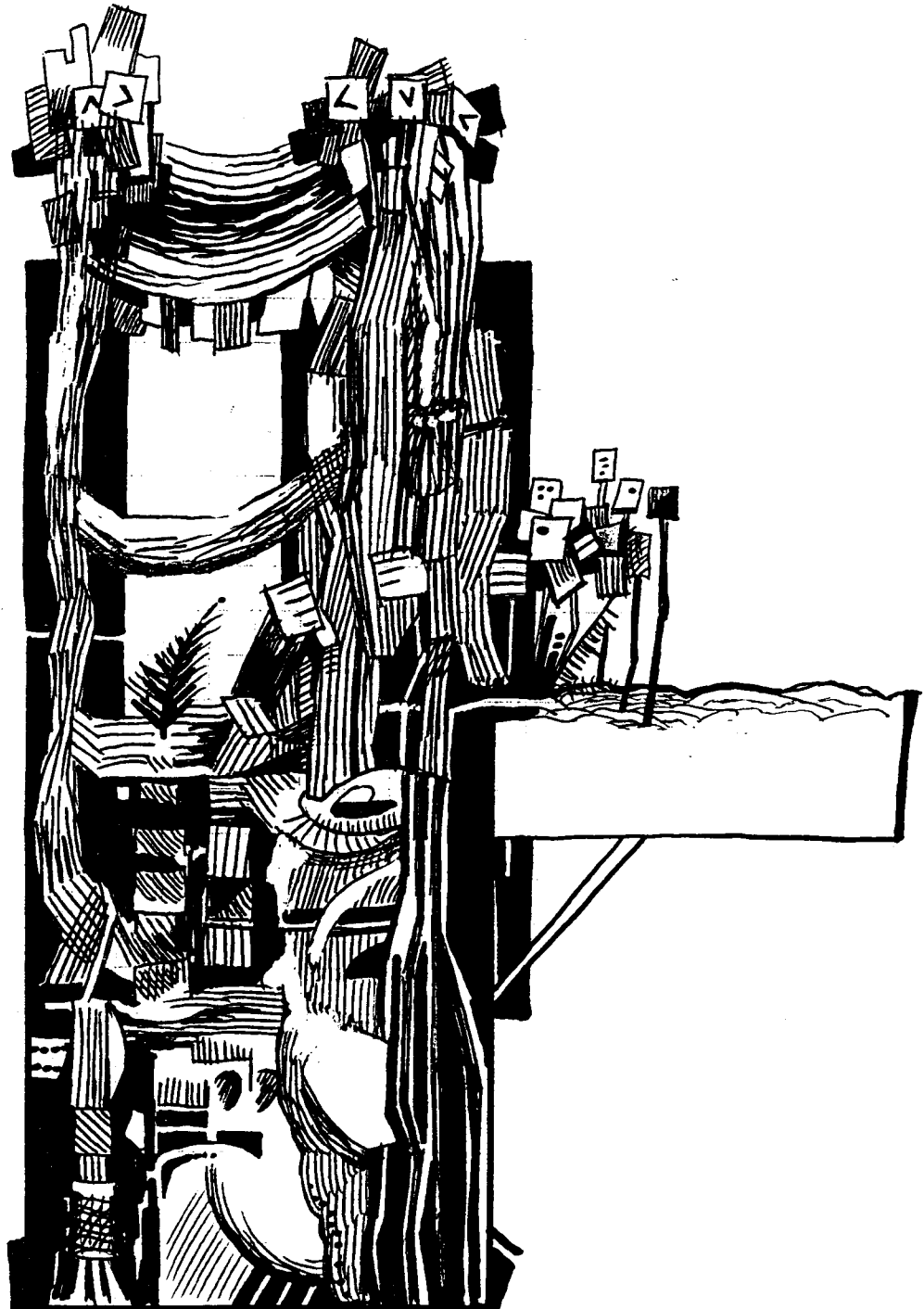


Winter-Spring, 1996

In A NutShell

A Publication of the MENTAL PATIENTS' ASSOCIATION



Biff '95

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Surrounded by Song by Stanley Burfield

Such longing
to hear that singing
to sing with that song;

to fill the reservoir
of my soul, to find in myself
the loam of the earth,
to slip out of artifice
and finally be whole;

such longing
to hear that singing,
to leap with that song.

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Vancouver B.C.

Computer technology may be a growth industry, but it's not *the* growth industry. Growth is.

I was in Banyon Books the other day, and was overwhelmed. If you were to walk in there off the street armed only with a general desire to get yourself out of your life's rut, to grow in some small way, you would stagger out days later with blood-shot eyes, a wooden head, and nothing to show for it but confusion. The store offer literally hundreds of ways to grow, promoted by thousands of psychologists, gurus, cult leaders, Wise Ones,

heads of churches, channellers, mystics, poets and solid citizens, each path microscopically detailed, each sounding for all the world like the one and only. A fascinating place to pass a lifetime. I'd love to.

On the other hand, pity the poor suckers who are never exposed to any of these choices, except that particular One, which they happen to bump into in some dark corner somewhere, only to find themselves sucked into its gurgling gullet, and eventually squirted out again, somewhat the better or worse for wear, who can tell which. Like all of us, they are only looking for a little growth.

(Continued on next page)



Clay sculpting at the MPA Activites Centre are Brent Collinson, Susan Davies, and James Carver.

Surrounded by Song

(Continued from previous page)

Maybe it's just my imagination, but a lot of the people who are heavily into these things, into 'growth' seem to be quite a bit more screwed up than most of those who aren't. But, of course, on second thought, this only makes sense. It's the more neurotic, or co-dependent, or shy, or what-have-you who are really brought face to face with their selves and their own inadequacies. The rest manage to ignore their stagnant lives. Either they are capable of just muddling through, or they bury themselves in their defenses; the unending distractions that this society is so efficient at providing, or their work, or any number of positively-reinforcing obsessions. Drugs all.

Have I missed anyone? Oh, yes: those who are healthy. But growth, by definition, is not something which the healthy don't have to do. So where do they fit in? Well, my theory goes like this. It starts with a famous study of the so-called "talking" therapy, psychoanalysis, which basically showed that most people who underwent psychoanalysis, usually for many years, changed for the better very little faster or further than did most people who underwent no therapy whatsoever. In other words, people seem to slowly grow out of neuroses to a large extent just as a result of nor-

mal living experiences. They adjust to reality. They start out spoiled or angry or fearful or just generally lacking in confidence, and are forced to find out that the world keeps on ticking around them no matter what. So they slowly start to relax. And finally they become happy at 50, according to rumour, anyway. These are our healthy citizens. And this is growth. If that sounds pessimistic, it's not really. I suppose there are a few people who have never had any difficulty getting through life. But I never meet them. So it makes me optimistic just to know that the average struggling person evolves naturally, given time.

I know there are thousands of recipes in Banyon for speeding growth, and I suppose some of them do work for some people, but I have the feeling those are the exceptions. Not as much because of all the recipe dropouts I have known and heard of, but more because I know how complicated we humans are, and that we are essentially social beings. I have spent my whole life trying to grow (well, when I wasn't doing anything else, that is) and have passed in and out of hundreds of revelations as to what was wrong with me and what to do about it, by which I mean I arrived at understanding. But, looking back after 44 years, I'm

still basically the same, just less shy and more confident. And only two things stand out in my crowd of experiences, as having seemingly caused spurts of growth. The first was a period of extreme, solo adventuring, which probably made me feel a bit bigger than the mouse I had been, and the second was my marriage to Linda. Probably the biggest share of my adult growth happened as a result of living with her. And the main thing about our marriage is that we are basically FOR each other. Many relationships don't have this, and so don't result in growth. We discovered a long time ago that we could trust each other with our selves, our true selves. And there is no revelation to compare to that. Looking back, it feels to both of us that, for the entire duration of our lives previous to this, we were lonely. And isolated. That we were always defensive to some degree, except when alone, or when in total distraction from ourselves and others. But we didn't realize this at the time, and seemed pretty much like everyone else, both to ourselves and them. And I suppose we were!

So now I feel that most people can't get very far just by pushing hard on their own. And that probably the best outcome of most disciplines is simply a gain in understanding, otherwise leaving one more or less untouched. On the other hand, the attempt to

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Surrounded by Song

(Continued from previous page)

change oneself can very, very easily result in repressing unwanted characteristics, and thus in going two steps backward. I know from sad experience.

The phrase, "we are social animals." means a lot. It means that our massive, physically-isolated brains, our souls, are built to look outward rather than inward, and to look outward specifically at others of our species. And not just to look at them but to think in conjunction with them, to emote with them, to create with them, to do everything we are capable of together with others, in couples, in small groups and in large ones. As isolated individuals, massive parts of our brains either come to a halt or turn in on themselves or simply turn round and round in stagnation.

The big problem is how to be together with others. Most of us have never had much example. We came from single-parent or broken families, or families that simply didn't talk. Very, very few came from households that included grand-parents and other relatives who could keep things going when the parents failed, the kind of family that was common long ago, supposedly. We've more often learned from our parents how to isolate ourselves than how to get together.

How to storm out. My feeling of the young people today is that many have given up on their families altogether and have gathered friends around them for growth and nurturing. That's something, anyway.

Friendship is a wonderful thing. I think really good friends can nearly substitute for good spouses. Especially if they spend a lot of time together. And share deeply. But the trouble with friends is that they are not bound to each other. If you burden them too much, or don't grow as fast, you might never see them again. But married couples are tied together with that old wedding knot, not that that means much these days. But I think it's still easier for most married partners to be themselves with each other than it is for most friends. So, of course, the trick is to marry someone who is compatible.

Alternately, a good psychotherapist could, theoretically anyway, serve as well as or better than either a friend or a spouse. They are bound to a person by their profession, and are certainly good at digging deep and accepting what they see. The problem, I would think, is that they are required to. You can trust them, but only because you are paying them to accept you. It's not the real world. It's more like a fantasy.

On the other hand, if your spouse accepts you, and even loves you, that really says something.

Many people use their god as a sort of spouse substitute. I would think a god would fall more into the category of the psychotherapist, assuming it is all-accepting, which I would expect it would be. But unless the god actually appears and says "You're okay, I'm okay," it would constitute even more of a fantasy than would the psychotherapist. Besides, what an abuse of spirituality, but that's another topic.

Here's something I wouldn't mind getting some feedback on, because it just occurred to me: the difference between happiness and joy. I'm thinking that happiness results from gaining some confidence and finding your place in life, such that you gain a feeling of self-satisfaction. Whereas joy seems more like a feeling you would get during, and as a result of, intense participation with others. As a result of being able to let yourself loose in an outward direction, and finding it works.

In sum, the answer to the problem of spicing up one's life lies in the plural of the word spouse.



UnderDog by Jim Gifford



The place was The Primal Coffee House at St. James Community Centre in Vancouver; The time was the last Friday evening in November. Dennis Strashok was up front, holding a guitar in his hands, performing his original and gifted songs. I was captivated yet irritated. The reason for my agitation was the woman sitting across the table and towards the stage from me.

Before the night's entertainment had begun, I overheard her talking to one of the organizers. She said she was a university student working on a thesis and had come to observe and take notes of the goings-on. All well and good, I guess.

But now, in the middle of one of Dennis' sensitive and spiritual creations, she was chatting with her friends who were also in attendance. She was showing them a large folder full of papers

and materials she had so far gathered.

It was an 'I, me, mine' monologue, very annoying and condescending, in text, to the mental health consumers (I prefer the term 'survivors') gathered.

Anger welled up in me but I counted to ten, took deep breaths, relaxed and tried to enjoy the music despite her self-centred verbalizing. Leaving early, I got out in the fresh air, took a long walk, cooled off, and recalled something I had once read.

It was from 'The Broken Body' by Jean Vanier, which, when home, I took down from the bookshelf and opened to the following quote:

"Do not be surprised at rejection by broken people. They have suffered a great deal at the hands of the knowledgeable and powerful — doctors, psychologists, sociologists, social workers, politicians, the police and others. They have suffered so much from broken promises, from people wanting to learn from experiments or to write a thesis and then, having gained what they wanted — votes, recognition, an impressive article — going away and never coming back.."

Let us hope this woman does go away and never comes back. Like too many others who have returned she possesses the baggage of academic knowledge but no feel for her work. She sees people like Dennis and I from the blind perspective of 'outside/in' and has no vision or understanding of us from the 'inside/out'.

We need people in the mental health movement who have experienced the abyssmal depths and come through their malady with a deep love and acceptance for those who remain struggling in the darkness. And we need 'outsiders' who know firsthand, and empathize with, hardship, rejection and injustice.

Too many of those professionals who would heal us and organize our lives, have only their theories and statistics to guide their sincerity of human concern. And then there are those, like the woman at The Primal Coffee House, who 'look down' on our plight and lack insight into what makes us really tick.

Let them study and get their degrees. Who knows? Maybe a few will pass muster. It happens.

Meanwhile, Dennis, keep 'telling our story' in your magical lyrics and music. As you sing, my heart and soul soar. For truly, in your words:

"The earnest endeavor of every true lover is to reach for the wounded side."



Minute Particulars

by Andrew Feldmar

There have been a few authors whose writing I love so much that I wait for their next publication with an impatience not unlike the anticipation of longed-for letters from my best friends. I experience a deep sense of loss and grief when such authors die and I realize their work is complete, no use waiting for additions. I have mourned the passing of D.W. Winnicott, Jerzy Kozinski, R.D. Laing, W.R. Bion and Masud Khan. I am grateful for surprises still to come from Milan Kundera, Alphonse Lingis, Phyllis Chesler, C.K. Williams and Jacques Derrida.

Chuang-tzu, the Taoist sage of the fourth century B.C., wrote, "Just as flames mark the burning of wood, so life is the energy released in the aging and death of the body. Even though then wood is reduced to ashes, the energy released as fire radiates throughout eternity, and though men come and go the flame of life burns eternally". Good books are filled with the fire, the flames of life, of those who wrote them. The heat warms my heart, the light helps me to see. Without the words of those

mentioned above, I wouldn't be me.

Recently, I found out that two of my guides, friends, heart-warmers and mind-sharpener had died. Emmanuel Levinas was ninety when he died last Christmas. He said that one makes contact with God through the face of the Other. When I look into someone's face, he said, I hear "Thou shalt not kill!" He was a Jewish philosopher, born in Lithuania, who lived and worked in France. He thought that the task of genuine thinking was ethical, a lovingkindness. "To know the good," he taught, "is to do the good". He spent his life exploring the concept of responsibility.

On January 28th, Joseph Brodsky died, the Russian poet who learned to write in English. He was born the same year I was and died at age 56, a young man, I can attest to that. In the 1960's, before he left Russia, he was tried on charge of social parasitism and sentenced to corrective labor in the Russian Far North. He was punished for the lack of desire to make money. In 1984, in a Commencement Address at an Ameri-

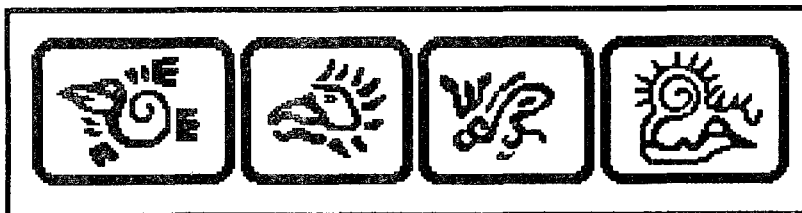
can university, he said, "No matter how daring or cautious you may choose to be, in the course of your life you are bound to come into direct contact with what's known as Evil". He went on to say that "evil takes root when one man starts to think that he is better than another".

Levinas was captured by the Germans in 1940, having to spend the rest of the war doing hard labor in a POW camp near Bergen-Belsen. Most of his family perished in the Holocaust.

Both these men taught me, from the depths of their own experiences, that attempting to avoid encounters with Evil is futile. One thing matters only, which is one's own conduct during an encounter with Evil. Because, when it's over, you are either dead, or if alive, you will have to continue to live with yourself.

Both these men project the hope that the victim will always be more inventive, more original in his thinking, more enterprising than the villain. Neither of them, in fact, ever gave in to the temptation of thinking of themselves as victims. That would have meant passivity, even cooperation.

Lao-tzu speaks of a man who is "so sure of life that the tiger and the wild bull avoid him in the hills and weapons turn from him on the field of war...And why? Because when he dies he does not die". Both Levinas and Brodsky are such men. Or so I think.



Branches Over the Wall: Information and Wisdom

by Dennis Strashok

Over the last year or so, everywhere you turn, you hear something about the Internet and the World Wide Web. It almost seems that the "powers-that-be" have decided that it is something that every person should get involved with. I myself have begun to dabble in the new information technology that is available on the 'Net.

We have known for a long time that we live in an information age, yet it is only recently that the potential of the personal computer tied in to the World Wide Web has caused an explosion in the amount of information available to the average person.

I read an interesting quote somewhere which spoke in glowing terms of the Internet. The writer said, in effect, firstly that there was a vast amount of information and that with so much wisdom coming from so many people, it was bound to improve the world in general. I noticed that the writer had almost equalled "information" to "wisdom" and I had to stop and consider that for a while.

Information is not necessarily or always wisdom. Information may represent raw data, or some type of knowledge, or an opportunity to learn and perhaps

to experience. Wisdom on the other hand is the ability to take the information, sort out that which is important or useful and to apply it to the matters and situations at hand. Wisdom is that which makes knowledge or information work and work properly.

It is wrong to assume that everything you see and hear on the information highway will be important and useful. Just as the farmer threshes the harvest to separate the wheat from the chaff, so all of us must use our own minds and wisdom to separate out what is useful and important from the remainder.

A few months ago, I had just started a trial membership with a computer information service and was exploring the forums offered. One of them, entitled "Ideas, Innovations, and Inventions", appealed to me and I began to pursue a message thread on some particular innovation. To my disappointment, someone interjected a comment on a misspelled word and the whole thread degenerated into multiple messages arguing about the importance of spelling. My initial zeal was severely dampened by that experience. It seems that both the best and worst aspects of human

communication are on the 'Net. Perhaps that is why some people involved in the Internet are spending a lot of time on the issues of etiquette and manners and censorship.

At one time, I was studying Cognitive Therapy in one of the programs that I was taking. I confronted the teacher and asked "Where is the power in your theory to make the changes?" She responded, "The power of truth." I thought it was a good answer and it made me consider the effect of truth on ourselves and others. So it is also with the information age. There is much out there on the information highway that is speculation, opinion, entertainment, or just plain garbage. Hopefully, we will find some truth amongst all this flood of information. Then, if we will learn to apply it, it could become wisdom to us. In the meantime, it's big business, but it can open the doors for the little guy.



Worry

Worry gives a small thing
a big shadow.

Author Unknown

Chariots of Fire

by Sam Roddan

Sixty years ago I was whipping streetcars around Vancouver. Most of my time was spent on the Owl Run on the Fairview Belt Line. After midnight my passengers were the strays off Main and Hastings and Granville - the drunks, the street walkers and the prodigal sons struggling to make their way home. Many lived in the Jungles at the foot of Campbell avenue, hide-aways under the Georgia Viaduct, the tar paper shacks along the banks of False Creek.

Over the years, passengers became old friends, "regulars". And often we waited for them as they straggled out of the Regent, The Rainier, Balmoral or the Cozy Corner on Columbia. Even today, I still remember some of their names: Old Harry, Ben, Mr. Brown, Blondie, Mary-Lou.

Through the lens of my motorman's window, I had a cinematic preview, a non-stop film loop of back lanes, dark alleys, garbage dumps, people-on-the-run, figures in doorways waiting for lonely assignments. Always a full frontal vision of life on the street in the Dirty Thirties.

When I drove a Special to the Forum on East Hastings, I always got in free to the wrestling matches between the great ones like Strangler Lewis, Tiger Duala and Man Mountain Dean. When I ran the Special to the Au-

ditorium on Georgia, I saw and heard the Revivalists and Faith Healers from California. Who could forget Aimee Semple Macpherson or the notorious Dr. Price who played havoc with hundreds of live during his Crusades of Healing in Vancouver?

I still remember the crowds of old people, full of hope and great expectations who packed into our streetcar, with their crutches and braces and wheelchairs.

At the front of the Auditorium, beneath a huge Cross, Dr. Price set up his Mercy Seat. Here his retinue of helpers stacked the proof of his Ministry of Healing: discarded crutches, canes, back braces, splints, rolls of bandages, rupture belts, strange, orthopedic supports.

Testimonial, tears, prayers, the pressing of flesh, followed in quick order. Then, in the midst of Hymns, amens and Hallelujahs, the ushers swept through the congregation scooping up the collection.

But after the Service came the big let down. And my conductor and I got it all first hand as we again loaded up our streetcar with our passengers still with their aches and pains and crutches and wheelchairs. And as we headed down Georgia and along Pender to Hastings we made gentle stops

and starts and dropped them off at their lonely lodgings.

In my day, I took many passengers for some pretty rough rides along the streets of Vancouver. But what I liked best was to speed up my chariot back to the barn in the early hours of the morning. The streets were empty, the traffic was gone and Inspectors, like Mr. MacIntyre, were sound asleep in their beds.

That was the time I felt like a young Sun God whipping on his wild horses to usher in another day. The wheels of my chariot rattled and pounded under my feet and, coming into the home stretch along Broadway, ribbons of fire trailed from the overhead wires and trolley like shooting stars.

And I went flat out until I rocked past Mr Price's Shoe Store. It was then I threw on the brakes and screamed around the curve at Main. When Mt. Pleasant Barn at 15th loomed up in the fading moonlight, I firmly reined in, soft-pedalled the foot bell and with a mighty hissing of air, I gently brought my chariot of fire to her stall.

Then I trudged out in the quiet stillness of early morning, sometimes I could hear a shout, the clump of horses, the rattle of milk bottles. But far off, over the sleeping homes, floated the sound of bells from Holy Rosary. And I knew I would soon be home.



Sidhu's Kitchen

by Jim Gifford

big black eyes dance subtly, a smile caressing
his dark face.

sidhu moves with enlightened ease among the customers;
a collage of artists, bohemians, new age entrepreneurs,
and college students.

white hair and white slacks garb him, white swirls of
hair flowing to his shoulders.

cups of chai tea integrate my personhood, soaring and
enchanted as mischievous little clayton frolicking along
the sidewalks of fourth avenue on his new bike.

crazy clowns of illusory chrome bustle up and down the
street 'mid mirror mirage folly.

don walton's laughing lips, bantering with a comrade, stir
my thoughts as i sip chai tea, allowing a deep sigh.

peace of mind beyond understanding of the knowledge of good
and evil flows through one universal stream of consciousness,
god's immaculate dream, in the hope humanity erupts beyond
the divine discontent of man's misfortune.

do not judge smiling buddhas of another way, sauntering the
common ground of the cosmos until the bubble bursts and we
emanate into the centre.

today tatlow park was the heart of my wheeling eternity as
here and now the light of the sun transforms illusion into
eternal delight of my burning mania as vibrant visions of
laughing daffodils mingle in unitary poverty.

reality is a vision; a daffodil is no less.

the myths of this world unfurl: we are evermore children
playing; universes dancing; ourselves unfolding.

i love a sufi spring as tonight stardust we become, sipping
chai tea at sidhu's kitchen.

The Vision On My Kitsilano Door

by Jim Gifford

the vision on my kitsilano door
the door to inner peace and territorial
misconception

reads
'god is out to lunch'

i walk up fourth avenue to the naam
cafe, kits blist out answer
to denny's
the flowers of illumination mingle
i cannot see him

'tis cloudy; rain impending

is god hidden among the innards of my
typewriter, waiting for me to print 'his'
presence in the black and white
world of a sentence freak?

does he dwell in sidhu's chai? tielhard de
chardin and thomas merton tell me
where 'he' is
for the love of god

wandering in wonder, i visit don mainwaring
chat chuckle commune
don makes salmon sandwiches
with flowing movements
of unwasted gesture
a sense of reverence for fish and bread

if god is out to lunch
this is where 'he' is here and now
aleness conversation
sandwich chuckle

these are god's realm
nurturing nourishing
the timeless wisdom of
an impending raindrop

Interview with Nath Cameron by Dennis Strashok

Nath Cameron is a cartoonist and artist with a background in the mental health system. His cartoons are very humorous and often parody the problems that consumers encounter. I met him at the Kettle Friendship Society and was struck by his sense of humor and creative abilities.

Dennis: Can you tell us a little bit about your upbringing and your background in the mental health system?

Nath: I was brought up in an upper middle class home in West Vancouver. I went to Caulfield Elementary School, followed by Terry Fox High School in Port Coquitlam. Then I took courses at Douglas College in Career Employment and cartooning. I was always doodling and cartooning. It was something that came to me naturally. I remember a P.T.A. leader that I did an essay for and I included some of my drawings. She especially liked it and encouraged me to continue. I was diagnosed with severe schizophrenia at the age of 13, but went through years of denial concerning the illness. I managed to stay away from major periods in the hospital.

Dennis: How did you become interested in the creative arts?

Nath: My first serious attempt at painting was at age 20. I took Art Classes at Terry Fox. At a boarding home with knowledgeable staff, I met a staff person with empathy and insight. This person was an inspiration and a help to me. Long hours were spent in the office conversing over coffee and cigarettes. Then, when I was at NuVu Society in Poco, that was a milestone, as it was an outlet for my writing and cartoons. That's when I really began to put more time and energy into my work, writing poetry and drawing cartoons and graphics for the newsletter, the NuVu Review. That was about 1986. There really is an abundance of talent there amongst the members.

Dennis: What are the different forms of creative work that you are engaged in?

Nath: I've always been a cartoonist, like I said, but I also do writing, mostly poetry and paintings. Lately I've become interested in Mixed Media and Sculpture. I've been spending time working on sculpture projects at the Broadway North Care Team. I have an aunt in the

U.S. who is a sculptor and she has inspired me. Generally, there's always been a lot of creativity in my family. My cartoon book "Medication Man" was in high demand for a while, so I was spending more time on that.

Dennis: Where is your work available?

Nath: Right now, my cartoon books are available at the Comic Book Emporium at Granville and Davie. As I say, I have also been published in the NuVu Review. I have slides of my paintings and I am seeking to make them more well-known.

Dennis: What are your plans for the future?

Nath: There is so much offered here in Vancouver, that at times I am overwhelmed by it. I have only recently moved into the Commercial Drive area and will be exploring opportunities here. I have to be careful that I don't overtax myself, but I want to put out the things that I have already produced and continue to work on new projects.

Dennis: Tell us a little about the material that we will include in this issue of the NutShell entitled "Medication Man".

(Continued on next page)

Interview with Nath Cameron

(Continued from previous page)

Nath: Medication Man was a character made up on a whim. Basically, it occurred as I overheard a conversation where someone was being called "Kitchen Man". It was just some kidding around between two people working in a kitchen. Since

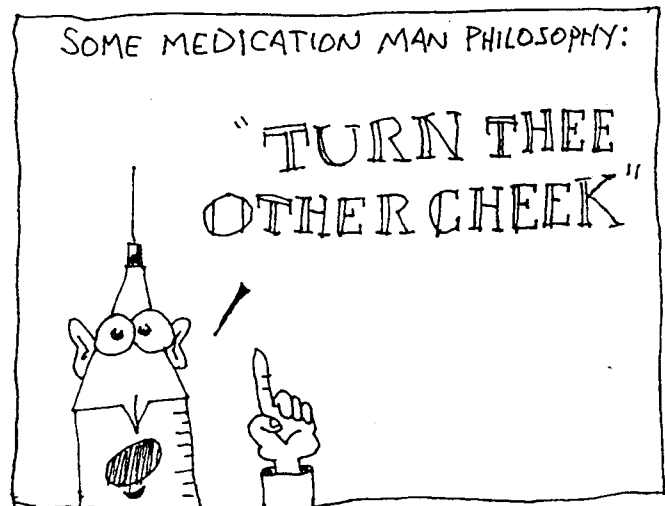
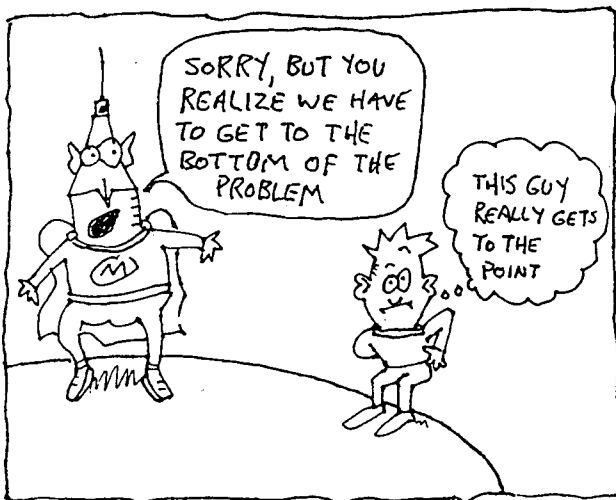
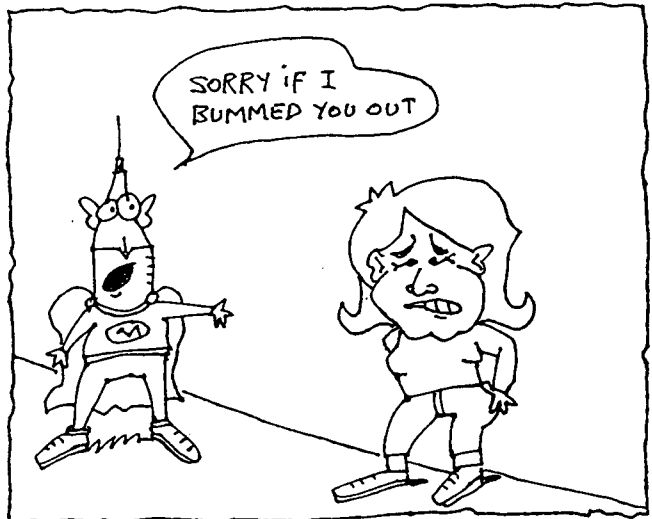
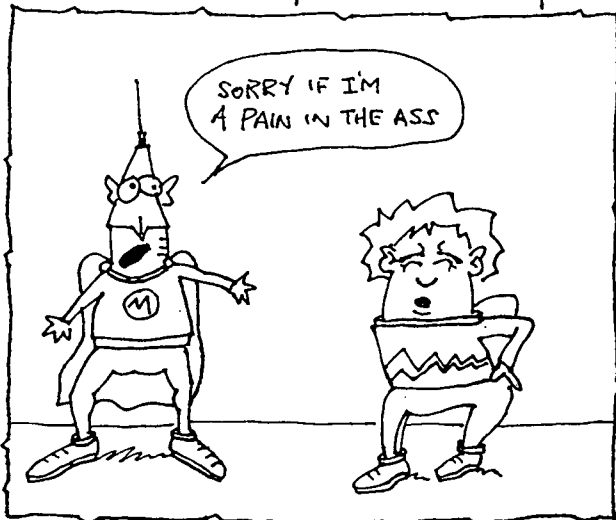
this particular person was not apt to be working in a kitchen unit, I thought "Medication Man" would be apt for a comic strip because almost everyone at the time at this clubhouse (a Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre created by Dr. Shauna Little) was taking

"meds". I created these comics because I thought they would be funny. And a lot of people laughed. Basically, I think it is the product of myself, laughing at myself.



MEDICATION MAN

by NATH CAMERON
(NEUROSES BY THE GROCERIES)
CAMERON
-92



The Escape of Susan

by Terry Levesque

"Come to my room"

"OK."

"I have some tapes. Do you want to listen to some tapes?"

"OK."

"This is my friend, she's had a stroke, her right arm is paralyzed."

"Hello, I'm sorry to hear that."

"What do you do?"

"I'm a writer."

"Yes, I am. What's your name."

"Susan."

"Do you have any cigarettes?"

"No."

"You can have one of mine."

"OK."

"What level are you on?"

"I'm on level one, they took my clothes. If you are on a level three or four you can have your clothes and then you can go off the hospital grounds. But I'm on level one, they took my clothes."

"You said that."

"Well, Susan, I should get back to my room. I'll see you later Susan."

A few days later I talked to Susan again.

"What level are you on now, Susan?"

"I'm on level three."

"That means you can have your clothes and can go out."

"Yes?"

"Do you want to leave the hospital and go over to the restaurant?"

"Yes."

"OK. Let's go."

"Tell me, Susan, do you have a boyfriend?"

"I lived with Rashad for five years. But we split up. Now I live with Ed, he's my roommate. But we just live together. I would never sleep with Ed. Never."

"I see. Did you love Rashad?"

"Yes."

"Are you still in love with Rashad?"

"Yes."

"I see. But you come to the restaurant with me and you would make love to me."

"Yes, you and a couple of sailors."

"I see."

"Tell me, Susan, are you a blonde?"

"Yes."

"We should get back to the hospital. we've been gone a long time."

A few days later I asked where Susan was. I was told that Susan had left the hospital yesterday with Ed and did not come back when she was supposed to. The next day, Susan came striding into the hospital and one hour later she was back on level one. They took her clothes. They said she had tried to escape. A few days later, however, Susan was back on level three and could once more go out.

"Where would you like to go Susan?"

"Downtown."

"OK. Let's go."

Susan went straight to the Love Shop downtown and bought a slinky, sexy, two piece silk outfit. Then she wanted to go for a drink.

"There is a hotel down on Hastings Street, why don't we go there."

"OK."

"You know, my father was supposed to take me skiing this weekend but he is too busy gambling down in Reno."

"That's OK, Susan, we'll have a drink instead."

At the hotel, Susan drank beer and put money in the jukebox. Listening to some music and drinking beer, Susan looked down in her sexy outfit and said,

"You're not going to kiss me there."

"Oh, yes I am."

"No, you're not."

"Do you have a cigarette, Susan?"

"No."

"You can have one of mine."

"Do you still have that condom?"

"Yes."

"Good."

"Well, Susan, we have escaped again haven't we. We have escaped Susan."

"We should get back to the hospital Susan. We've been gone a long time."

(Continued on page 15)

The People Who Are Master

by Jim Gifford

B.C. Provincial Liberal Leader Gordon Campbell made a cogent remark when he was Mayor of Vancouver. To paraphrase, he stated it is the responsibility of the majority to protect the rights of the minority.

As members of the human family, the less fortunate and the handicapped may justifiably make demands on us for the essential needs of food, clothing, shelter, and health care. The access to these necessities, in a civilized society, is a fundamental right, not a privilege. Yet the safety net that provides them with a support system is in jeopardy.

As we all are only too aware, a disastrous financial situation has arisen in Canadian governments. We are drowning in debt and the interest paid on loans. No household could be run as fiscally irresponsibly. There must be cutbacks but where?

At a Federal Liberal Party Convention last year, members were lamenting the upcoming budget. They were concerned about the ax falling on their special interests and pet projects. Bleed somewhere else, each said; no surgery on my priorities. Prime Minister Jean Chretien simply and wisely declared 'everyone wants to go to heaven but no one wants to die.'

What to do? The government could stop throwing money around like a drunken sailor, catering to their selfish and deluxe manner of living: limousines, subsidized airflights, cheap legislative cafeterias, ad infinitum, to say nothing of the gross pensions. Set us an example: clean up your own back yard and get your 'House' in order. End your 'death wish' for the Canadian Treasury.

But not on the backs of the most vulnerable and helpless in our country. Public servants are just that, answerable to the needs and concerns of the people who are master.

In an interview published in 'In A NutShell' magazine, former B.C. Ombudsman Stephen Owen said 'our society is impoverished whenever we have a person in clear need of assistance and society doesn't help that person. It lowers the value of society for all of us.'



Laughs with Lewry

My psychiatrist cured me of a ringing in my ears. Now I have an unlisted head.



Bookworm:

The Open Door

Theatre Communications Group

1995

Reviewed by Andrew Feldmar

For many years R.D. Laing was the chairman of The Philadelphia Association in London, England. He was one of the founders, and the intention was to provide asylum to people who otherwise would end up in mental hospitals, diagnosed, labeled, medicated and forgotten. At one time there were as many as seven households in London, where severely disturbed and disturbing people managed to live together. Philadelphia stood for 'brotherly love' and it was a reference to the Bible (Revelation 3:8), "behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it".

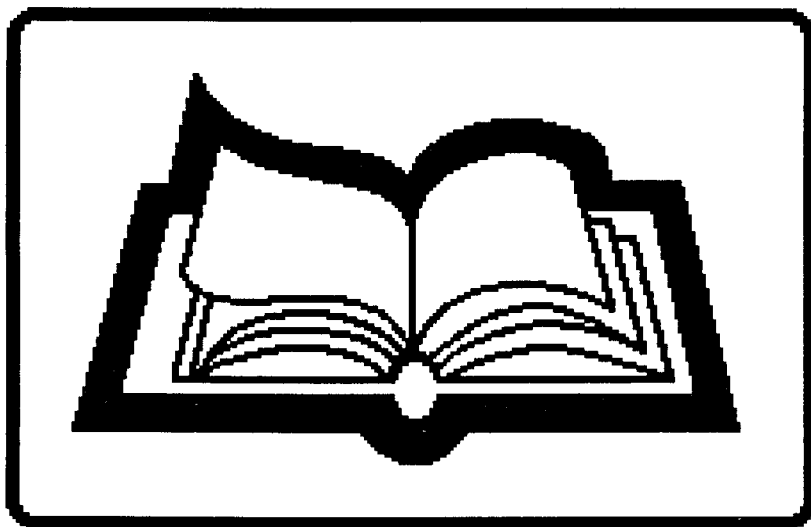
Peter Brook has been a director of the Royal Shakespeare Company and now heads the In-

ternational Centre for Theatre Research in Paris. He staged over fifty productions of plays and operas. His films include Lord of the Flies, King Lear, and Meetings with Remarkable Men. He writes, "It is the truth of the present moment that counts, the absolute sense of conviction that can only appear when a unity binds performer and audience. This appears when the temporary forms have served their purpose and have brought us into this single, unrepeatable instant when a door opens and our vision is transformed".

In an earlier book, published in 1968, called The Empty Space, Brook refers to the Polish director, Jerzy Grotowski, who

believes that the theatre "cannot be an end in itself; like dancing or music in certain dervish orders, the theatre is a vehicle, a means for self-study, self-exploration; a possibility of salvation". Reilly, the psychiatrist in T.S. Eliot's The Cocktail Party, bids farewell to his patient, saying, "go in peace. And work out your salvation with diligence". Yes, salvation is the theme both in therapy and in theatre. Revelation's open door and Brook's door opening in the unrepeatable instant, are the same door.

Brook speaks of deadly, holy, rough and immediate theatre. All these terms also apply to psychotherapy. When I was wondering how is it that so much of what Brook says on theatre also holds for therapy, I realized how much of therapy is theatre. "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged", writes Brook and "The irreducible elements of psychotherapy are a therapist, a patient, and a reliable time and place", write R.D. Laing. He goes on, "But given these, it is not so easy for two people to meet". Brook's "Deadly Theatre approaches the classics from the viewpoint that somewhere, someone has found out and defined how the play should be done".



(Continued on next page)

The Escape of Susan

(Continued from page 10)

Shortly after this I was sitting in my living room when the telephone rang.

"Hello, this is Susan and I've lost my panties."

"Ha, Ha, that's laughable Susan."

"What are you laughing at. It's

not funny. Bring me some cigarettes."

"OK. Susan, I'll do that."

A few days later I telephoned the hospital to talk to Susan.

"I'm sorry," they said, "Susan is not at the hospital. She has been released. She has gone home."

"Where is home?"

"Hello is Susan there?"

"She is sleeping."

"Give her my number."

Did I ever see Susan again? No, I never did.



Bookworm

(Continued from previous page)

Deadly Therapy diagnoses, applies techniques, uses standard methods.

Both Laing and Brook were inspired by Artaud who wanted the theatre "to contain all that is normally reserved for crime and war. He wanted an audience that would drop all its defences, that would allow itself to be perforated, shocked, startled, and raped, so that at the same time it could be filled with a powerful

new charge". Artaud thought that "only in the theatre could we liberate ourselves from the recognizable forms in which we live our daily lives". Compare with Laing's cry, "If I could turn you on, if I could drive you out of your wretched mind, if I could tell you I would let you know".

Peter Brook writes simply and brilliantly, distilling wisdom from many years of experience. He is an explorer who never

rests for he abhors boredom. These days it takes courage to notice and fight boredom. There are many who would seduce us into deadly boredom under the guise of sophistication. For Brook, as "soon as boredom appears, it is like a flashing red light". The Open Door is exciting and passionate.



The Best

The best preacher is the human heart; the best teacher is time; the best book is the world; the best friend is God.

Jewish saying

Bulletin Board

Primal Activities

Primal Mental Health Productions Association (PMHPA) is a non-profit society specializing in the arts, including writing, drama, and music for members of the mental health community. The association sponsors a Writer's Workshop every Monday night at 7:30; an Actor's Workshop every Tuesday night at 7:30; an Artwork and Painting Workshop every Thursday night at 7:30; and a Coffee House every Last Friday of the month at 7:30. All activities take place at St. James Community Square at 10th Ave. and Trutch in Kitsilano. The Workshops take place in the Primal Office or Sanctuary Office on the main floor, while the Coffee House takes place in the small community room downstairs. For further information, call the Primal Office at 730-8309.

"Moments"

"Moments", recently published, is a collection of stories by consumers in British Columbia about special experiences in their life journey while working towards mental health.

It is available through the Canadian Mental Health Association, B.C. Division, 405 - 611 Alexander St., Vancouver, B.C., V6A 1E1, phone (604) 254-3211.

Mental Health Information Line

For free, 24-hour, confidential information on mental illnesses contact the Mental Health Information Line at 1-800-661-2121. In the Lower Mainland, dial 669-7600.

Freebies:

For those in need: Free clothing; Dishes

Choose from a variety of donations

At Community Resource Centre, 1731 W. 4th Ave., Monday to Friday,
9 am to 9 pm on request.



