their prices. We wound up paying nearly two dollars a gallon and headed north again, cursing everything and everyone beyond the cramped confines of the aging Ford Econoline van.

My shift was about over when I took a right-hand corner too close to the shoulder. The right wheels caught soft mud where I thought there ought to still be good road and we were suddenly off the road, headed toward a stump at 40 mph. I fought the instinct to hit the brake, stomped on the accelerator and cut the wheel back toward the road. I don’t know why we made it without dropping a speaker on Jim’s head, or smashing the van head-on into the stump, but when I finally got us back on the road and stopped to check for damage, nothing showed but some fresh mud behind each tire and far too much of the blood-shot whites of four pairs of eyes.

We made it to Fort Nelson without any more trouble, set up the equipment and checked out the upstairs rooms the club had for road bands. We talked to the manager about the club and the crowd to see if we could get a feel for the place before we started our first set the next night.

Despite warnings from the club’s manager about fist fights, the first week of the gig came off smoothly. I hadn’t seen anybody exchange anything heavier than words in more than 30 hours on the bandstand. We learned about each other’s strengths and weaknesses while we played for a crowd of mill workers, Indians and a few of the local hookers. The locals told us that early September was the mellow season for Fort Nelson. The ground was still thawed out from summer, so the loggers hadn’t come back to town, and the mills had run out of logs to process in the middle of August, and had shut down.

I’d heard the stories about a fight across the highway, in a club next door to the Hudson Bay Company store, during one of our sets the third night we were in town. According to the day-shift bartender at the Zodiac, one guy had lost an eye to a stranger with a broken beer bottle.

Another night, between sets, I’d had to talk my beard out of the grasp of a drunk Indian who looked like he could have played the heavy in any one of the James Bond movies, but I’d played tougher towns on the Olympic Peninsula. At least this club didn’t have chicken wire stretched across the stage to protect the band from the flying glasses and beer bottles of rustic critics.

The second night of the second week, Jim told me he had a feeling something was about to happen. If we were going to see a fight, he thought it would come soon.

The second night of the second week, Jim told me he had a feeling something was about to happen. If we were going to see a fight, he thought it would come soon. Jim was a battle-scared, 42-year-old Texan country singer, a veteran of miles of back roads and beer bars. His campaigns had led him through most of the U.S. and up and down the highways of Canada. He and I had hit it off because I, at 33, was a little more than halfway between his age and the drummer and bass player. I didn’t understand why he was working with the pair until one day he told me that up north, musicianship meant less than stamina.

At 20 and 21, they had enough energy to play five hours a night, drive all day to take a couple of local girls 250 miles further up the road to the hot springs, get back to the club 15 minutes before the first set, play until 2 a.m., party until 5 a.m. and survive on four hours of sleep a night.

The manager told us to stretch whatever song we were playing, if and when a fight started, until the fight was over or the Mounties arrived.

The second night of the second week, Jim told me he had a feeling something was about to happen. If we were going to see a fight, he thought it would come soon.
"If you don't quit playing, they'll leave the band alone," he'd said.

During the first break that night, Jim came up to me at the bar and said that he could almost smell the tension in the crowd. Whatever happened, he told me, when they start fighting, play a solo until it's over.

"Duck anything that comes at you and use that Gibson as a club only if you have to, because we can't afford to buy you another guitar up here," he said.

Halfway through the next set, in the middle of a rockin' version of "Honky-tonk Angels," the back door of the club slammed open and a dozen guys boiled through it. Jim looked at me as if to say, "Here it comes," and finished the tune. We held a quick conference, out of range of the microphones, and decided to play Jerry Lee Lewis' "Great Balls of Fire" for our next song.

By the end of the first verse the lines of battle had begun to form. The intruders had shoved several tables together next to the dance floor and were loudly insulting everyone: the dancers, the barmmaids, the band and anyone else they could think of.

Halfway through the second verse someone hit someone else and, without any apparent signal, two dozen people were rolling around on the dance floor, crashing over railings and smashing fists into whoever they could reach.

Jim shouted, "Take it!" over the microphone, and I went into, if not the best, at least the most exciting guitar solo of my career.

From my vantage, nine feet above the dance floor -- three feet of stage riser and six feet-plus of semi-scared guitarist -- the melee looked like a school of piranha in a feeding frenzy from an old Tarzan movie.

I tried to play a generic rock-n-roll solo, but by the second chorus. I'd begun watching the fighters and had picked out what I thought was the fight between the ringleaders of the two factions.

I stepped around the microphone stand to the edge of the stage and began playing my lead-licks to match the fight. When one guy was on top I'd play mostly block chords and heavily hammered single notes, and when the other guy got the upper hand, I would play whining slurs on one string at a time. That solo was simple application of inventor Buckminster Fuller's advice, "Don't fight forces; use them."

The fight lasted five or six choruses, about three minutes, before it began to slow down and finally stopped.

We ended the song and went into a slow tune while the by-standers and the barmmaids tried to put the furniture, what was still whole, back into order. By the end of that set five Mounties showed up to arrest anyone they could. Most of the fighters had left by then, and the rest of the night was passably calm.

We finished the last set, and I went up to the bartender and asked if anyone had been badly hurt. He laughed and said that this fight had been pretty easygoing. I found out the next day that two people had needed stitches and one had a broken nose.

"At least the loggers are all out of town and nobody went out to their truck for a chainsaw," he said calmly. He was serious.

The rest of the gig was anti-climactic. We finished the next Saturday night, packed up the van and cleaned out the upstairs rooms on Sunday morning. When we settled accounts with the manager, he had charged us premium prices for all our drinks over the past two weeks, and we were each short by about $50.

We'd had our fill of Fort Nelson and knew that arguing would get us nowhere. We took the money, made one last check of the stage for any missed gear and piled back into the van for the trip home.

The road south from Fort Nelson climbs for a few miles before you hit the crest of a hill. It's muddy or dusty all year-round, and from the top I could see the whole of the town stretched out below.

As we neared the top, I asked Jim to pull over and stop. He looked at me and asked me if I was thinking what he was thinking. I laughed and told him he'd have to stop and see.

He pulled over, but not too near the shoulder, and we both climbed down from the front seats. Without saying anything we walked to the back of the van and looked at the dust and dirt covering the back doors. Somebody had written "Fuck the U.S." in the dust. We rubbed off the sign and looked at each other.

Jim pulled out his red bandana to wipe the dirt off his fingers, sighed and asked me, "Did you like that town?"

I watched him wiping his hands and then wiped the dirt from my own fingers on the seat of my jeans. "No, not much," I replied.

Without turning around to face Fort Nelson, we both dropped our pants, bent over and spread our cheeks in one last salute before we climbed aboard and headed south.
he Dead is alive, and today is wonderful, I thought, when I heard the Grateful Dead is due to arrive in Seattle this August.

My memory took me back to the last Dead concert I had attended. July of 1987 was the reunion of the "Summer of Love." At the other end of the continent, even Gary Hart was allegedly getting into the spirit of it with Donna Rice.

The nation was becoming restless; the Iran-Contra hearings were dragging on, Lt. Col. Oliver North was rising to the rank of national hero, the U.S. was reflagging ships in the Persian Gulf and the P.T.L. club was slowly crumbling.

The Grateful Dead had just released "In the Dark," its first studio album since the 1980 release "Go to Heaven," and the band's first official release since its live double albums "Dead Set" and "Dead Reckoning" in 1981. Mindful of our nation's blunders, we were ready for a change and this was it: the Dead was going on tour with Bob Dylan, set to play July 19 in Eugene, Oregon.

Living in Seattle, I was glad to hear the Dead would make a stop reasonably close by. I would not have to make a cross-country trek to see this outdoor phenomena. Having enjoyed many Dead concerts since my initiation in 1981, this was one I definitely didn't want to miss.

The day before the concert, my friend and I loaded our car in the drizzly Seattle weather. Our hopes that this "rain or shine" concert would be played under sunny skies began to dampen.

On Interstate 5, we saw a variety of Dead-bound cars: Volkswagens and old school buses. They burped smoke from their exhaust pipes and crude signs proclaimed "Dead or Bust."

We spent the night outside of Vancouver, Washington, and awoke to a morning that was still, gray and silent. The sun we had hoped for did not brighten the horizon. Only the brightness from the headlights of oncoming cars greeted us as we drove toward Oregon State University's stadium, the Deadhead shrine-for-a-day.

Eugene welcomed us as we pulled into a muddy parking lot. Boards had been laid over puddles created by Oregon rains the night before. We began looking for familiar faces.

Even as everyone's hope of sunshine began to fade, the sun peeped out from behind the clouds. Somewhere a dog barked,
a child cried and heads peered out from makeshift sleeping quarters. Tents and lean-tos made with tarps tied between cars provided shelter for the people who had arrived the night before.

This was it. The pre-concert excitement was in the air. Slowly the makeshift campsite came alive as people woke and put on tie-dyed shirts, Levis, paisley prints, and other requisite

Others sold the less than legal items that always accompany a Grateful Dead concert: Marijuana, LSD and mushrooms among the most popular.

Dead garb. Bare-breasts and bare bottoms were everywhere in this communal dressing room.

Roaming entrepreneurs walked by the shelters selling essential drug paraphernalia such as bongs, pipes and roach clips. Hats, homemade Dead shirts and all types of food from sprouts to "magic" cookies were included in their wares. Others sold the less than legal items that always accompany Grateful Dead concerts: marijuana, LSD, and mushrooms among the most popular.

The welcomed sun was hot on our backs as we waited in the seemingly endless line of Deadheads.

The oval stadium was uncovered, with rows of bleachers. Speakers framed the stage set up on the University of Oregon's football field. Plastic draped over the stage was a precaution against another downpour.

Inside, we found friends and a place to sit on the right side of the stage near the field's 40-yard line. Some people rested on blankets, some kicked a hacky-sack, and others reminisced with friends they hadn't seen since the last Dead concert. It was like a reunion of sorts; the wide variety of people, both young and old, gathered in one place to share one experience.

The Dead, unlike most groups, usually play a two-set show which lasts about four hours. The band usually plays whatever fits the mood, usually creating new versions of classic studio recordings strung together in a sort of free-form jam session. Dead concerts are quite unpredictable, as the band rarely, if ever, repeats itself.

The Dead do little in the way of self promotion. The band members don't wear stage clothes, and they don't do much on stage besides stand and play. Even so, something draws the crowds. Pondering my special attraction to the Dead, I realized what draws me back year after year. It's not just the music or the performance or the atmosphere, but a combination.
me back year after year. It's not just the music or the per-
formance or the atmosphere, but a combination.

The music demands active, cooperative listeners, and when
the Dead began to play, fans didn't let the band down. People
were dancing and feeling the music. No one in the "focused"
crowd mobbed the stage, a typical sight at many concerts.

The Dead played three sets, one of these as a backup band
to Bob Dylan, who sang with a nasal exuberance that some-
times reduced melodies to two notes.

The Dead grooved to its most recent hit, "Touch of Gray,"
and old songs such as "Alabama Getaway" and "Friend of the
Devil." The Dead joined Dylan in the classic "Rainy Day Women
#12 & 35." As the music drifted from the stage, the crowd be-
gan to sing louder. Among the Deadheads, I noticed more
people "lighting up" to this song than some of the others.

The crowd portrayed many differences in life experience,
but similarities in political affiliation became apparent during
one of the intermissions. An airplane wrote the word
"Reagan" across the sky and the crowd booed. The audience
later realized this was not a show of support for the president,
and it cheered.

Happening upon such an event by accident, one might
think it was a lost battalion of hippies. Those preppie types
who corresponded with the few BMWs in the parking lot, were
scattered among others who looked like stereotypical "flower
children." Also shuffling through the crowd were "bikers,"
sporting saddlebags over their shoulders and long greasy
manes which made one wonder if they weren't in the middle of
a hot oil treatment. Completing the biker look were black
riding boots and tattoos usually covering some part of the
body.

The crowd also contained people of no particular descrip-
tion. Those dressed in T-shirts and Levi's grooved with the rest
of the audience.

An older man swayed to the music in front of us. He wore
an old straw hat with a black band around it, baggy black
pants, a black and white striped shirt and black suspenders.

The hair under his hat, pulled back in a ponytail and reaching
nearly to his bottom, was streaked with grey. Sporting a long,
white beard, the man's arms encircled a young boy, probably
his grandchild.

People danced and sang along with the band, and when the
Dead stopped, the crowd simply sat down and talked with
people around them or just walked around until the Dead be-
gan to play again. When the band started up again, the crowd
rose and continued as if nothing had been disturbed. Casual
intermissions were expected and accepted as part of the Dead
experience.

The concert ended with a Dead and Dylan finale. As I
walked out, I noticed the jets of water, set up on runways for
people to cool themselves, were still spraying. As the water hit
me, I was overcome by a relaxed feeling that radiated from the
crowd. Here was a multitude not gathered for war or violence.
They were here simply for the transcending experience of the
Dead live.
Evening on the flats, looking west toward Ika Island.
Skagit Flats

A walk through the wetlands

Where the Skagit River meets Puget Sound lies one of Washington's few remaining estuaries. This wetland, hidden and relatively free from human intrusion survives as an example of what was once common throughout the Sound.

Estuaries have long been important to mankind, providing ideal locations for towns and cities. Few wetlands in Washington have survived the impact of urbanization.

The Skagit Flats hang on by virtue of the distance from large population centers. The quiet wildness of the Skagit grows in its uniqueness each passing year as more wetlands disappear under the pressure of man.

Story and photos by Bill Gregersen-Morash
Using the surrounding islands as nesting sights, bald eagles search the flats for food.

Estuaries are characterized by constantly changing mixtures of fresh and salt water. The forces of the tide and the drainage of land waters deposit the sediments that form the mudflats and salt marshes. These huge expanses of land become vital feeding and breeding grounds for thousands of birds.

Snow geese by the thousands use the flats as a feeding ground during their long migration.

Dikes that protect surrounding farmland from flood waters also serve to isolate the flats from the human population.
An immature bald eagle rests on a favorite perch on Craft Island, overlooking the flats.

A harrier hawk, common to the flats, skims over the grassy salt marsh hunting small birds and rodents.

Bones and feathers litter the flats as a reminder of the constant struggle for survival between predator and prey.
The daily changing of the tide carves out an intricate network of channels that spread throughout the grassy marsh.
Duck hunting season sometimes degenerates into open season on anything that flies. This great blue heron made an easy target.

The most powerful force on the flats is the tide. Unrelenting, it reshapes the landscape constantly.
Walking may be considered a hobby by some. Like any other hobby, it can easily grow beyond the definitions of pure leisure and entertainment to a potential for metaphysical discovery. With this in mind, I stroll into my twisted tale and added sputterings.

On the first sunny spring Saturday available, my companions and I set forth along Marine Park's beach in Fairhaven hoping to forget life's trivial tasks and do nothing but a little meaningful nature gazing.

On this particular day, the tide and its governing moon had been kind to our curiosity. Available for observation were the diverse creatures and geological formations of Bellingham's section.
of Puget Sound, usually sheltered beneath its cool waters.

As we stumbled over barnacle-covered rocks, seaweed patches and clam shells, we came upon a bizarre creature lying in the sandy bottom of a small tidal pool. This orange-tinted creature was about a foot in diameter and resembled a cross between an octopus and a starfish. It was brightest at its rounded center that served as a base from which about 20 tentacles jutted from its spiny, sea-dwelling body.

In short, it looked very much like a sun, and indeed one member of the group proclaimed, with great confidence, that this was a creature related to the starfish, called a "sunburst." The others, myself included, were skeptical.

Thoreau says he has only met but one or two persons in the course of life who understood the art of walking.

Desiring to add a little excitement to our walk, members of the group offered wild, xenophobic speculation as to what this foreign sea animal (obviously not a "sunburst") might be.

One woman believed this creature to be an extraterrestrial, visiting the earth to observe the habits of humans. With this realization in mind, we all became somewhat paranoid.

Paranoia continued when another member of our group insisted it was a highly dangerous and rare sea creature; one bite from its menacing jaws, would surely bring sudden death. One other nature-gazer offered a more scientific explanation: this was obviously the missing link in the chain of human evolution, a long lost Darwinian ancestor from somewhere between the primordial slime and the development of the opposing thumb.

It was our duty, insisted our novice geneticist, to notify Bellingham's top scientists immediately. None of us really believed any of these lofty explanations, of course, but it was fun to think about. Certainly an active imagination and the art of walking go hand in hand.

Walking is an art which everyone, if physically able, can participate in. I am proud and grateful for my ability to walk, for it is an art I feel I can master. Walking, beyond biped motor activity, means taking the time to observe our society, discover the laws of nature, and to reflect and philosophize about mankind's most burning questions: Why is there evil on the earth? Is there a god? Is there life after death? What is Michael Jackson? How did lawn gnomes and the sport of curling come about? All these mysteries seemingly could be solved by walking in our great outdoors. We need only take the time to look around.

Afterall, Charles Darwin did not perceive the theory of natural selection from within the confines of Darwin family mansion in England. Rather, he ventured to far off places, such as the Galapagos Islands, and studied nature by taking long walks, gathering plant and animal life. In 1859, after many years of observance, he published his renowned work "The Origin of the Species."

And while I certainly do not profess to hold the genius or inclination of Darwin, it is exciting to realize I too could discover some important notion, simply by observing nature, and participating in the art of walking.

Science benefited from Darwin's strolls, but many other realms of human endeavor have profited from walking as well. The romantic poet William Wordsworth thought nature was a prime source of study and discovery.

When a traveler asked Wordsworth's servant to show him her master's study, she answered, "Here is his library, but his study is out of doors."

Henry David Thoreau, the celebrated American naturalist and writer in the 19th century, was well aware of the virtues of walking, not as a means of exercise, but in order "to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society."

In agreement with Thoreau, I welcome a walk as an excellent way to enjoy nature, to become part of it, and to forget my obligations to society. In doing so, I might be free to discover the realities of life, or at least to guess what I think might be the realities of life.

In his natural history essay, "Walking," Thoreau says he has only met "but one or two persons in the course of life who understood the art of walking, that is, of taking walks."

According to Thoreau's "Walking," sauntering may derive its meaning from sans terre, meaning without land or a home, which in the positive sense, he says, means having no particular home, but being equally at home everywhere. This ability to be at home in nature, Thoreau says, is the secret to successful sauntering.

To these ideas about walking, Thoreau adds, "If you are ready to leave father and mother, and brother and sister, and if you have paid your debts, and made your will, and settled all your affairs, and are a free man, then you are ready for a walk."

But in today's society, this may take a little imagination, a quality I hold as the most important aspect of the walk. Certainly Thoreau would not regard a walk around Bellingham's massive industry, Georgia Pacific, as a way to commune with nature. As I passed by G.P.'s billowing smoke stacks and steel structures, I began to imagine I lived in a cold, dehumanized Orwellian, Brave New World-like universe, and I was the only human element in a totalitarian and machine-driven world.

With the ominous night sky above and the droning and clanking machinery around me, I became rather lonely and frightened. Undoubtedly, my thoughts weren't pleasant, but they were born from the art of walking (in accordance with the art of reading, of course), and that in itself was intriguing and new.

As I began to head toward home, thoughts of "1984" and "Big Brother" began to fade from my worried head. Noticing the work of nature around me, I felt more appreciative of the twinkling stars above, the flowering trees, distant mountains and our ability to enjoy and create.

In essence, the celebration of life. Perhaps I am one of the few who can claim, "Walking did this for me!"