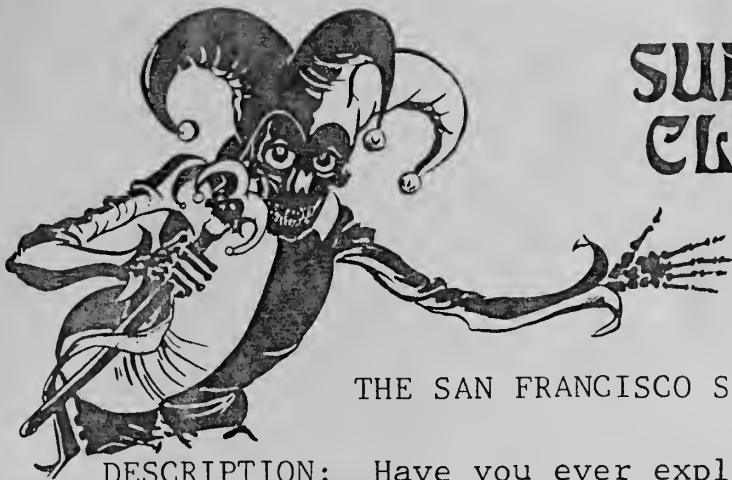


SUICIDE CLUB



THE SAN FRANCISCO SUICIDE CLUB

DESCRIPTION: Have you ever explored a subterranean sewer at night with forty other people; climbed three stories on a swinging rope ladder to dine on the roof of a condemned building; staged the practical jokes you've always fantasized about? No...? How about dinner at Rev. Moon's or talking a policeman into hitting you with a pie? Well...we hadn't either. The surviving members of the S.F. SUICIDE CLUB have agreed to EXPERIENCE THINGS THEY HAVEN'T EXPERIENCED BEFORE. In most cases they are challenges that we wouldn't or couldn't do alone because of the danger or need for teamwork. A large group also provides more investigators into the unknown, as uncovering mystery and adventure in the 20th Century requires a lot more detective work. Events generally fall into three categories: adventures, infiltrations and stunts. As you may notice in the above emphasized phrase, no WHY or PHILOSOPHY is attached...

PURPOSE: Fill in the blank yourself.

WHAT IT HAS NOT BEEN: So far, there has been no President, no voting, no meetings, no collectives, committees or consensus, no rules agreed on by everyone, no dares, no mandatory experiences. We do have initiations, but attendance at them is not required in order to participate in the club. We are neither secretive nor publicity seeking, but we also do not encourage the vicarious. Journalists or photographers must join the club and experience the events themselves in order to record them - we do not give armchair interviews.

HYSTERY: On January 2, 1977 gale warnings were issued in San Francisco, and, at midnight, four friends unexplainedly found themselves holding onto handrails as 20 foot waves broke over them. Afterwards, they agreed they wanted to explore other such experiences in a larger group of friends. The SUICIDE CLUB was chosen as a name, based on the Robert Louis Stevenson story of a club that gamed at midnight, the losers forfeiting their lives. The name was also chosen to alienate and frighten people away. It was offered in the Spring '77 catalog of Communiversitry, a San Francisco Alternative University without fees. Suicide Club initiation now follows Communiversitry's trinary catalog publication and registration on the 3rd Saturday of Feb. and June and on Halloween weekend. The Club has two annual events: A Champagne Dinner on the Golden Gate Bridge on the last Friday of February and a MASSIVE TREASURE HUNT of opposing teams, culminating in a water balloon and pie fight at the final destination on the last Saturday of February.

Memberships: The membership in the San Francisco Suicide Club is divided into three (3) separate, distinctive groups, one, associate, two, regular, and three, eternal members. To become an associate member you need only send _____ for _____ newsletters and your associate membership card. (on the back of your associate card is stamped a large ASS.) Your ASS.ociate membership card allows you to attend any of the events listed in the newsletters. When you attend an event you get your ASS. knocked off and become a regular member. To qualify for eternal membership a member must sponsor or convene an event for which they receive a Death Certificate. (an event of some special achievement) Any member may convene or sponsor an event by completing and following through with the "Planned Chaos" form which are available to all members without charge.

San Francisco SUICIDE CLUB tee-shirts are available for \$3.50, for anyone, member or not, who has gone on an event.

APPLICATIONS: Application forms are your introduction to fantasy. Even if you don't believe your ideas are realizable - Fantasize! ADVENTURES - INFILTRATIONS - STUNTS.

DECISION MAKING AND LEADERSHIP: The individual creating an event is totally responsible for planning it and any rules to be followed. Their ideas are not voted on, amended or censored; ultimately members vote with their feet. Convenors do write up what they feel were their mistakes in planning afterwards, if they want, and any subsequent rules they will offer for their next events as a 1) warning or 2) assurance (depending on whether you like the rule or not). A Questionnaire - "Planned Chaos" is used for write-ups and includes the questions overlooked in the past.

RISK: Possibility of physical injury and/or arrest is an everpresent part of many, but not all, adventures. These are not sought out and write-ups usually attempt to detail their possibility and how the leader plans to avoid it. We are becoming very experienced in this area.

MAILING ADDRESS: S. F. SUICIDE CLUB, P.O. BOX 7734, S.F. CA. 94120

The Club maintains the MUSEUM OF THE INCONSEQUENTIAL at 451 Judah at 10th Ave., open 2-7 pm, Mon-Sat. It is a collection of the disgusting, bizarre and fun loving groups and events other denizens of the solar system have created.

DIVEST YOURSELF OF EXPECTATIONS

SOLIDARITY IS A NECESSITY

PLAY IT OUT TO THE END

Aug 7, 1986

Hi Peter

Thanks so much for the "ride home with Bernard, after Laura and "Angel Face" at the Castro last night. That seems to be one of our popular meeting places - Fun Films! yea?

I'm glad you had a chance to meet Bernard. He is a student of playland art. As I'm sure you found out.

Enclose are Suicide Club "In the Beginning of Gary I drew in 1979 Heydays of the "Club" SFSC." and on the back of this note ^{a picture} The other letters are my efforts to provide more space for the Carousel - I appreciate your suggestions and comments on this effort which at present time is all but consuming me...

PS. Hope to see you again soon.

Best regards your friend,

David

THE ANSWER PERSON™

SEND IN YOUR QUESTIONS AND DOLLARS TODAY

THE ANSWER PERSON
P.O. BOX 7734 SF.CA. 94120

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

THE ANSWER PERSON

DEAR MS GLICK:
IN ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION ABOUT STARTING A SMALL BUSINESS IN YOUR GARAGE ...

MS GLICK, THERE IS NOT NOW, NOR HAS THERE EVER BEEN IN OR ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO A BUSINESS THAT PERIVES ITS INCOME BY CHARGING PEOPLE TO ENTER INTO A GAME OF SPIN THE BOTTLE.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ONE DOLLAR REMITTANCE AND GOOD LUCK ON YOUR NEW VENTURE,

TRULY YOURS
J.M.
THE ANSWER PERSON

READ FOR YOURSELF A TYPICAL LETTER FROM THE ANSWER PERSON



IF I CANT FIND AN ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION ITS NOT WORTH KNOWING...

Francisco Chronicle

The Largest Daily Circulation in Northern California

MONDAY, JANUARY 3, 1977

777-1111 20 CENTS

Bionic Races to Reality

War from Kansas also boasted Patent Double-Action, Extra-thought-Creating, Perfect-Talk-1 Man."

ence on TV is no more subtle: ion Dollar Man crashed a was rebuilt (at today's hospital o bionic legs and a bionic right super-vision bionic left eye" ns.

end. Bionic Woman, was saved l "bionic intervention" after a dent; her two bionic legs can

run 60 miles an hour; her bionic right arm can lift a ton; her bionic left ear can hear whispers a half-mile away.

A few of these fantasies, at least, have become reality for thousands who suffer disabling or even lethal ailments. Humans once doomed now walk freely with an extraordinary variety of artificial or transplanted organs inside and outside their bodies.

What can be transplanted? Kidneys.

Page 6, Col. 1

Many Blackouts

Rains, Floods

In Bay Area —

Snow in Sierra

By Julie Smith

San Francisco got drenched with more than an inch of rain yesterday and the Sierra got, as one ski resort employee put it, "All the snow we've been praying for."

The rain came in fits and starts until afternoon, when the heaviest downpour fell. By 8 p.m., 1.26 inches had fallen on the downtown area.

The San Francisco Police Department reported dozens of fender-benders caused by rain, flooding in several areas throughout the city and stalled cars caused by flooding.

A spokesman for the California Highway Patrol said, "We are so completely swamped with accidents you wouldn't believe it."

And Pacific Gas & Electric Co. reported power outages in Berkeley and San Francisco. More than 12,000 homes in the East Bay were affected, and in some instances lights were out more than four hours.

At 4 p.m., lightning struck a PG&E power line in the Mission District, outside 436 Murray street, forcing police to barricade a section of the street to prevent injury.

About the same time, the California Highway Patrol blocked both northbound and southbound traffic on the Bayshore Freeway near Grand avenue in South San Francisco because of highway flooding.

Wind gusted up to 45 miles an hour, and gale warnings were posted in San Francisco Bay and along the coast.



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Kees the ence, had rarily uired aid, a il de- piling emer- to 15 the few

civil SR. I capa- gned erip- cono- itary and the

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d-to

Playland Research
Center

Box 410 - 750 LaPlaya
San Francisco, CA
94121

S F S C:
THE BEGINNING

"OH DEATH! WHERE IS THY STING?"

Sunday, January 2, 1977

"STORM WARNINGS posted at San Francisco Bay."

Twenty foot waves and "wind gusts up to 45 miles an hour;" the storm of the decade was at our doorstep. We saw it as a chance for new experience. So the four of us, Adrienne Burk, Nancy Prussia, Gary Warne and I - left the warmth and comfort of Gary's Circus of the Soul bookstore, on Judah near Ninth Avenue. We piled in my old Ford and went off on a spontaneous trip to Fort Point, below the Golden Gate Bridge, where it had been reported that the largest waves ever seen were crashing over the sea wall. We had to see this for ourselves.

Had we known then how many streets were flooded, freeways closed, or power lines down, we may have foregone the pleasure, and remained dry, relaxing on Gary's cozy sofa. According to the headline story on the front page of the next day's Chronicle, "Over 12,000 Bay Area homes were without electricity." The San Francisco Police reported "there are so many stalled cars and fender-benders through the City caused by the rain and floods that you wouldn't believe it." A spokesman for the California Highway Patrol said "they are completely swamped with accidents."

At that time we were unaware of these facts. Little did we know either, just how our unplanned escapade would come to change our lives, or how it would affect so many others over the years that followed. We were just four friends on our way to witness first hand what others might prefer to watch on tv.

The storm raged, the present met the past, as we drove through the Presidio to the historic sight. We parked safely, back from the water's edge. Huge waves, some over twenty feet tall, came crashing down upon the anchor chain that served as the only barrier between us and the immense turbulence stretching across the bay's water. The ocean's upheaval resounded, sirens of the deep beckoned, their call summoned us. Exhilaration compelled us, together in awe we left the security of our Galaxy -

(500 Ford, that is). We walked into the wind through sheets of down-pouring rain. Closer and closer we led one another, and then, almost without knowing, we were at the ocean's edge. It was no longer important to stay dry; the torrents had soaked us. We could get no wetter. Yet closer still we silently dared our collective effort to become a part of the chaos. Hanging onto the chain, foot-by-foot, we slowly forged our way ahead. We gripped the large steel links with an unyielding grasp as breakers crashed over our heads and tons of water fell about us. We could not communicate. The sound of the ocean's roar, the wind and the downpour were too great. But there was no need for words, the experience said it all. There was no fear. Nothing could break the chain. We felt secure. The smiles on our drenched faces were unanimous. We had won. Survived the peril; we had traversed the sea wall, we now shared its secret. Except for being wet, we were unharmed; the adventure had unified us, we would forever be soul mates.

As we stood linked together in spirit, still holding tightly to the chain, I leaned my head back and looked directly up overhead, perhaps to show my appreciation to a Higher Power, whose thundering presence had joined us together in such a glorious way. Suddenly, my mind took a spin, twisted and stopped upon a horrible and more depressing thought. For there above, suspended like some Gothic giant, dark and shadowy from that point of view, was the understructure of the Golden Gate Bridge. Recognizing this span, and being aware of its infamous reputation; my own mortality was one again awakened. Perhaps my logic and perception had been affected by the tumult of the water's boom and crash, that thundered from the fortress' wall. Cannons there had never issued so loud a report. Till then I had felt in control. We were only flirting with life, but now we were gambling with death, and the greatest adventure of all was much too close. I pulled Gary closer that I might convey the irony of my notion over the din of the sea. It seemed we had conquered our fear of the waves, only to find ourselves standing directly in line with any suicider who may come plummeting down upon us from the bridge above. "The odds of this happening seemed greater than the possibility of our being washed out to sea," Gary concurred, and with respect for any grievous departures, we withdrew directly.

Undaunted we made our dripping wet, but invigorated, retreat back to the shelter of the car. We felt exuberant and considered how we might share experiences like this with others, and perhaps bring an end to the kind of fear that tends to restrain and repress people. Certainly, the negative aspects of fear inhibits people.

We all agreed. Both Gary and I had read the short story by Robert Louis Stevenson, "The Suicide Club." The plot was simple but profound. It revolved around a social club, whose membership pay, and add some excitement to their lives. At each meeting, they drink, play cards and have a merry time. Sounds simple, but for the hidden agenda, the last thing done at each meeting: a full deck of cards is shuffled and dealt one to each member. As the cards are dealt, each member turns their card face up for all to see. The member who receives the ace of clubs must, before the next meeting, kill the member dealt the ace of spades. The following meeting is held in honor of that member's demise. The crime, or agreed-upon act if you choose to call it that, must be made to look like suicide, hence the name, "Suicide Club." The club survives as prospective members are recruited and current members fortuitously take their place of shadowy honor, following their predecessor, on the lengthening register of the departed. Macabre. Suggestive of the dance of death in which a skeleton leads other skeletons to the grave. Briefly put, that was Stevenson's suicide club.

Of course, Adrienne, Nancy, Gary and I all had our own ideas and we were bubbling over with them. The first, last, and only organizational meeting of the club had taken place that evening. Acturllly, by then it was about four in the morning. We had spent several hours locked in our moment-to-moment adventure. We wore our wetness like a badge of courage; water still filled our tracks as we entered the old Zim's Restaurant, between 17th and 18th Avenue on Geary. We sloshed up to a large red table and sat down with a squish. Water dripped in pools around our chairs as camaraderie oozed from us like embryonic fluid. It mixed with our many ideas and a variety of syrups that passed back and forth across the crimson table that morning, as, over pancakes, we gave birth to the club. We all agreed on the name: "The San Francisco Suicide Club." Gary thought it a good name, because, quote, "It'll keep wimps out." By referring to the club by its initials "SFSC", we could obscure our chosen name from the general public and anyone who we felt may consider the name too lurid. In this way we would preserve our anonymity, remaining hidden and exempt from city registration fees. Then we wouldn't need dues; and since we were governed by consensus, we wouldn't need officers, either. But best of all, no boring meetings. Just events and adventures into the unknown. Any member could sponsor an event, and they didn't even have to use their true name - any moiker would do. The only suicides our club would be celebrating would be those of anxiety, apprehension and fear. Our plan was to introduce prospective members in a way that would require them to confront and overcome any ominous dread of membership, then -

initiate them into our fold and encourage them to create and sponsor special events. Hopefully, these events would help to annihilate other feelings of inadequacies or apprehension: fear of heights, the dark, fire, water, or even that of being nude in public. There would be no restrictions, and members would be encouraged to create any event that might help them overcome whatever they might be afraid of, by sharing a daring activity with others. Silly or serious. Frightening, or perhaps just challenging fun. Members would be informed by self-addressed, stamped envelopes that they would provide. Upcoming attractions, dates and necessary information would be sent in plenty of time so members could plan to attend and share, like the original Suicide Club, "a fearless life" with the knowledge of inevitable and certain death.

Unlike Stevenson's maniacal club, the SFSC would not be preoccupied with death. Only facetiously would it be considered. As friends our aspirations were high. The SFSC would be dedicated to living fully, events would be explored and prepared beforehand. Safety would be a prerequisite and a most important consideration. Anything questionable would be researched and if necessary rehearsed. We would use Safequards and prepare alternative plans. Our final three-point plan was simple and encompassing:

1. Put your worldly affairs in order -
2. Divest yourself of expectations -
3. Play it out to the end -

A concise philosophy that has lit our path brightly, they remain unchanged.

Before we left Zim's on that new day over eighteen years ago, we vowed to make future initiations stimulating and exciting, scary and fun. However, we knew in our hearts, we could never recreate the heavenly rapture of that evening's event. It was much more than our fearless reaction to the threatening storm. It was the unleashing of Nature, something no mortal could ever duplicate. How grand it was to watch it be, and how fortunate I feel to be part of the circle of adventure-loving friends, ever widening, like ripples from that chaos that took place under that golden bridge oh so long ago! Yet still vivid to me as if it were yesterday.

Dave Warren 4/1/95

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The Suicide Club lives

BACK BEFORE bungee jumping made it onto *Evening Magazine*, and well before gonzo travel writer Tim Cahill stumbled into the desert and onto the pages of *Rolling Stone*, a band of San Francisco hooligans staged death-defying events that tested their wits and survival instincts.

Not really about death so much as leading a zany life, they stripped naked on a cable car for an Easter Sunday photo op in 1977; they hijacked elevators at a Union Square parking garage and surprised would-be riders with pantomime shower scenes; they took over abandoned buildings for potlucks; one-night-only stage plays, and theme parties. And they climbed things: bridges, churches, whatever. They were the Suicide Club.

Named after a Robert Louis Stevenson story, the club formed one night when the founding four (Gary Wame, David Warren, Nancy Prussia, and Adrienne Burk) went down to Fort Point on a stormy night and dared one another to hop a fence and tempt the sea. A railing along a seawall served as a lifeline against incoming surf. Fast, heavy, and cold, the surf that night was enough to sweep any of the daredevils to a watery grave. Exhilarated afterward, the four drank tea and conceived the Suicide Club. The railing, long since corroded and removed, became a rite of initiation.

"Gary was the avatar," recalls



Pushing the envelope: *The Suicide Club* ride, Easter 1977.

Sebastian Melmoth, a *nom de plume* given him by Wame. Together Wame and Melmoth did extensive urban spelunking (in places like sewers, drains, and BART and Muni tunnels). "Everyone pushed in different ways. Nancy did the sexier stuff. I did a lot of the events that involved climbing." For Melmoth, "being naked in public was 10 times more frightening" than rappelling 400 feet into the bottom of an empty Evans Street gas storage tank.

The Suicide Club has been survived by the majority of its members. Some, like Don Herron (who runs the Dashiell Hammet walking tour of San Francisco), remain informed by that time. There's also a private eye, a senior partner in one of the Bay Area's leading

investment banking firms, a neon sign hanger, a noted architectural critic who was then a dishwasher, a lawyer/playwright, and several social workers.

One evening last fall several Suicide Club originals reconvened to swap stories, increase their legend, and sit for a portrait. A few of them belong to today's Cacophony Society, but many hadn't seen each other in years. Only one has died for certain: cofounder Gary Wame passed away a couple of days before Thanksgiving 1983. In his will he left a final dare: to scatter his ashes from the top of the Golden Gate Bridge — in broad daylight. Melmoth and company not only obliged him, they painted a bit of him inside the bridge for posterity.

B.W.

PHOTO OF SEEMEN BY DON LEWIS. PHOTO OF THE SUICIDE CLUB BY RON DELL 'AQUILA, COURTESY OF SEBASTIAN MELMOTH

Bay Guardian
1/21/74

San Francisco's Suicide Club



Photo by Gregg Mancuso

Food fight in progress.

By Margo Skinner

Members don't really have to kill themselves. In fact, they don't *have* to do anything. *The San Francisco Suicide Club*, which takes its name from a more sinister organization in short stories by Robert Louis Stevenson hangs (not literally) completely loose. It has, according to "Alan Quartermain," its non-spokesman, a local bookseller, "no president, no voting, no meetings, no collectives, no committees, no consensus, no rules agreed on, no dares or mandatory experiences."

On the other hand, some of its "events" may be dangerous, "but that depends on what you're afraid of," says the bearded, smiling Quartermain. SC does offer five broad categories of experiences: "urban adventures and explorations, usually at night, and often with physical barriers to entry; infiltrations of bizarre environments and groups (a forthcoming project is to visit the Moonies); large-scale games devised by members with people as the pieces; elaborate stunts and practical jokes; side trips to unusual entertainments."

"Events" are invented by members: and any, all, or none of the other members may participate. In the latter case, one can justly say it's a "dead event."

Among recent fun doings was a nude cable-car ride, less dangerous than it sounds. Gutsy, and perhaps more exhibitionist SCers boarded a little dingy ear at its first stop on its earliest Sunday morning trip. They wore dashikis, robes, capes, and such like. They paid their fares, and proceeded to strip to the buff. Conductor and gripman were impassive. Not so the passengers or crew of a following cable car. Riders cheered and the conductor played a wild tune on his bell. "He thought it was really hilarious." At the second stop, after posing to be photographed,

The Suicide Club got some media attention (mainly in print) but managed to avoid the much more narcissistic preoccupation of the SF Cacophony Society with getting names and pictures in the news. Among other reasons for this was that journalists were required to come to events as participants rather than as journalists and this exercised a very health-restraining influence on all but the most adventurous reporters.

SCers got off, donned their shoes hastily on the street, and ran off to a damn good breakfast. Twenty-five people participated in this event.

How did they feel about it? "Most thought it was funny," says Quartermain. "Some were upset and frightened, but they did it anyway."

Membership of the Suicide Club is 120. Sixty percent are male, 40 percent female. The age range? From 6 to 45. "There are quite a few six-year-olds."

Events range from low-key, like attending horror movies (the club held the world's first parade mini-film festival at the city, with "The 5000 Fingers of Doctor T" and "Catch as Catch Can") to somewhat rough, like the old-fashioned New York street game, Ringolevio, in which one team must capture all the opposition players, "using as much force as necessary to drag them to a jail."

It's "planned chaos," says Quartermain, but remember, nothing is compulsory.

The most frightening event the members was a literal jump off the Ghler Bridge, Russian River. This was a 35-foot jump, hanging from a girder, letting go and splashing in the river.

Another event that would make claustrophobic silly me was "Living in Santa Cruz." There are large caves near the U.C. campus. "One overweight person got stuck, and had to be kicked out of his clothes with a grease."

Then there was the canoe trip on Aquatic Park to Mission Barcadero, under pier pilings. For this the group rented one-glass canoes, and saw such inhabitants as rats and starfish amid the pilings.

The famous food fight sounds like more fun. A writer of popular books on anthropology provided the setting. He was being evicted; the house was to be torn down. So the Suicide Club intervened. Food was donated by Safeway and Safeway, in the form of dying cream pies and ripe fruits and vegetables—potatoes, bananas, lettuce, etc. People came in their most formal clothes, and hopefully dined on better stuff. Then the fun began. Once the fight had started, they

couldn't stand up because there was too much slime on the floor," says Quartermain, smiling nostalgically.

An initiation in the Taraval Tunnel leading to the beach featured Death as interlocutor, encircled by strange candles. "He made them himself," announced Quartermain proudly. "He's a fire-eater."

Future events? "At the end of January we will have another depressing event, 'Recreating the Great Depression.' Everybody will forsake their friends, lovers, and jobs for a few days to become the transient poor, exploring the idea that there are pockets of every time in every decade, and some people are still expressing most historical incidents on a small scale." Before I had a chance to ask, "How's that again?" he told me that participants will hang out on the street, eat in soup kitchens, and try to find jobs, pretending they've just come to the city. Some can elect to ride the rails out of the city to find work. Later they will meet at pre-arranged sites to exchange their experiences. This event will be done by teams only, Quartermain warned, men and women.

Later plans also include infiltrating the Moonies, to spend a weekend at the Booneville farm, and "let them try to brainwash us."

In June comes the big "King Solomon's Mine" event, the brain child of Alan Quartermain, whose pseudonym comes from the great adventure novel

by H. Rider Haggard. "It will be a large-scale, highly physical movement game incorporating three oldtimers: Ringolevio, and King of the Mountain among them. Two warring teams will meet in a sand gulch one mile from San Francisco. In the gulch will be the "treasure," for which the groups will vie. The only limits, says Quartermain, "will be no weapons and no blows with a closed fist." The story line will follow that of *King Solomon's Mines*. This event will take place at high noon on Sunday June 24. The "treasure" is a secret.

How to join in these jollifications? There are three classes of membership, associate, regular and eternal. An associate contacts the "grim reaper" (treasurer) and sends the amount specified by him. He then receives a monthly newsletter chronicling events and a membership card stamped "ASS" (associate). With this he can attend any events listed in the newsletter. Once you attend an event, whatever it is, "you get your ASS knocked off" and become a regular member. (I'm sure that's just a joke.) Any member who conceives and attends his own event makes the third class, and is awarded a "Death Certificate" on parchment paper, "a must for your den or study wall beside any formal educational certification and good conduct awards from the military."

Dues are approximately 25 cents a month (for mailing), and paid at a flat \$2.50, which is refunded. The explanation of how this is done is so gobbledygook that I won't pass it on.

Transportation is available in

the Suicide Club's pet hearse, for which a fee of 75 cents a person is collected.

For further information,

write: SF Suicide Club, PO Box 7734, San Francisco 94120.

Quartermain adds jovially: "Let's put the fun back in funerals." □

'Die laughing'

SF Suicide Club

Jeri Pupos

At 6:30 a.m. Easter Sunday, approximately 30 people simultaneously stripped while their Powell and Mason cable car stood motionless.

Much to the gripman's dismay, these members of the newly founded San Francisco Suicide Club (SFSC) posed in the buff for a minute-long photo session for curious onlookers.

It wasn't the rising sun that memorable morning that caused them to strip. Their intentions were quite simple: to create unusual picture postcards with the inscription "welcome to San Francisco" on them.

Formed by Gary Warne, David Warren, Adrienne Burk and Nancy Prussia and offered by Community in January, the Suicide Club now boasts 75 members.

Warne describes the SFSC as a "group of people agreeing to do things they wouldn't normally do in a group or by themselves."

The Suicide Club, ironically, has taken its name from a story of the same title by Robert Louis Stevenson. In Stevenson's tale, characters make a game out of ending their lives. In the SFSC the game is to add a sense of adventure — not to death — but to life.

On the eve of their pranks, SFSC members meet at a Judah Street bookstore. With a wheelchair and a laughing skull in the background for "atmosphere," they brainstorm ideas for unusual stunts.

Last winter, at three locations around Union Square, members dressed in Salvation Army-type clothing and attempted to give money

away. With pots filled with money and a sign that read "Take Some Money" in front of each, participants rang bells announcing their scheme to Christmas shoppers.

Although Warne counted 5,500 passers-by, he says only about 100 saw what was happening and took any. "Think," he says, "of how the real Salvation Army feels when people don't 'see' or 'hear' them."

When people watch the stunts, they either laugh, become angry or ignore the whole thing.

Warne says, "Most of the time people choose not to react at all because they are not sure what is happening. If they laugh at something serious they are thought of as fools. If they don't laugh when they should they're fools again. So in order for them to cope, they become stony-faced."

Members worry about getting arrested during the stunts, but they do have a course of action if they are. According to the official SFSC newsletter, they are to "try and invite or trick cops into participation."

"If they arrest one member, they have to arrest all of us," Warne says.

On April Fool's Day, the SFSC acted out a longtime Warne fantasy of creating changing scenes in a series of elevators. SFSC took over the three elevators of the Union Square parking garage at lunch time.

Preparation began 45 minutes beforehand on the bottom level of the garage.

Although scene suggestions included a gorilla with bound hostages, a barber shop with a manicurist, a

candlelight dinner complete with violinist and a fire eater, they agreed that a shower scene was best.

A shower curtain was rigged up in one corner of an elevator with a tape recording of running water. A man wearing a shower cap stood whistling behind the curtain. Three other members stood about clad only in towels and waited for their turns in the shower.

When the elevator doors opened, people would start to enter and then turn around to wait for an empty car. Three men sat with mouths gaping. One woman decided to enter and said, "Hey, this is fun! How long are you going to do this?"

Everything went well until the group decided to present the fire eater. When several people complained, the manager of the garage ran out of his booth and yelled to an employee, "Dick, call the police." With that, the playing ended.

Although Warne discloses that future escapades would include scaling condemned buildings and racing through the sewers of Oakland, he smiles and says he "just couldn't go into details."

Suicide Just For The Fun Of It

switchboard in the Taraval Police station in San Francisco lit up with calls all night of June 18th. Apparently a line of people were waiting for a bus, almost all of them were blindfolded. In the Sunset district -- a quiet, residential neighborhood south of Golden Gate -- such behavior prompts many folks to call the cops.

Policemen in a cruiser soon arrived and were told not to worry; nothing was going to happen -- yet, and only not in their district.

What did happen was that 45 blindfolded people were taken to Ocean Beach aboard the Muni. They were escorted into a dark, clammy tunnel where their blindfolds were removed, and instead led by a man in a death costume to a tunnel 10 miles -- from the zoo to Fisherman's Wharf -- in the dark, along the waterfront.

Most of them did, and at the end of the trek the survivors were initiated, taken into the San Francisco Suicide Club.

Members agreed to put their worldly affairs in order, to enter into the world of chaos, cacophony and dark saturnalia, to live each day as if it were their last. Then they paid two dollars to cover mailing costs of the Suicide Club newsletter, which lists events ranging from explorations of hotels and underground sewers to infiltrations of religious cults and Nazi bars to elaborate parties involving gorilla costumes, water balloons and large quantities of pies.

Its members -- who now number over a hundred -- view the Suicide Club as everything from "a group of people who have agreed to experience things they've never experienced before" to "a bunch of people helping each other live out their fantasies" to "a vehicle for pranks, adventures and just plain fun." Bob Campbell, who joined the club in February, thinks that "it's beyond any one person's clear conception. I think it's an idea with a life of its own that's autonomous from its creators and its participants."

Its official creators are Nancy Prussia, Adrienne Burk, Gary Warne and David Warren, who stood together on a sea-wall as 20-foot waves splashed over them during a storm last January. They decided afterwards to "do this sort of thing with other people."

The name comes from a story by Robert Louis Stevenson about a group of men who aid each other in ending their lives. But Warne concedes that the name was chosen to alienate and frighten people away. "We didn't want dilettantes," he said.

The Suicide Club was offered as a class that semester in Communiversity, a totally free university without fees, credits or walls. Sixty students signed up, with

45 attending the first initiation, held February 9th in a set of abandoned artillery bunkers at Fort Funston. Initiates were blindfolded, separated into groups of six, and given one match to find their way out in the dark. They cleverly set fire to the blindfolds, and easily found

the exits.

The club has no leaders, no rules, no consensus and no formal meetings. Its newsletter is written by whoever feels like leading an event and "members vote on ideas with their feet" by attending or not attending.

Among other adventures, both planned and spontaneous, the club has eaten dinner with the Moonies, staged a giant treasure hunt ending in a pie and water-balloon fight, attempted to board The Golden Hinde (a replica of an 18th century sailing ship), spent the night in a ghost town, climbed up a 40-foot rope ladder into an abandoned hotel, impersonated a group of mental patients in downtown San Francisco, had a giant frog enter a human in the annual Calaveras County Frog Jumping Contest (he was disqualified), explored the Oakland sewers at night, posed naked on an early morning cable car for a postcard reading "WELCOME TO SAN FRANCISCO," and had a champagne dinner on the Golden Gate Bridge.

Not all these events have met with local approval. At the culmination of the treasure hunt, the teams converged on a cache of pies hidden in old bunkers in the Presidio. They were suddenly surrounded by several cars full of military policemen, who trained spotlights on the group. But the tension was immediately eased when Shirley Sheffield managed to talk a young MP into hitting her in the face with a pie.

Another time, while attempting to board

The Golden Hinde in inflatable rafts, the club members were spotted by harbor police, and immediately began to sing buccaneer songs and feast on a dinner they had brought. When a policeman yelled down, "What are you people doing in the water?" they replied, "Having a birthday

party for the Queen." It was, in fact, the Queen of England's birthday and the Suicide Club, by lucky coincidence, had brought a cake along. The police let it go at that.

The audiences are not always so appreciative, however. Members of the club, led by Sheffield, recently entered an ama-



Mary Friedman

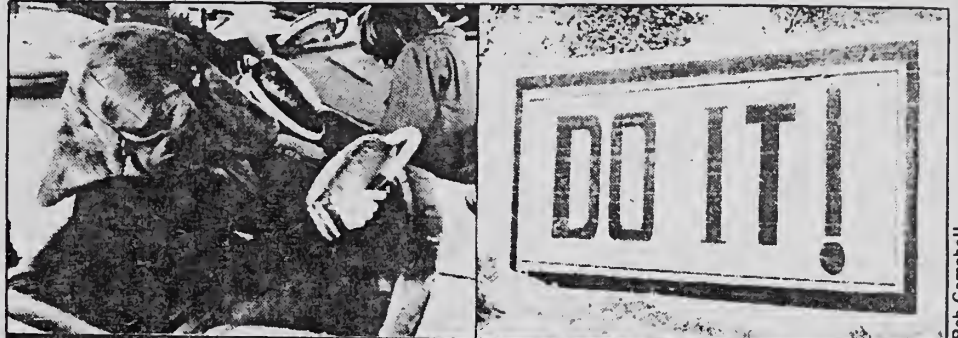
Crashing a bon voyage party

teur vaudeville show as a kazoo band doing the Daffy Duck theme song. Dressed as clowns, gorillas, squirrels, bathing as beauties and death figures, 10 of them stumbled onstage and, as Sheffield puts it, "really did die out there. But it was fun. The chances to be on a vaudeville stage are few and far between. It was always one of my fantasies to do something like that."

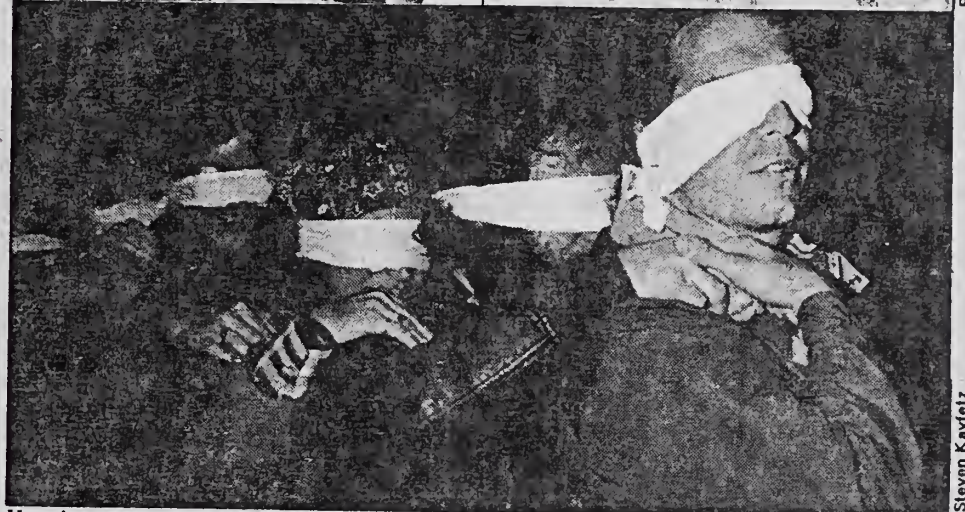
The ability to live out fantasies is a common theme of the club. On April Fools' Day, Gary Warne saw a long-time fantasy of his come to life when the Suicide Club took over two elevators in the Union Square parking garage and filled them with strange and elaborate scenes. There was a candlelight dinner with a violinist, a barber and customer, a gorilla with several bound and gagged hostages, a shower scene complete with a curtain, people in towels and a recording of running water, and an elevator crammed full of balloons.

On July 17th, Cathy Hearty will lead would-be, had-been and wish-they-were hippies through the Haight-Ashbury, giving out flowers in a re-enactment of the "summer of love."

Sometimes, the fantasies seem to be shared by outsiders as well. One elderly woman entered the elevator with the shower scene and said, "Hey, this is fun. How long is this going on?" And Shirley Sheffield will never forget the two young military policemen who approached her after the pie-hitting incident and asked, out of earshot of their superior, "Where are all you people going after this? Maybe we could meet you."



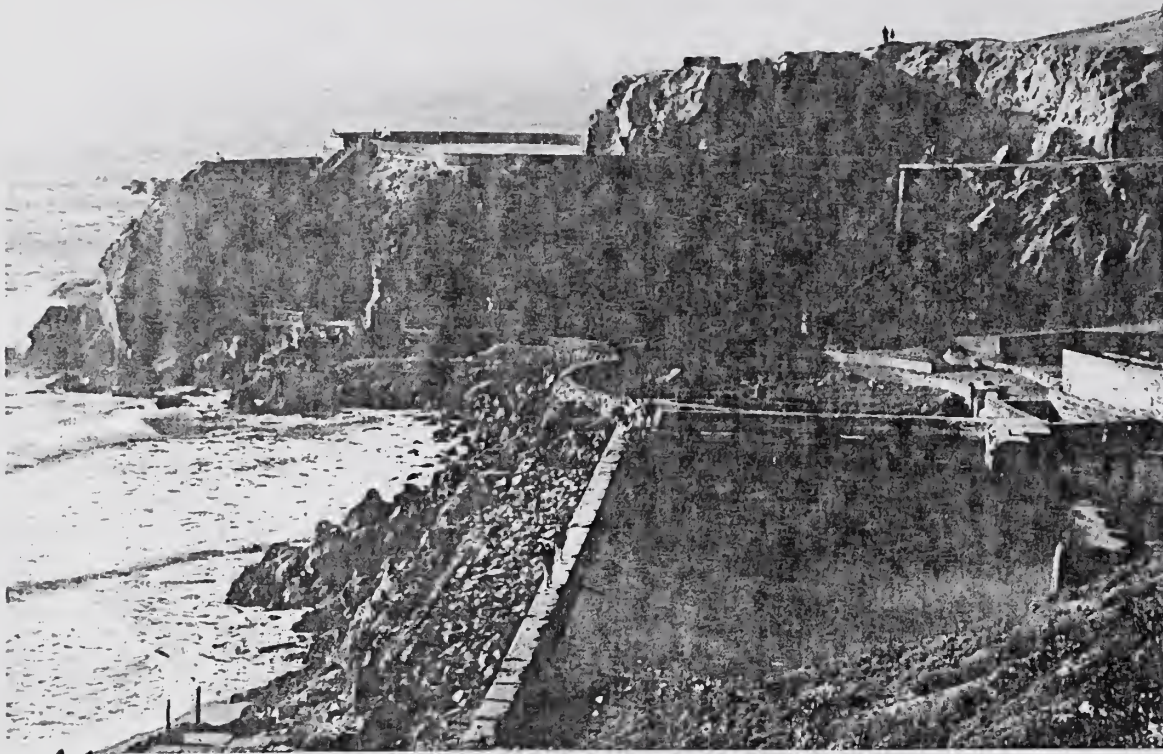
Bob Campbell



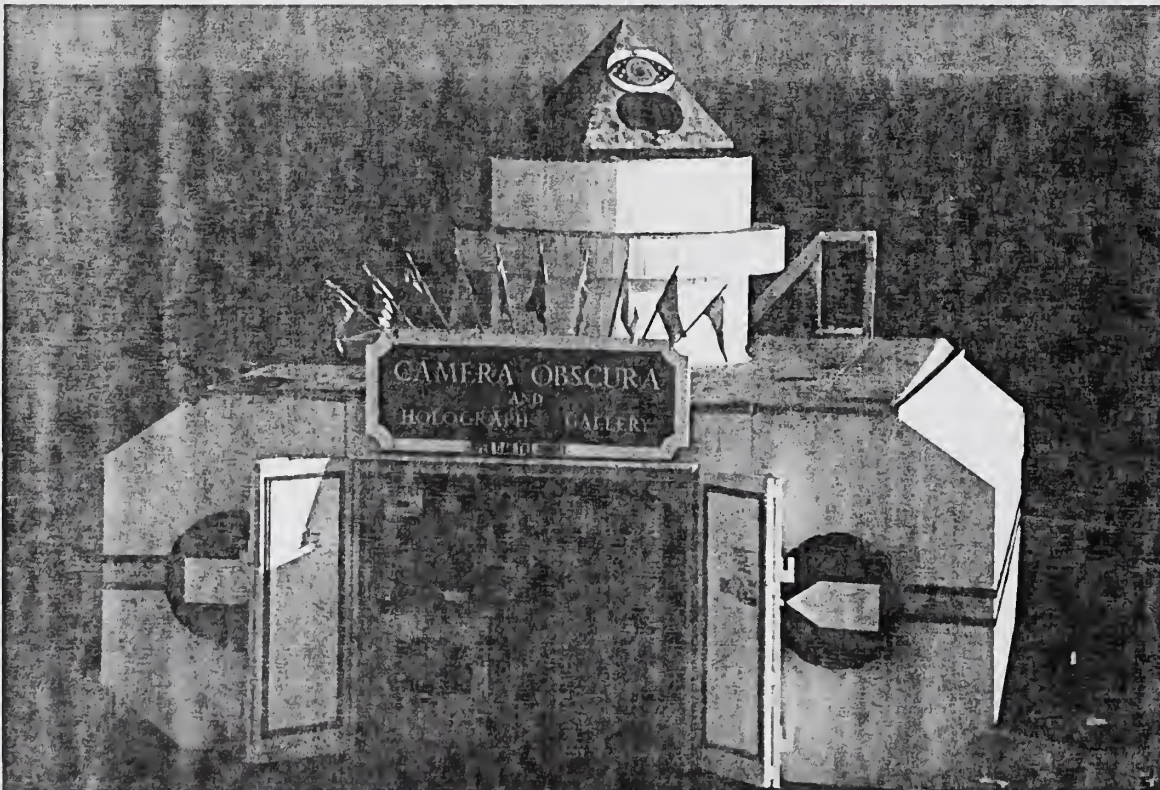
Steven Kayfetz

Hopping around the bumper car track at the recent Calaveras frog-jumping festival; doing it out by Seal Rock; and undergoing the Suicide Club's grueling initiation rites (which this year resulted in twelve deaths and forty-two injuries).

My first event was the June 18th initiation which, among its many adventures, included being walked and bussed while blindfolded to the first leg of the event (see above photo). My favorite part was the walk through the Karaval Street tunnel under the Great Highway to the beach while the tunnel was lit with two rows of soup cans filled with burning kerosene. (See description on second paragraph of blue sheet - third page after this.)



Photographed at the Plant Casarea and the ruins of the Petro Babas during the initiation.



DEFENDANT'S COPY

DATE ISSUED MO. 02 DAY 23 YR. 77		TIME ISSUED 0215	DAY OF WEEK THU	OFFENSE(S) SECTION CODE 2941.5	ASSIGNED TO/DEPT. NO. R 268261
(PRINT) LAST NAME FIELD				ADDITIONAL OFFENSE/ OR COMMENT 602 6 700	
RESIDENCE ADDRESS 1321 HAZARD ST.				LOCATION/OFFENSE(S) COMMITTED 170 ... DIST. 12	
CITY S.F.				<input type="checkbox"/> OFFENSE(S) NOT COMMITTED IN MY PRESENCE CERTIFIED ON INFORMATION AND BELIEF.	
BUSINESS ADDRESS/OR SCHOOL ATTENDED				I CERTIFY UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY, THAT THE FOREGOING IS TRUE AND CORRECT. EXECUTED AT SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. ON THE DATE SHOWN ABOVE (SIGNATURE OF OFFICER)	
SOC. SEC. NO. 073-42-2301		OTHER I.D.		WITHOUT ADMITTING GUILT I PROMISE TO APPEAR AT THE TIME AND PLACE CHECKED AS INSTRUCTED BELOW (SIGNATURE OF PERSON CITED/OR PARENT/GUARDIAN OF JUVENILE) THIS DATA MAY BE COMPUTERIZED IN LOCAL, STATE AND NATIONAL FILES	
DRIVER'S LICENSE NO.		STATE CA	RACE W	DATE OF BIRTH MO 12 DAY 04 YR. 26	AGE 26
SEX M	HAIR BRN	EYES BLU	HT. 6'7"	WT. 140	INCIDENT REPORT NO.
APPROVED BY JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA (S) 12-08-75 P.C. 853.9				JUVENILE NUMBER	
NOTICE TO APPEAR					
ADULTS APPEAR AT: MUNICIPAL COURT CLERK'S OFFICE				TIME	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RM. 475, HALL OF JUSTICE, 850 BRYANT ST. S.F. APPEAR ON: (DAY) THU 0800				(ALLOW BETWEEN 10 AND 15 BUSINESS DAYS) MO. 07 DAY 04 YR. 77	
JUVENILES APPEAR AT: YOUTH GUIDANCE CENTER				TIME	
<input type="checkbox"/> 375 WOODSIDE AVE., S.F. BRING PARENT OR GUARDIAN APPEAR ON: TUE <input type="checkbox"/> WED <input type="checkbox"/> THU <input type="checkbox"/> FRI <input type="checkbox"/>				(ALLOW AT LEAST 5 BUSINESS DAYS 1:30-3:30 PM) MO. DAY YR. PM	

Here it is, my citation from "Enter The Unknown #2."

ONWARD: It really did call for some kind of action, that billboard near the freeway's Mission off-ramp reading "Warning: A Pretty Face Isn't Safe In This City! Fight Back With Self-Defense," that being a new moisturizer, yet, from Max Factor. Few nights back, 26 young people scaled a rope ladder and edited the silly ad to read "Fight Crap With Self-Respect" and "Self-Abuse, A New Mutilator by Ax Factor," at which point police arrested the lot. They are now known as "The Max Factor 26" in the cosmetics counter culture.

★ ★ ★

HERB CAENT

RALLY SCHEDULED FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS

Supporters of the recently jailed Max Factor 27 (see news account) announced yesterday that they plan to hold a rally in the near future to demand the release of this valiant brand of intrepid "urban adventurers". A spokesperson for the Coalition to Abort Injustice as Applied to the MF 27 stated that the rally would include speechifying by supporters of the jailed activists, and some sort of liquid refreshments, the exact nature of which would depend upon the Coalition's financial condition. In addition, petitions will be circulated demanding the 27's release. The petitions will be mailed to Mayor Moscone, the corporate headquarters of Max Factor, and the Denver, Colorado office of the ASPCA. For those members of the '27' not resident in San Francisco, appeals will be made to the mayors of their cities to fight extradition.



We drove cars to this location, which was where we were told that we were going to climb the side of this building and deface a billboard. So John Law climbed it, pulled a rope ladder up after him which the rest of us then climbed.

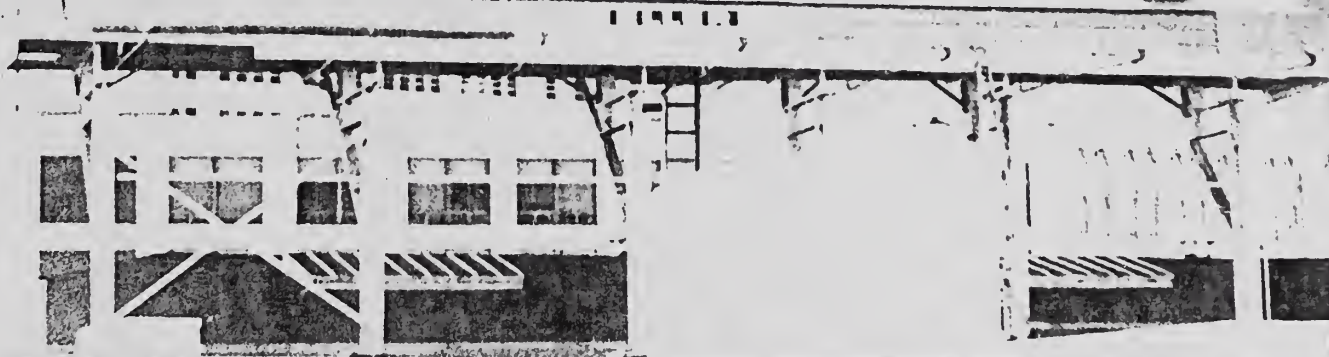
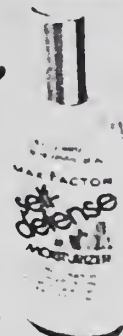


Here's what the billboard looks like today. And that's the parking lot with the truck, two cars, and a person, all of them in the foreground.

"A PRETTY FACE ISN'T SAFE IN THIS CITY."

FIGHT CRAP WITH SELF-RESPECT

THE NEW MOISTURIZER
BY MAX FACTOR.

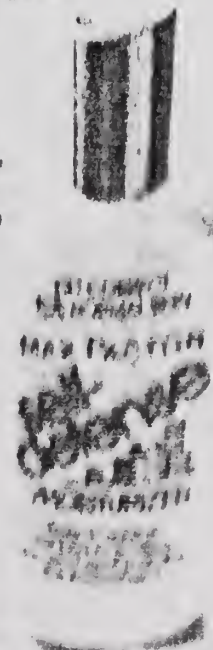


A PRETTY FACE ISN'T SAFE
IN THIS CITY.

FIGHT BACK WITH
SELF-ABUSE.

THE NEW MUTILATOR

AX FACTOR.





This is Jim Khennedy, one of the Max Factor 26, looking at photos of the incident twenty years later. Being the only one who didn't hear about the charges being dropped, he went to the hall of Justice the morning of the hearing, got fingerprinted and booked, and went to court, only to hear the D.A. drop the charges.

ADVOCATE - U.C. DAVIS
PAPER
9/12/77

POLICE CRACK SAN FRANCISCO
TRESPASSING RING

In a daring predawn raid, San Francisco police recently arrested 27 members of a trespassing ring that had operated undetected throughout the city for months. Described by one television photographer as "a goldfish-swallowing, Volkswagon-stuffing group with a social conscience", the Organization has repeatedly invaded abandoned buildings, climbed the piers of the Bay Bridge, ridden nude on the San Francisco cable car, and staged guerrilla theatre (and sometimes gorilla theatre) productions in elevators and subways.

Shortly after midnight on Aug. 29, responding to reports of a possible burglary in progress, dozens of police converged upon an abandoned warehouse at 13th and Mission in the City. With the assistance of units from the fire department, they assaulted the roof, where they surrounded and captured the 27 self-styled "urban adventurers".

When apprehended, the suspects had just completed alterations on two Max Factor billboards. Both boards originally read:

A PRETTY FACE JUST ISN'T SAFE IN THIS CITY
FIGHT BACK WITH SELF-DEFENSE
The new moisturizer by Max Factor

The amended forms read as follows:

"A PRETTY FACE ISN'T SAFE IN THIS CITY"
FIGHT CRAP WITH SELF-RESPECT
A PRETTY FACE ISN'T SAFE IN THIS CITY
FIGHT BACK WITH SELF-ABUSE
The new mutilator Ax Factor

The 25 adults and two juveniles, including one King Hall student, will be arraigned Sept. 14 on charges of trespassing, mopery, and malicious mischief. The Advocate will carry further reports on the fate of the MF 27, as they've become known.

KEIL, CONNOLLY & BARBIERI

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

KEIL BUILDING

244 KEARNY STREET

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94108

TELEPHONE (415) 986-4667

CHARLES P. KNIGHTS (1890-1968)

GEORGE F. BARRY, JR. (1901-1970)

EDWARD D. KEIL
GEORGE A. CONNOLLY
ROBERT J. BARBIERI
WILLIAM D. SOMMER
JACK F. BONANNO
SIDNEY R. SHERAY
H. KELLY OGLE

September 13, 1977

DELIVERED

Mr. Gary Warne
451 Judah Street
San Francisco, CA 94122

Dear Gary:

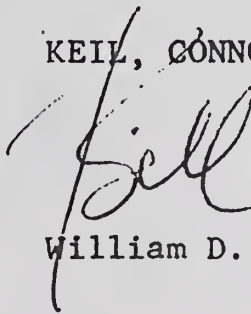
This will confirm that the District Attorney will not be prosecuting anyone concerning the incident on August 28, with the exception of the two juveniles involved. This will further confirm that no one need be booked, and that no one need appear tomorrow morning at 8:00 A.M., again with the exception of the juveniles.

I hand you herewith the rope ladder, ropes, paint brush, paint cans, water bottle, paste, poster paper and miscellaneous papers which were confiscated on August 28. I personally signed all of these out from the Property Clerk at the Hall of Justice.

I trust that this satisfactorily handles the matter.

Yours sincerely,

KEIL, CONNOLLY & BARBIERI



William D. Sommer

WDS:s1

Luckily a Suicide Club member who
was an attorney got us off.

KEIL, CONNOLLY & BARBIERI

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WILLIAM D. SOMMER
JACK F. BONANNO
SIDNEY R. SHERAY
H. KELLY OGLE

September 14, 1977

Mr. Gary Warne
451 Judah Street
San Francisco, CA 94122

Dear Gary:

The following thoughts occurred to me after you, Jayson and I discussed Tuesday night the matter of press coverage of the incident.

First, as I told you, the District Attorney has chosen not to prosecute, and this differs from a dismissal on the merits, as in theory a prosecution could still be commenced. I am concerned that if the billboard or property owner read the wrong sort of newspaper article, he could indicate to the District Attorney that he felt tricked in giving us his cooperation, and could possibly induce the District Attorney to open up the proceeding again.

Secondly, I am concerned that the wrong sort of newspaper stories might hurt the efforts of the two juveniles who were not so fortunate as the rest of you. Until a final disposition of their case has been made, I would hope that nothing concerning the incident, whether newspaper articles or otherwise, should come to the attention of the Juvenile District Attorney or Juvenile Probation Officer.

All in all, then, I would urge that Jayson not write up the incident. I hope to reach him by telephone by the time you receive this, but would appreciate your passing this message along to him in case I am unable to reach him.

Lastly, I shall send you a bill for our costs one of these days. It will be fairly nominal.

Sincerely,

KEIL, CONNOLLY & BARBIERI


William D. Sommer

WDS:s1

FRI NOV 25th 7:00 PM A CRIME WILL BE COMMITTED AT 8:00 PM
NOVEMBER 25th THAT YOU ARE POWERLESS TO PREVENT!

If you can stop shaking long enough after reading this to sign up for it, here's how to receive instructions:
Send an envelope with your name, address and zip code on it. (please paste together from cut out letters of newspapers, etc.)
to: Mr. X, 1837A Green Street, San Francisco, Ca. 94123.
Do not tell ANYONE that you are signing up for it. The enjoyment of this evening depends mainly on the anonymity of everyone involved. Anyone we hear about who tells is automatically disqualified from taking part. Also, if you decide to go, you are doing so completely blind: you won't know what it is, what to do, who's leading it or who else is participating until it happens. One last item: this is an arrestable event. Don't come if this bothers you. Also, be prepared to follow instructions as there won't be any opportunity for discussion before the event begins. Don't sign up if this bothers you either. So, Do you have the courage? Can you stand the suspense? Remember the credo of the Suicide Club when you send your envelope: "Live each day as if it's your last, for it may be."

Mr. X

(Note: The above event was submitted anonymously & the editor disclaims any knowledge of the contents of this event.....ed.)

SAT NOV 26th 11 AM A DAY AT THE RACES

LEAVING 615 Frederick Street at 11 AM NO LATECOMERS, BE THERE ON TIME!! The day is clear, the track is fast, and they're off! This is a Trip to/infiltration of Bay Meadows in Half Moon Bay, one of the two main racetracks in the Bay Area. I've been to the track once (in New York) and discovered that the real inside the plush racehouse bar, etc. We'll encounter sharp-eyed bettors, grieving losers, horse-lovers, horse-haters, and maybe even a thousand-to-one winner. I'm leading this as an infiltration, not as a stunt or as any kind of theater. I personally want to mingle in the stands and talk to people who come here a lot, perhaps learn something about the lure of gambling and the never-ending quest to beat the system. The ~~first~~ first race starts at 1 PM, but I want to get there early so we can walk around and hopefully get behind the scenes (i. e. talk to jockies, trainers, exercise boys, etc.). It's a half hour drive from F and we must have cars to get there. Drivers please contact me beforehand. Admission is \$2.25, and there's a small parking fee, which we'll split. We will leave at 11 AM. Be at my house at 10:30 and I'll explain something about the paramutual betting system, odds, track records, etc. Bring binoculars.

JAYSON WECHTER 665-7644

This is how I became part owner with
ten other souls of a hearse for the
Suicide Club.

WED NOV 30th BUYING A CAR FOR SUICIDE CLUB EVENTS

We will be collecting money thru Nov 30th, 1977 and the total collected will be matched (up to \$500). There is no minimum or maximum donation. There is no minimum or maximum number of contributors. A car will be chosen by a mechanic, not by club members, the only consideration being that it has a standard transmission. The price will be the total, or less, that we have collected, minus the first installment of insurance. The car can be used only for the suicide club which for this purpose shall consist of 1) scouting out events, 2) picking up materials for events and 3) going on events...not for personal reasons. A donation will be asked for each time the car is used for #3 (the events) of each person that rides in it. The money will be used for the next time it breads down. Donations will be accepted at other times too. If the mechanic says that the collected total isn't enough for a good car the deadline will be extended. The car will be sold & the money can be used for other property held in common by the club if necessary and in case of the dissolution of the club the car will be given to Communiversity.

JIM FREUND - Originator
GARY WARNE - "Executor"

LIVING DEATH

This time we're going to leave town, change our names, move to a dull remote vicinity, find meaningless and profitless jobs, and converse in trivial conversation about what we learned from our Reader's Digest subscriptions. We'll have 4.75 kids who'll all have braces. We don't plan on seeing each other after we arrive. Drivers arrive three weeks ahead of time to buy underwear for everyone and to load luggage. Dress drably, bring only dull friends. Impossible to be arrested.

BOB CAMPBELL & HIS ALIENATED FRIENDS

TA GET IDENTIFIED: Laugh all you want to, but Bob
married Judy Hait, moved to Seattle,
got a job at Lockheed, and had

I just wanted to identify children! or
signing up and taking money from people for the canoe trip, before
it was written up in the newsletter. I realize now that the
spontaneous popularity of the event excluded people (as we
almost reached the limit for enrollment that first evening) and I'm
really very sorry that I was so thoughtless. (I did suspect it
was going to be very popular, and didn't want to be excluded myself-
how's that for irony?) Anyway, if any of you who have them, direct
your slings and arrows at me. P.S. I won't do it again.

Adrienne Burk

LICENSE NO. 1H46213 DATE 3-17-78

ADDRESS 1315 FUNSTON TIME 1336

NOTICE

THIS IS A WARNING NOT A CITATION
THIS VEHICLE MUST BE MOVED WITHIN 72 HOURS

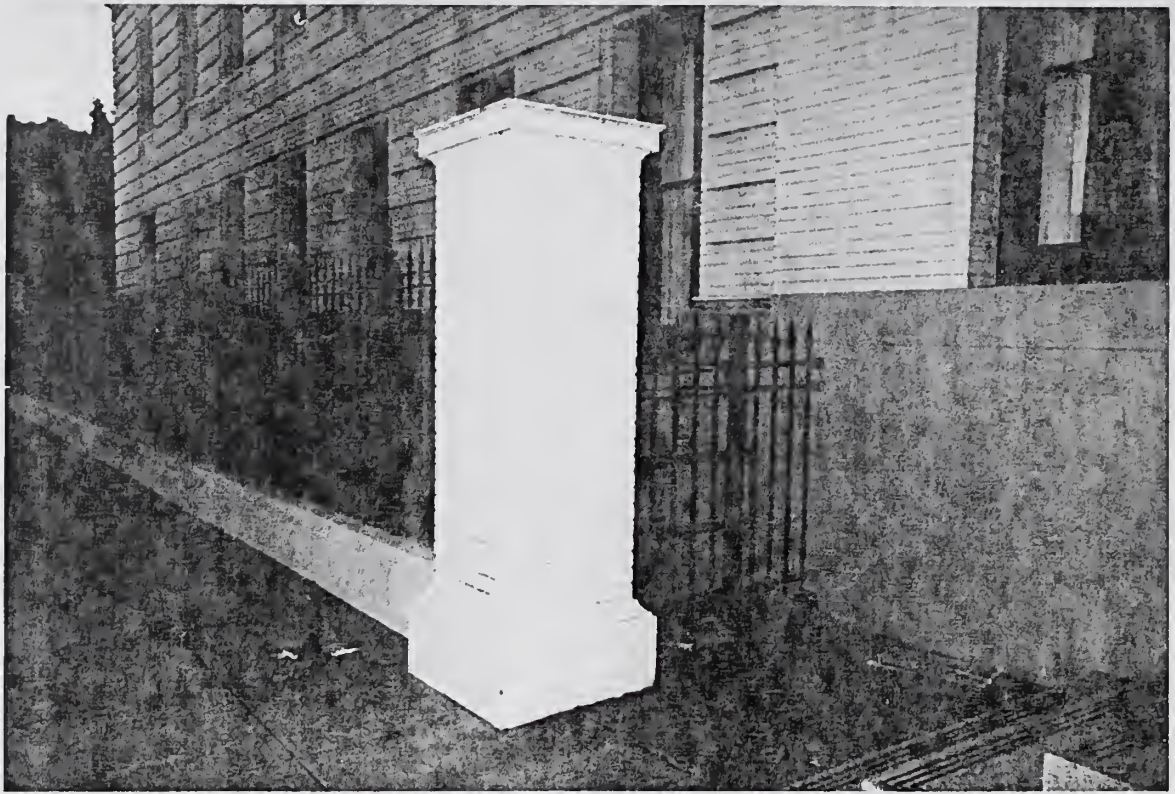
IF THIS VEHICLE IS NOT MOVED(AT LEAST ONE BLOCK) IN COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 37A OF THE SAN FRANCISCO TRAFFIC CODE, THIS VEHICLE MAY BE TOWED AND THE OWNER SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATE PENALTIES.

1891
6881-855

SAN FRANCISCO POLICE DEPARTMENT
(SEE REVERSE SIDE)

SFPD - 59(11-71)

Owning a hearse has problems the average person can't even begin to imagine. One of them is that damn few people like 'em parked in their neighborhoods. We found this out when the Suicide Club hearse kept getting these warnings whenever we parked it around the neighborhood of St. Anne's Church. You'd think that Catholics, of all people, would understand hearses . . .



This is the entrance to the Parkersburg hospital or court that participants in *A Crime Will Be Committed That You Are Powerless To Prevent* used after they followed a series of anonymous clues and a kidnapping of Adrienne Burke in my first try at staging a Suicide Club event.



The event was organized by "The Club" and no one had any idea who was organizing it. The newsletter which carried a disclaimer which served to keep the mystery and paranoia around it to the point that only a handful of people who were supposed to sign up for it. The event was held at the Parkersburg hospital or court. The event could be organized by the club or by the club members.

Q SATURN CERTIFICATE LET US HEAR YE ALL

Let it be known *NOW & FOREVER* that on this date

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 25TH 1977

PETER FIELD

Qualified for eternal membership in the

SATURN BRANCHESO SUPERIOR CLUB

Risk:

Did come out of the closet to create, facilitate and ---
survive A CRIME THAT YOU ARE POWERLESS TO
PREVENT - which was his personality. THEREFORE ---

With Strength, Character & Goodwill the above person did fearlessly enter into the World of

CHAOS, CACOPHONY & SATURNALIA

Conquered these forces and bent them to their desire, enabling all those who witnessed and participated in this great event to grow rich in experience & wisdom.

Official Eternal Member Number

30

Azrael

THE COLLECTIVE MIND
© MCMLXXVII B.S.

The Great Lost Cathedral of the Tenderloin has been found

Bill Mandel

Sunday, October 27, 1985

WALK THROUGH A dingy lobby, up a flight of institutional steel stairs, squeeze through a narrow metal door and there it is — the Great Lost Cathedral of the Tenderloin.

For more than 35 years, a vaulting, neo-Gothic-style cathedral built into a Tenderloin high-rise in 1929 slumbered beneath obscuring layers of plaster, fake walls, false ceilings and faulty memories. Now that this great treasure of lofty space and light has been uncovered, the question is: What do we do with it?

The chubby, 24-story building at 100 McAllister St., at the base of Leavenworth, is now a semi-seedy residence hall for students at Hastings College of the Law. When it was built in 1929 as the William Taylor Hotel, however, it was the tallest building in San Francisco, and the tallest hotel west of Chicago. Its neighborhood was the finest, just off glamorous Market Street.

The Methodist Church threw up the big pile as a combo money-maker and housing for missionaries passing through San Francisco. It was named after the Methodist missionary credited with bringing the eucalyptus tree to California.

What was known as the Great Hall, designed by the architect Lewis P. Hobart, accommodated 1,500 worshipers, and was famous for its large stained-glass rose window. But it fell into disuse in 1934, when the Methodists sold the building to private developers.

Two years later, the building reopened as the swank Empire Hotel. Its most popular feature was the Sky Room Lounge, The City's first bar offering a panoramic view of the Bay Area. The more famous Top of the Mark opened three years later, in 1939.

Everything changed with the outbreak of World War II. The Empire Hotel became the property of the federal government. In the great war effort, no one paid much attention to the Great Hall and the fancy Sky Room Lounge.

Across town, visiting servicemen stopped into the Top of the Mark for one last drink before going off to war. That sentimental sacrament turned the Mark into a world-famous symbol of San Francisco. Meanwhile, the older Sky Room Lounge was stripped of its luxurious Deco furniture — all gleaming mirrors and stainless steel — and closed to the public.

The government turned the Great Hall into a military induction center. The Selective Service plastered over the granite Gothic arches and the fine stained glass. Carpenters came in and built a false

ceiling 20 feet above the floor. They poked holes in the vaulted roof and dropped heavy wires 55 feet down to hold the ceiling.

Look at the picture on Page B-6. The bright white columns running alongside the cathedral are government work. Run an imaginary line from one set of columns to the other — that's where the ceiling went. The wires came through those black holes in the vaulted roof. You can still see a few of the wires.

Forgotten by most people, defaced beyond recognition by the government, the Great Hall slumbered in obscurity for 35 years. Below the false ceiling, the big white room changed hands but not themes. The Selective Service System ceded it to the Internal Revenue Service. The cathedral had gone from the divine to the iniquitous.

Then, in 1977, the feds moved to their monstrous building on Golden Gate Avenue, declaring the hulk of the Empire Hotel surplus property. Nearby Hastings

College of the Law bought the place for student housing. Along with the building came stories about its past.

It was easy to find the Sky Room. Its dusty hulk is still up there, 24 stories above the ground. The famous 6-foot-by-14-foot windows continue to look out on the sweeping view. The show is different now, of course, featuring an urban array of taller, younger buildings that sprang up to block that all-inclusive vista of the '30s. It remains spectacular, although too small to reopen as a club in the high-priced '80s.

The Hastings people also found clues that, above the fake ceilings and beyond the maze-like bureaucratic partitions in that first floor hall, something big was hiding, something just waiting to be rediscovered.

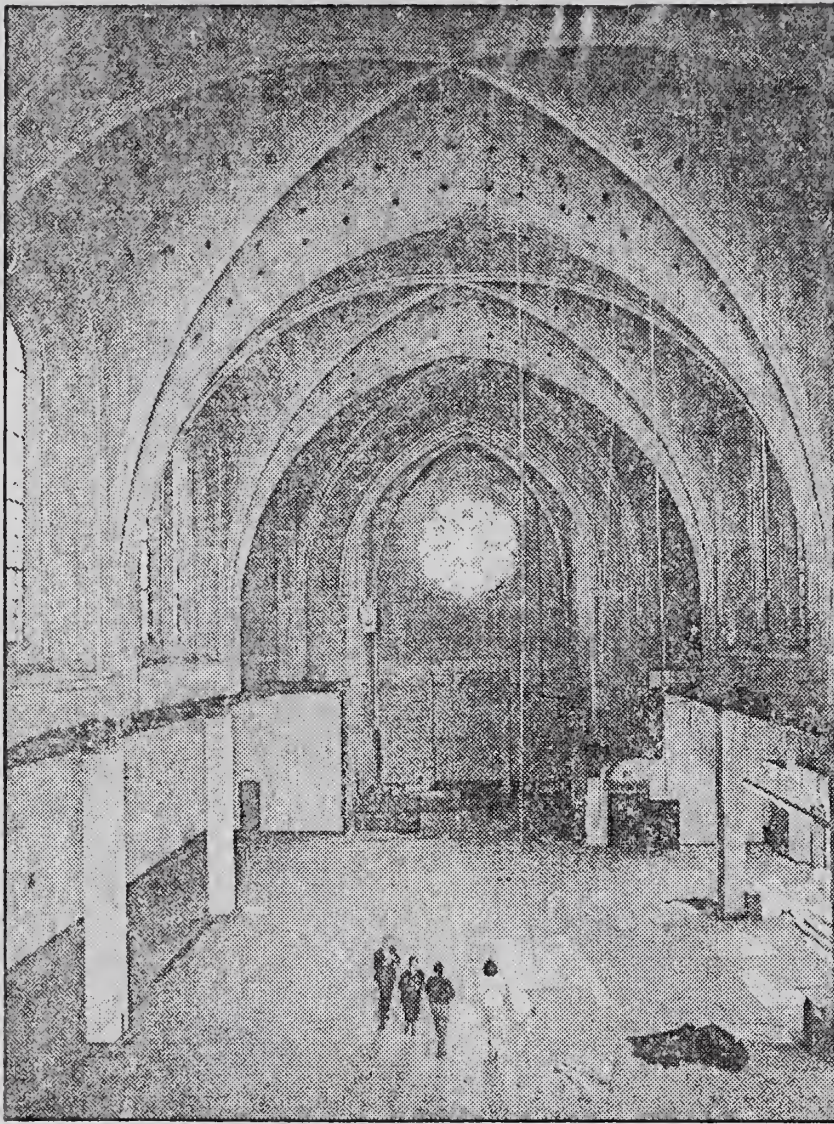
About a year ago, Hastings workmen came in and started tearing down the ceiling and the white plaster walls, revealing the stunning room you see in the picture. The Great Lost Cathedral of the Tenderloin had been found.

Last week, The City's Hotel Tax Fund appropriated \$15,000 for a use study by the San Francisco architectural firm of Robinson, Mills and Williams. The thought is to turn the Great Hall into a performing arts space seating about 800 people.

"This is beautiful, and very exciting," says C. David Robinson, who will direct the study for his firm. "Space is gold in San Francisco, and

we have at least 15,000 square feet of beautiful, graceful space here. It's costing between \$250 and \$300 a

square foot to build in The City now, so you can imagine the value of this find."



THE GREAT HALL, JUST DISCOVERED BY HASTINGS' WORKMEN
It has not been used as a church since building was sold in 1934

But the SF Suicide Club discovered it first, Bill! In fact, they did it twice in two Enter The Unknowns when large groups of Suicide Clubbers were led into the old Federal Building after it was closed down. The second ETU even got busted by the federal police. At those times the false ceiling was still in place but we managed to find the door to the gallery anyway and saw the vaulted ceiling with the wires and false ceiling still hanging from it. A very surreal sight in the dark with nothing but flashlites. The photo below shows the same room we had our post exploration potluck in, and also the room in which the second group got busted in.



Examiner photos by Paul Kitagaki Jr.

Atop the 24-story building is the hulk of the Sky Room Lounge, which predated Top of the Mark



Here's the section that contained
the church.



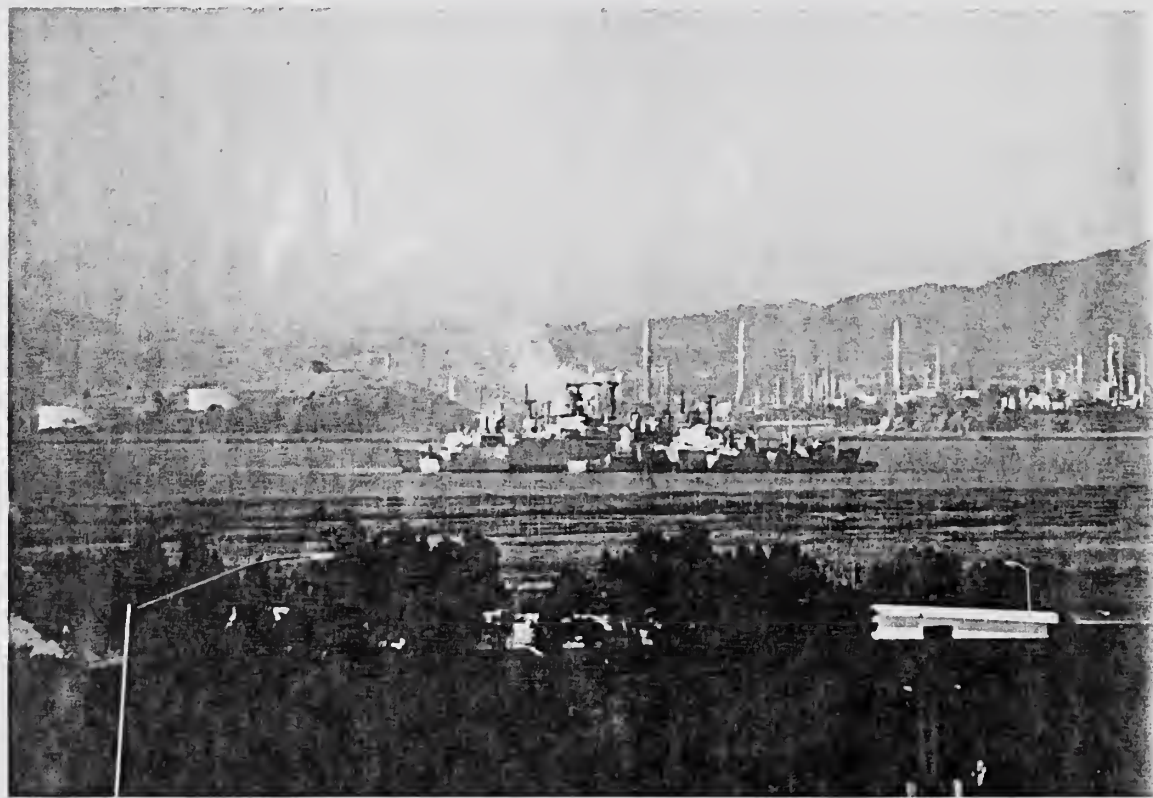
We went in over this fence
to the fire escape.



The picture windows are the old Sky Room Lounge.



The mothball fleet in daylight. We carried canoes across the marshes and paddled out to a landing alongside the first ship in the row.



Another row of ships. One of these is the Glomar Explorer of CIA fame, the one they built to salvage a sunken Russian nuclear submarine.



We tried the mothball fleet on Xmas Eve a year after the first trip, this time in rubber rafts. This didn't work out too well, especially when Barbara Vince, our first aid "expert" freaked out over getting a little wet on the raft trip and aborted the event by scaring everyone into thinking she was getting hypothermia. So we signalled a small craft nearby to call the Coastguard, and they called the patrol force that polices the Fleet. This turned out to be two middle aged black men driving a small tug boat who took us off the Fleet and fed us the story that we had been riding our rafts at night and had got on the Fleet when the water got too rough to make it back to shore. Oh, well.



The Victoria Theater, an old burlesque joint at 16th and Mission that eked out a living in the fifties and early sixties, had been shut down for years when the Suicide Club ran across it.

The result was a handful of Suicide Club members sneaking inside the theater through this side entrance to see The Last Show, an actual burlesque production with real strippers stripping and genuine stand up comics on lining. And we got away with it, too. No cops, no hassles, no nothing except this beautifully organized event.

Last of the Independents

Victoria

No matter what's going on outside, and god knows there can be plenty going on at 16th and Mission streets, inside the Victoria is a haven where people go to see something unusual — special performances, plays, film festival entries, and indie films so far out on the commercial landscape their producers rent the theater to show them.

Built in 1908, the Victoria Theater began life as a vaudeville operation called the Brown Opera House, built by none other than Edmund Joseph Brown, father of Pat and grandfather of

Jerry. In the movie era the building became the 16th Street Theater. The venue went Spanish, then burlesque; in 1970 it began a 16-year-long sleep from which it was rescued by Robert and Anita Correa.

"It was a shambles," remembers Anita. The pair started out with live performance, music, theater, and dance but lately have turned to film festivals, including the Lesbian and Gay festival, the Latin American fest, and, coming up, the Short Attention Span Festival. They're also looking at series of Vietnamese and Indian films, and the theater continues to host indie premieres, notably David McCallach's latest, a silent with a score by the Club Foot Orchestra. "I have a real soft spot in my heart for independent filmmakers; it's such a difficult thing to do," says Anita.

— Kathleen Maher



FALSTAFF BREWING CORPORATION

470 TENTH STREET, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94103

And this was the best New Years eve party I'd ever been to. Imagine spending a night exploring an abandoned brewery. There was a 20' barley hopper that we climbed down into that still had some grain in the bottom. Participants would climb down and jump into the grain in pitch darkness, hearts in their throats the whole time.



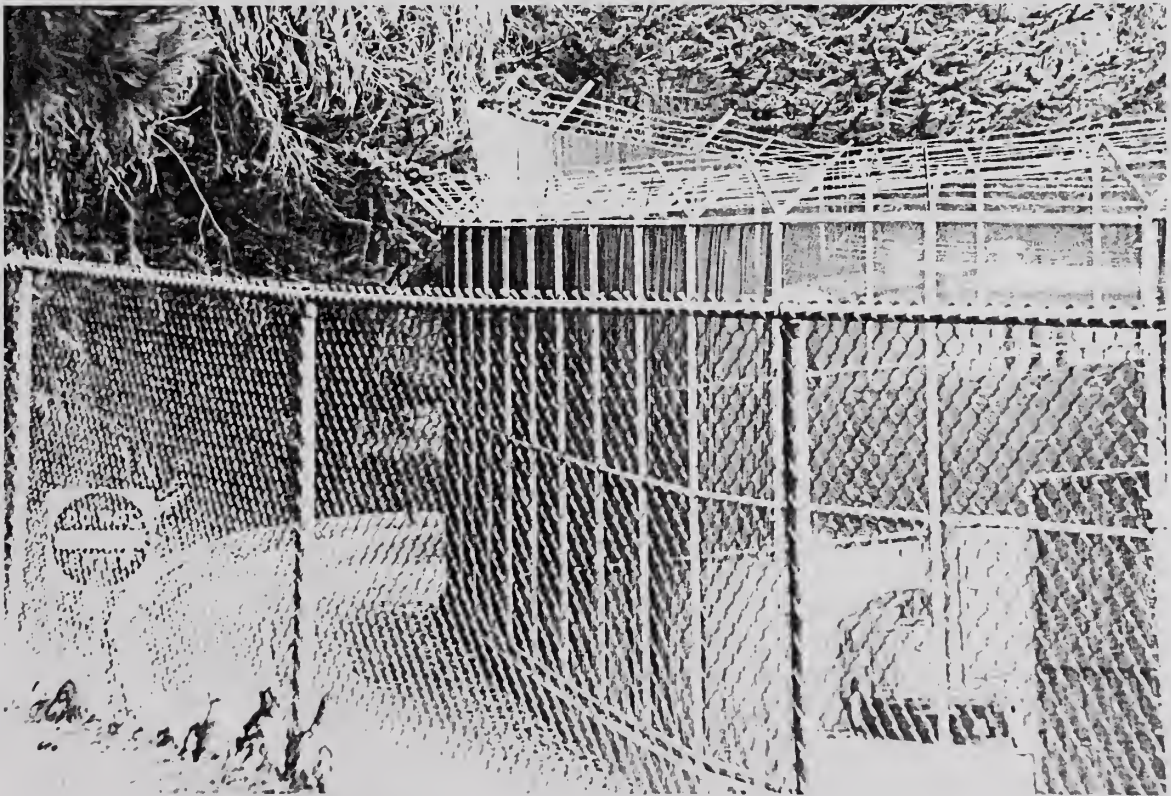
Woodside and Idora are where you go . . .



. . . to the hills where you go to find peace
and quiet . . .



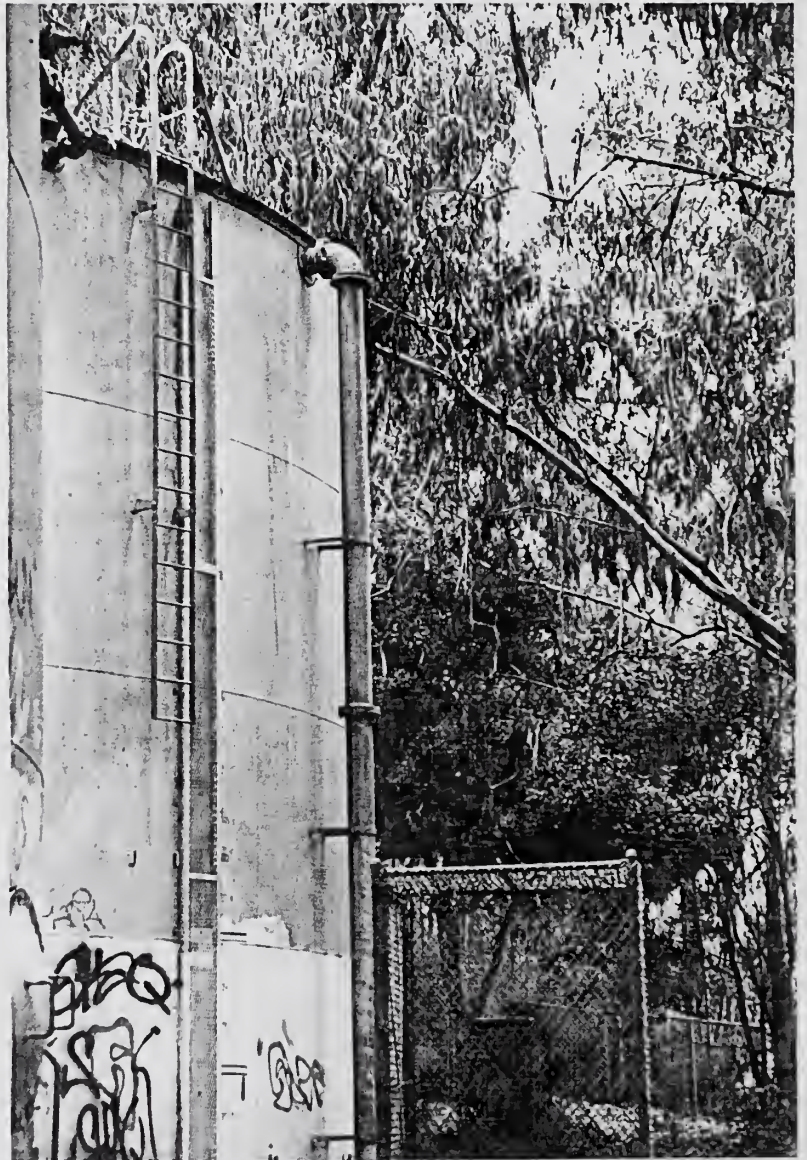
. . . which has Laguna Honda Hospital's main
lot along its left . . .



. . . of local rail near United . . .

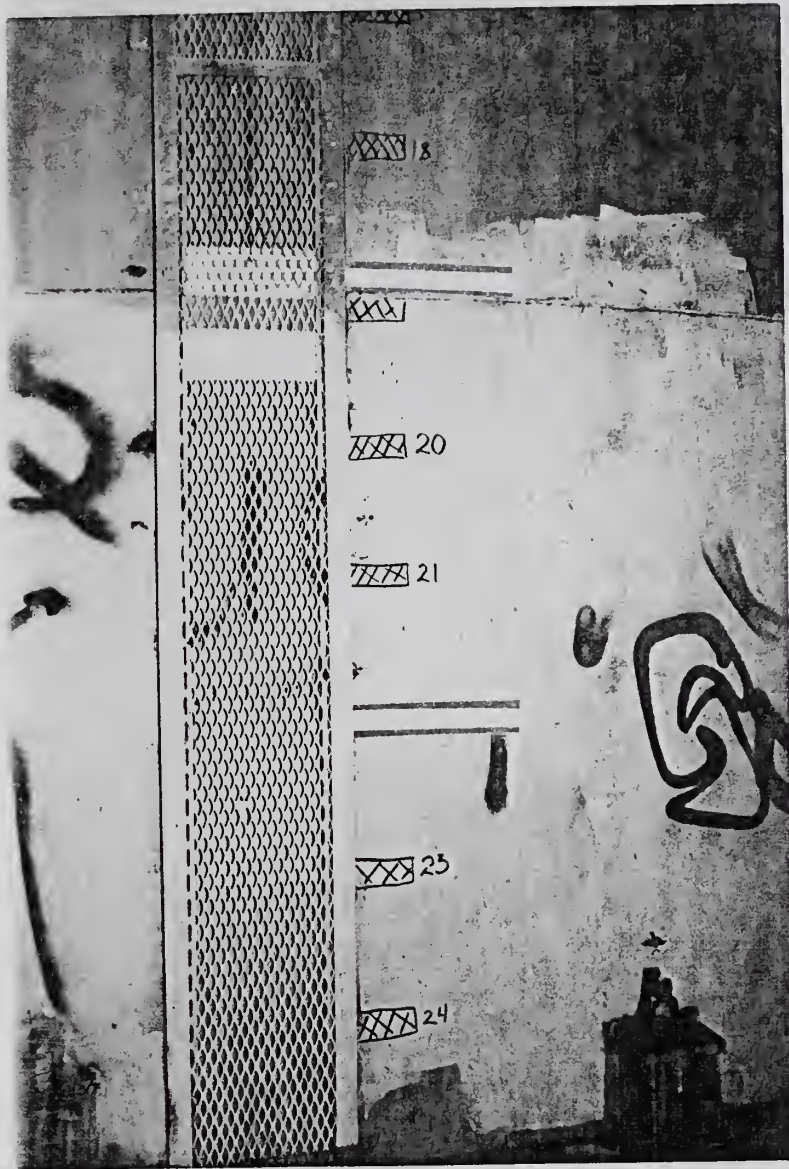


... and these giant water tanks
up the hill. It wasn't really the
San Bruno Mountain Reservoir ...



... but it was still a hell of
a lot of fun to climb to the
tank's roof, take off our clothes,
open a hatch, and climb down a
ladder to swim in a pool of
thousand gallons of water, just
like that. It was a real
kiss-off. A nice surprise. I
Steve K... around in an...
playing...

This is the gauge.

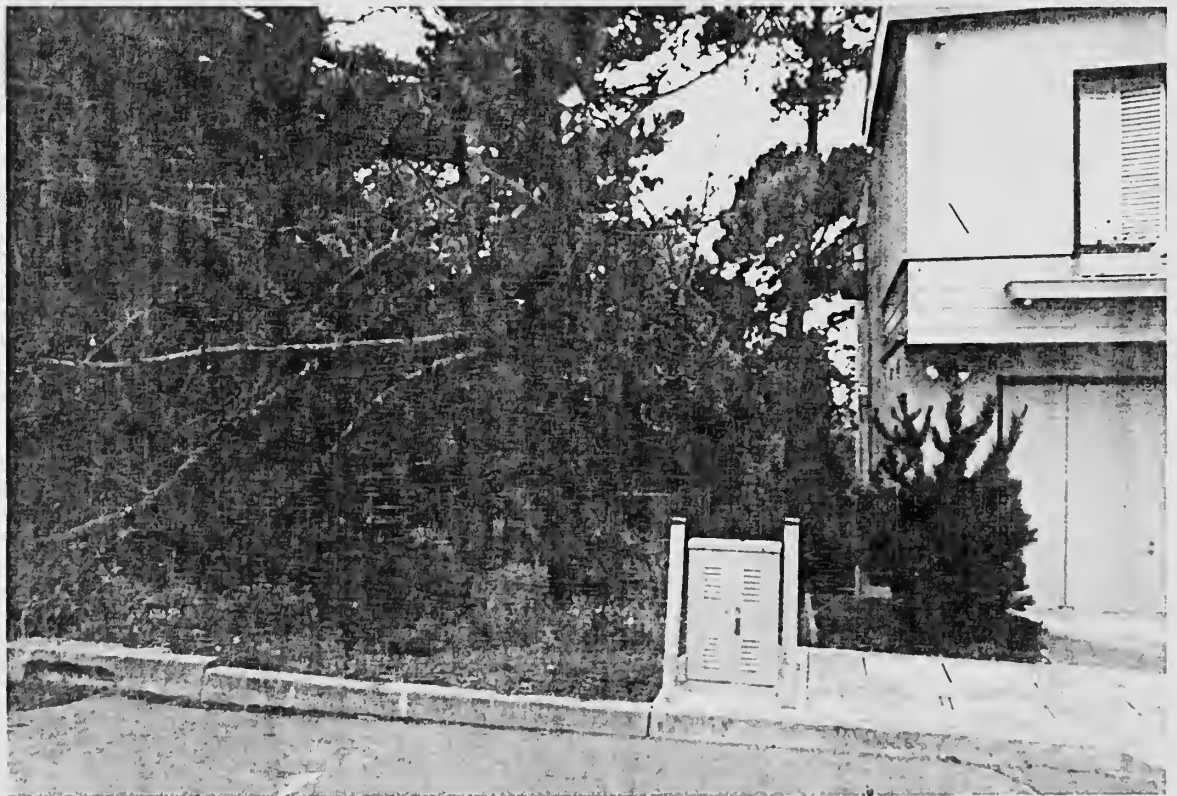


Walking back we saw the Mount Davidson cross rising above YGC.





Another way to the banks is
from this corner . . .





. . . and down this path.

Communities

SANTA GETS BUSTED IN COPENHAGEN

by Ellen Frank

IT IS COPENHAGEN at Christmastime. You are shopping at one of the city's largest department stores. Suddenly, by some pre-arranged signal, 35 men and women dressed as Santa Claus emerge from the washrooms and descend on the store's book department. There, they start taking books down from the shelves and giving them to customers. One of them warmly wishes you a merry Christmas and presses several volumes on you. Giving generously, he says, is what Christmas is all about: Here, take these. What is this? A promotion gimmick? But then an alarmed store manager comes in and begins shouting. Customers are laughing, taking books with them. Suddenly masses of police arrive, and swiftly haul the generous Santas out into the street. There, the red-suited people are roughed up, searched and thrown into paddy wagons. Watching bystanders are horrified. Children become hysterical.

The scene described above happened three Christmases ago, and the Santa Clauses (though *not* the police) were members of Solvognen (pronounced "SOUL-vong"), an extraordinary Danish guerrilla theater troupe that is one of the largest and most innovative groups of its kind in the world. In the five imaginative years of its existence, Solvognen has become a national legend. The department store gift-giving was only one stage of the group's 1974 Christmasmen (Danish for Santa Claus) action, and people are still talking about it. This year Solvognen will strike again at Christmastime, but no one is quite sure how. Britta, one of the group's founders, says, "We have only one rule—never do anything twice."

Solvognen's Christmasmen action centered around an army of 75 Santa Clauses, male and female, who began as naive and generous visitors from northern regions but gradually learned that Christmas has been corrupted by



"Christmasmen" arrested in store (above); dancing at GM plant.

greed and capitalism. The week started with the helicopter arrival of one Christmasman and his angel companion in a field outside the small village of Holbaek, near Copenhagen. They were officially greeted by the town mayor, and a woodwind ensemble played Danish Christmas tunes.

After the welcoming ceremony, the Christmasmen and the angel rode a large white horse into Copenhagen, where they met up with an army of Christmasmen who emerged from the Oslo-Copenhagen ferry docked in the harbor. Scores of white-robed, winged angels also swarmed off the boat singing carols. Large animals, including a 30-foot-tall white goose, rolled along with the procession. Nearly everyone carried a Danish flag. ("That way people will never mind.") The enormous pro-



Photos by Peter Lorenzan

cession moved toward the Central Square, giving away presents and hot coffee, and always singing. The next morning the Christmasmen went to the central police station, marched in double file into the cobblestone courtyard and sang carols.

On the third day the Christmasmen went to a recently closed General Motors factory, relocated to Germany because more cars could be sold there. They jumped the plant gates and entered the factory, where only a few work-

ers remained, sweeping up. Musicians played, workers and Santas sang and danced, and all gathered for a Christmas banquet. The press was along as usual and chronicled it all, including the arrival of the plant manager, who firmly announced that it was "undemocratic" to enter private property. The celebration dispersed before the police arrived. That night the army of Santas marched through central Copenhagen, singing carols about the greed they had seen since their arrival.

On the fourth day the Christmasmen marched to the Workers' Court, where the unions arbitrate disputes. There the Christmasmen asked: why were people out of work? They could see no shortage of money. The speech, delivered by a Santa Claus held high on a crane, was written by a highly respected law professor, a man who had marched with the army for several days and also served as adviser and tactician during encounters with the police. He told the Christmas army how to avoid arrest as long as possible, and when they were arrested at last, he guided their court defense. A basic tactic was to always remain in character as Christmasmen—peaceful, cheerful, nonviolent.

The tactic proved important the next day when the department-store raid occurred. The 75 Santas entered two major stores in street clothes, changed into Santa Claus garb in the bathrooms and converged simultaneously at the two book departments at exactly 4:00 p.m. They then gave away books to the customers and wished them all a fine holiday. The police arrived en masse and dragged the Christmasmen out of the stores. Many of them were beaten on the street in full public view. Of course they knew what they were getting into, and, as one Christmasman later explained to me, "We showed the cultural significance of crime. If you're going to be honest and gener-

—continued on page 70

DECEMBER 1977
68

REMEMBER THE
CALIFORNIA SANTA'S?
THESE GUYS DID IT
FIRST

SANTAS—cont'd. from page 68
ous, you have to be a criminal." The violence riveted the attention of the media; Santa Claus getting beaten makes for hot copy. Solvognen's myth grew.

• • •

Solvognen's political opinions are common to leftists the world over, ranging from an opposition to nuclear power to an emphasis on community self-government. They express the issues, however, in specifically Danish terms: economically, this means a strong anti-Common Market stand; militarily, they firmly oppose NATO and any Danish commitment of troops to the organization. Above all else, Solvognen speaks almost romantically for a simpler Danish life-style, where American consumerism is not an envied standard.

Solvognen's core is a collective of 25 women and men, ranging in age from 19 to 40. The work does not pay, so the members support themselves

with their own skills, which range from sewing to acting to technical work in commercial films. Many of them live in the self-governing anarchist community of Christiania, a former military base a mile and a half from central Copenhagen.

The major idea behind Solvognen's work is to bring more life to political demonstrations, to make them more than speakers and listeners, leaders and led, and to inject the active Left with a contagious exuberance that will appeal to people who do not consider themselves radicals already. Britta explains: "We want to make demonstrations fun and more for the people. We are trying to help the political movement to not be so square."

Take, for example, Solvognen's January 1973 celebration of Nixon's inauguration. The group marked the occasion by staging a Presidential goodwill visit, beginning, of course, with a press conference at the Copenhagen airport. The man acting as Nixon wore an enor-

mous and grotesque caricature mask. Pat was prim and ever-smiling. Kissinger spoke in a totally garbled tongue no one could understand. They all rode into town in a black limousine, with a motorcycle escort and many bodyguards. Danish and American flags hung from the vehicles, while Pat, Dick and Henry waved and smiled to the perplexed crowds. As they came into the city, an American-style band with majorettes accompanied the procession to the Central Square. Nixon addressed a rally while larger-than-life American consumer products walked through the crowd. There was a giant CBS record, a Colgate toothpaste tube and a camera, all proclaiming, "We march for Nixon." The rally moved to the American Embassy, where Nixon's head was symbolically cut off, and everyone—including the bodyguards—sang the Internationale. Pat Nixon and Kissinger had a fit. The action was far bigger news in the Copenhagen papers than Nixon's real inauguration.

• • •

What may be Solvognen's most spectacular action to date came when Copenhagen hosted a meeting of top NATO ministers. Solvognen's response was the Allied Mobile Forces, an army of 50 men who were ostensibly there to protect the ministers from demonstrations by "minorities" who oppose NATO.

The young men came from Christiania and other parts of the city for several days of intensive training. Their uniforms were U.S. Army surplus, and their modified trapshooting guns were designed to look like machine guns. They trained by watching military films borrowed from the American embassy. The "soldiers" cut their hair short and practiced close-order drill.

The action aimed to show the impact of a constant military presence. Specifically, they wanted to urge Danish resistance to supplying NATO with troops.

The ruse was effective. The AMF soldiers appeared at the

airport when some of the NATO ministers arrived. Tourists were shocked by the mass of heavily armed soldiers. "What is this? An armed state? A dictatorship?"

During a large public demonstration against NATO, the AMF were posted along the route in sandbag bunkers, guns poised in the air. Many of the anti-NATO protesters knew it was Solvognen, while others hurled epithets at them. Then the AMF forces rushed on a demonstration at the Portuguese Tourist Office, "beat up" people and threw them into a waiting truck. The victims were friends from a suburban theater group.

Finally came an occupation of Dansk Radio, the government-owned radio station. In an echo of Orson Welles' "War of the Worlds" broadcast, Solvognen actors announced on the air that Denmark was "... in chaos, in civil war, and the AMF must take over."

On the last day of the action, the army went to the Copenhagen Central Police Station, where they gave medals to the plainclothes police who had been along through the action.

Why is Solvognen so much better than anything similar in the United States? The answers are many: Denmark is a small country with a long tradition of tolerance; it has a sizable body of sympathetic left-wing public opinion; and, perhaps most of all, the European Left has consciously used cultural or artistic events as a means of spreading its ideas beyond the circle of true believers. In that effort, Solvognen has been successful. Today the group and its ideas have become so much a part of the national culture that the authorities sometimes see them when they aren't even there. Recently, at a public viewing of an American YF-16 military plane, three *real* policemen were arrested on suspicion of being Solvognen members.

Ellen Frank, a Massachusetts writer and filmmaker, is finishing a book on alternative theater groups in this country and Europe.

Dear Friends,

Does this spur
any ideas?

Larry

It took 18 years, but the Cacophony Society finally pulled off a Santa

event, even if they were drunken Santas. (See albums # 21 & 29 for photos.)

QUILT ADVENTURE

Let it be known, **NOW & FOREVER** that on this date

SATURDAY, JANUARY 14TH, 1978

PETER FIELD

Qualified for eternal membership in the

STAN BRANNON'S QUILT CLUB

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With Strength, Character & Goodwill the above person did fearlessly enter into the World of **CHAOS, CACOPHONY & SATURNALIA**

Conquered these forces and bent them to their desire, enabling all those who witnessed and participated in this great event to grow rich in experience & wisdom.

Official Eternal Member Number

30

Arval

THE COLLECTIVE MIND
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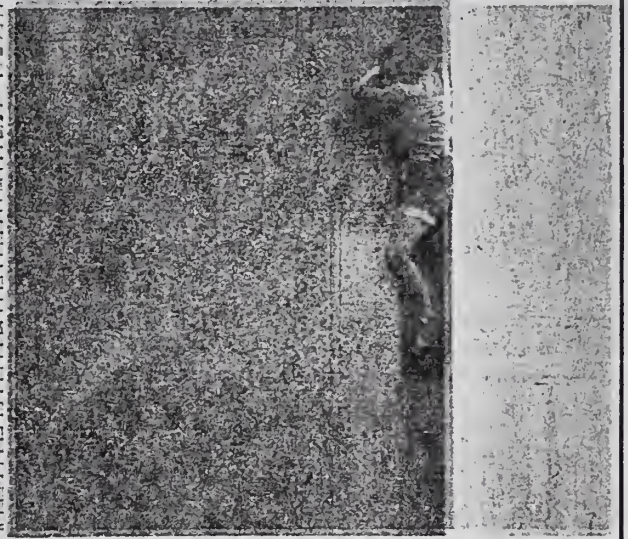
A Young Man

By David Ross

Photography: Robert Zipper



The East Face of Mount Shrader. "This is a wall on Shrader Street in the Haight-Ashbury belonging to Lucky's bar. I'd been studying it for quite a long time. You'll notice that the bricks haven't been pointed flush with the surface, and cement has been left out of the cracks so you have about a half inch to put your fingers in. The climb is about twenty-three feet off the ground.



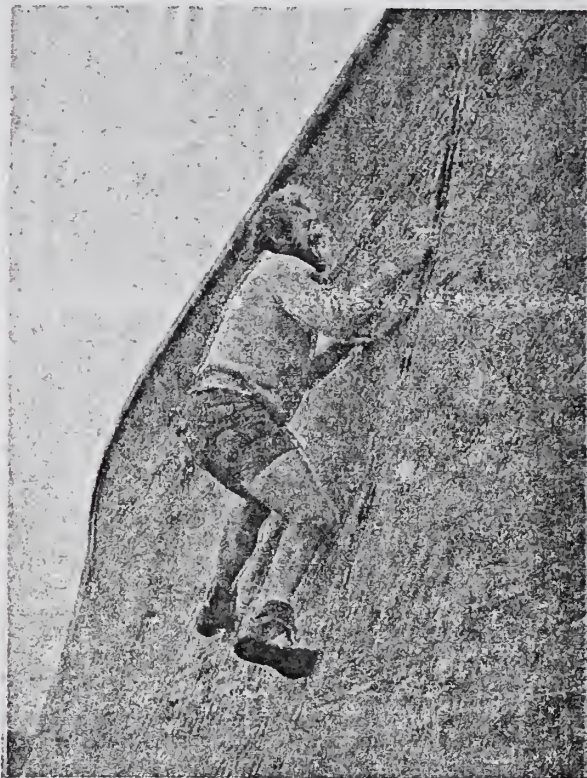
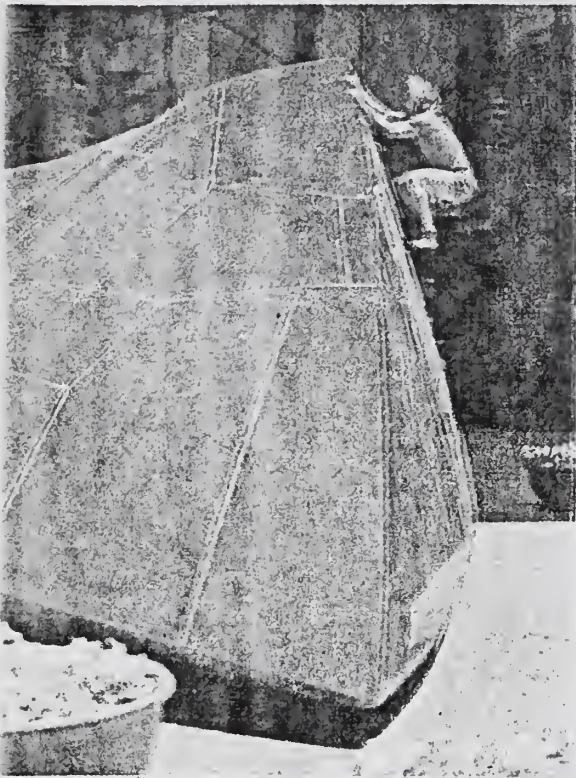
The Safeco Crack. "This required a different technique, known as off-width climbing. It's used when you have a crack that you can't securely jam your fist into. Generally, these are cracks of four inches or more. The entire crack is about 150 feet high, between two office buildings on Montgomery Street. I went up only another ten feet after this.



Exposed Aggregate. "This is a wall at Cala Foods at Stanyan and Haight. We go there to train because it gives us a particular type of climbing—face climbing—that you can't find anywhere else. In order to make progress on these pebbles you have to pinch them. Some of the climbing here is really quite advanced.



Petrified Mud. "This is a new climb for us. It's in a little park just below the Buena Vista hill. It's a beautiful wall, but at the top it goes into hardened mud, and I was nervous about climbing it in case the mud broke. The entire rock is about 110 feet high, which is not very difficult except for the mud."



Banker's Heart. "This is the famous piece of sculpture in front of the Bank of America building. As you can see, it's easy to run up the gradual side, but for a climber that's cheating. The sheer side, of course, is the difficult one. This particular hand traverse I thought would be impossible because of the slick and glassy surface obsidian has when it's polished. And there's also the immediate concern to your concentration that the two bank guards might come out."

The Ancient Mariner. "The wall is at Ocean Beach, at the end of Kennedy Drive. The climb involves what is probably the hardest thin crack I've ever done anywhere on rock or building. And also the most vicious, for I tried it over a period of a year and it took over a hundred attempts before I finally made it. With thin cracks like this, all you can get in are your fingertips. But the minute I saw this wall I said to myself, by golly, I've got to try it. It turned out to be my albatross—hence the name."

■ When Edwin Drummond climbed the east face of the Transamerica Pyramid this fall while hundreds goggled below, two possible explanations leaped to mind. The man was either a kind of romantic adventurer, out of Sinbad and the Thief of Baghdad, performing feats many of us secretly yearn to do.

Or he had a screw loose somewhere.

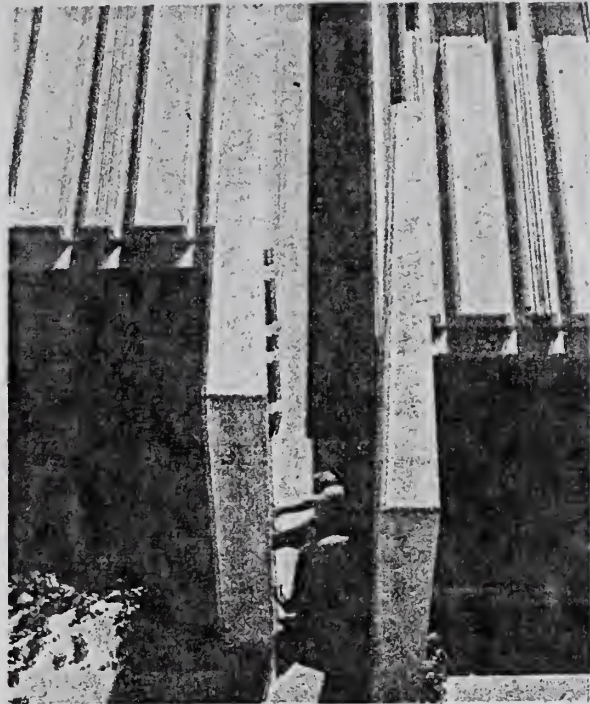
The fact is, however, that this wasn't the first time Drummond had attempted to scale the heights in San Francisco. Nor was it likely to be the last.

He'd already gone up the sides of stores and office buildings, not to mention a variety of rocks. What makes Edwin climb? Partly, the artist in him. "To me, this is a kind of living mural," he says. "Here over a short passage of time are some people dancing, as it were, on a vertical plane. And other people are enjoying it. They watch, they don't throw stones, and they even applaud sometimes."

Drummond calls it "buildering," on the theory that if climbing mountains is known as mountaineering, then ascending buildings should be—well, you get the idea.

But buildings aren't mountains, are they? Drummond would like to think so. "Even though you may be only ten feet above the sidewalk," he says, "you experience the same kinds of forces that you're aware of when you're climbing to three hundred feet above the valley floor in Yosemite." Should more people try city climbing? Sure, if they know how. "I think people should be less dominated by the structures, by the systems in which they find themselves," he contends.

Off the wall, Drummond is a quiet, pink-faced, goldenbearded young Englishman who has taught school and written poetry. He is married and has a young son. It is hard to picture him as that strangest of creatures—a human fly.



The Slowest Elevator in the World. "This is Embarcadero One. It's six hundred feet high. Needless to say, we haven't been up to the top yet—these are just the first six hundred inches—but it's a terrific chimney. It just soars up into the sky. I could probably do it in about half an hour. What you do is brace two feet on one wall, lean your back on the other, and alternately push with your feet and your back."



Edwin Drummond ascending the Transamerica pyramid October 8, 1977.

What makes Drummond's exploits so remarkable is that they are all "free climbs." By that he means that you climb solely on your own power. No equipment. Transamerica was such a climb. "The only thing we had was ropes, which is standard on climbs, for protection. You and your partner remain connected in case there's a fall. But you don't use the ropes for climbing. In this case we put a sling through the window-washing bolts, and we also had a special item called a tube chalk slotted into the cracks, put a snap link on the tube chalk and on the window-washing bolt and passed the rope through that at every other window as we went up."

Is the Pyramid particularly difficult?

"Well, the cone is rather like the last thousand feet of Mount Everest," Drummond says. "No one knows. I have been inside the cone, however, and studied it from the Bank of America restaurant, and I believe it can be climbed. Free-climbed. I should say that at three critical points, aid is essential. But I've devised special equipment to overcome these problems."

Drummond points out that when George Willig made his famous climb of the World Trade Center in New York, he did it with equipment. But Drummond has nothing but admiration for his rival. "What I'd like to do, in fact, is team up with him and together we might climb the Sears Tower in Chicago. Or maybe the Statue of Liberty. I haven't spoken to George, though."

Like many mountaineers, Drummond likes to name the structures he climbs. The brick wall of a bar on Shrader Street he calls "The East Face of Mount Shrader," for instance. The "chimney" type climb of Embarcadero One became "The Slowest Elevator in the World," and the great wall at Ocean Beach, because of its difficulty, he dubbed "The Ancient Mariner."

How long does a typical climb take? Well, Mount Shrader lasted no more than thirty seconds. "If I stay on too long, I risk a fall to the sidewalk." A twenty-five foot climb like the Safeco Crack on Montgomery Street would, however, require about five minutes. Drummond uses no cleats, just rubber-soled shoes called EBs, which many rock climbers wear. The basic principle of this kind of climbing, he says, is to keep a distance from the wall or rock. "Maintain a four-point contact with your legs and arms. But don't hug the wall. If you hug it, you can't balance on your feet."

Would you like to try your hand at building? Drummond warns against it. "This isn't something you can just go out and do, like shooting a couple of rounds of pool. It takes years of dedication and discipline. That's why I don't think there's much chance some drunk is suddenly going to go clambering up the Trans-america Pyramid."

One of these days, Drummond would like to finish the climb up the Pyramid that he and his partner, Robert Zipper, started in October.

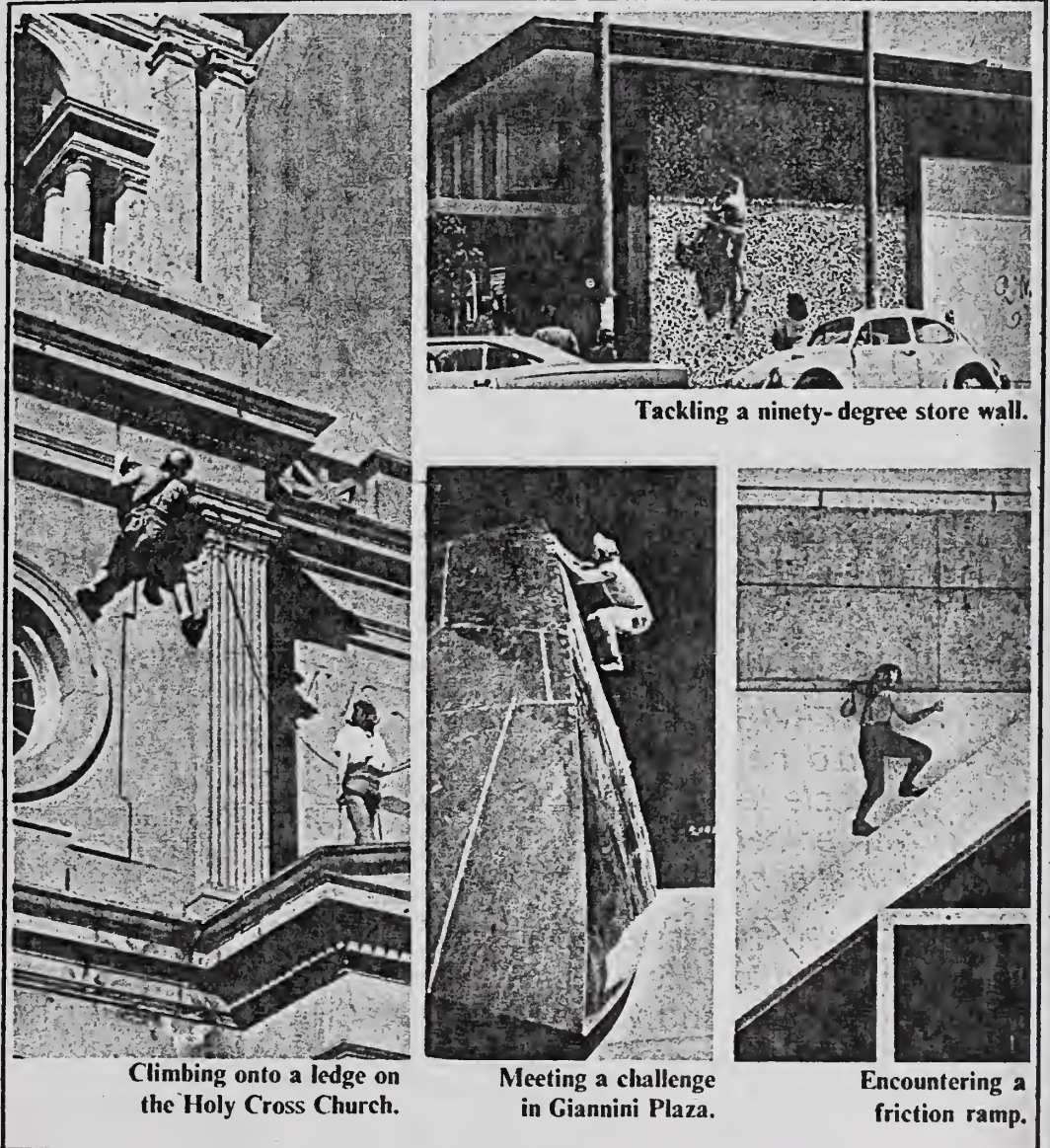
At that time, they made it only to the twenty-first floor before police pulled them off. The judge was ready to throw the book at them, but mercy prevailed and the charges were dropped. Now, though, Drummond is convinced he could do it again—to the top, finally—if only the lawyers can figure a way so Transamerica isn't stuck with the insurance liability.

That's probably the stickiest problem for people who go around scaling buildings for fun. Who's responsible if you happen to fall off? □

The High Art Of Buildering

■ They call it “buildering” and, as the title of Jeff Long’s article (*Adventure*) says, “They’ll Climb Anything.” Long’s article is adapted from *Ascent*, a Sierra Club book.

A graduate student in history at the University of Colorado, Long has been writing professionally for six years. His article focuses on Ed Drummond’s climb of the Transamerica Building. But here are some other examples of San Francisco “buildering:”



Climbing onto a ledge on the Holy Cross Church.

Meeting a challenge in Giannini Plaza.

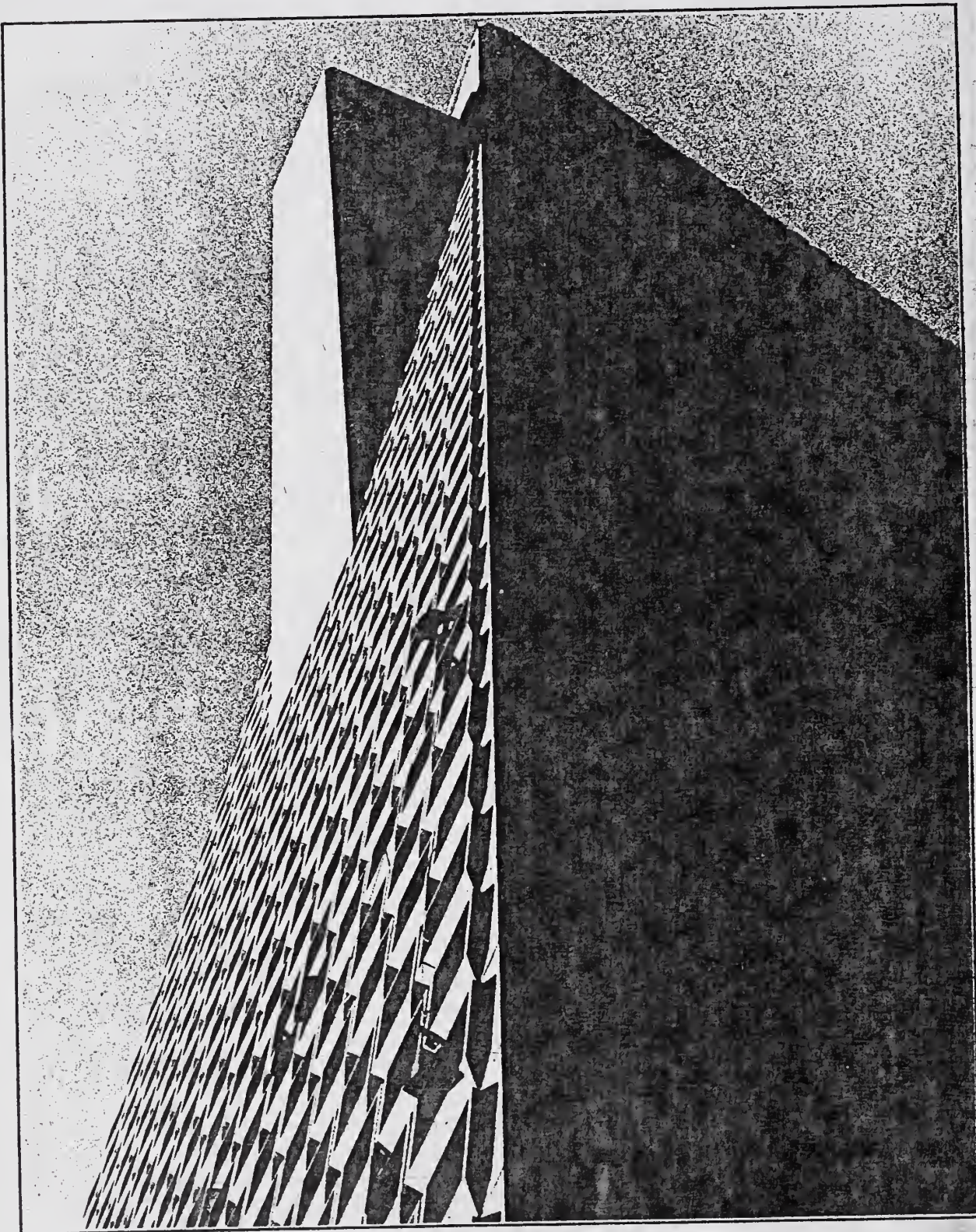
Encountering a friction ramp.

The other new contributor this week is Dr. John Kerner, Jr. (*Sports*), who is assistant professor of Pediatrics and director of Pediatric Gastroenterology at Stanford University Hospital. □

— H.I.S.

They'll Climb Anything

By Jeff Long



Adapted from a chapter in *Ascent*, edited by Allen Steck and Steve Roper, published by Sierra Club Books. All rights reserved.

■ Even more antagonistic to the social order than people who crawl around on rocks and walls in the wilderness are people who crawl around on buildings, infiltrating those spaces where society has taught us men cannot go. It seems especially impertinent to go clambering around on cliffs made of steel and concrete, on glass waterfalls, and on marble and asphalt bergschrunds instead of the real thing.

To have climbers reminding a skyscraper not only of its origin, but also of its artificiality, is to remind the rooster of the egg, an unwelcome pecking order.

At noon on March 5, 1923, a young man approached the Broadway facade of New York City's Martinique Hotel. It's not unlikely that he kissed his pretty, bob-haired wife of two months just before wiping his hands on his pants and grasping the masonry. One foot, then the other, left the ground. With the bustling 34th Street shopping district fat with shoppers, his audience was immediate, as anticipated. He was a professional; the climb was a matter of contract: \$100.

For a few minutes after it landed, no one touched the body on the macadam street. Finally a policeman pulled a card from the dead climber's pants pocket: "Harry F. Young. Work guaranteed on flagstuffs, church steeples, water tanks, and impossible places to reach. America's unique and original steeplejack and stuntist."

That one bare image of conceit collapses into a penny tombstone. Young had earlier wisecracked, louder than necessary, to a hotel detective, "If I do it, have the bath ready. If I don't, get a shovel."

Within five weeks the city aldermen had passed an ordinance forbidding human flies to climb the buildings of New York City. The fine was to be ten dollars, ten days, or both. Urban ascent was, for the first time, criminal trespass. Being in a place you're not supposed to be is also called other things: arrogance, stupidity, hubris . . . and no doubt the dead climber suffered further calumny that day. To an extent, the pejoratives will always apply; every time a climber enters the vertical world he's thumbing his nose at biological propriety. Human beings simply aren't built to live on a ninety-degree world.

Nevertheless, given a monolith that is taller than a man — whether it's made of granite, limestone, ice, or cement — twentieth-century humans will come and struggle to the very death with it. For all its sophistication and evolution in the past fifty years, ascent remains as old-fashioned and violent as ever, drawing at raw muscular thought and transforming it into a hole beneath your feet.

Take Joachim Richter, for instance, a young German lunatic who was internationally publicized in the 1920s because he climbed out of three asylums. In eluding the police on the second of those escapes, he climbed a smooth wall to the fifth floor of an apartment house in Berlin and entered a window. "Don't worry."

He told the screaming woman who lived there, "I'm the Kaiser. I just came to wash my hands." He did so, then ate the bar of soap. The authorities recaptured him, but the same week Richter bolted for freedom again, taking to the prison wall . . . beyond control.

There was more substance to these early human flies than their circus courage and criminal modes of independence. Their portraits would be superficial cartoons if they depicted nothing more than roosters and lunatics. But there is always that constellation of reasons we call ego, and there were some big ones making the circuit half a century ago. An unemployed steelworker, a bellboy, a sailor, a half-baked boxer: proletarians without real access to the public nonetheless made themselves bigger than life, front-page material. Reading the accounts, one discovers that almost every one of these men proclaimed himself *the* human fly, *the* unique stuntist, *the one and only*. Some were fair athletes, no doubt, with egos like beacons.

Because no legacy is left by a building climb, especially viewed from a distance of fifty and sixty years, people have forgotten some of the more spectacular ones: Bill Strothers' ("The Human Spider") ascent of the Brockway Building in Los Angeles (1919); Harry Gardiner raising money for war bonds on the Brooklyn *Eagle* Building (1918), and Steve Peterson, who fell three stories because he was past his prime ("It was a bum break," he said as he jauntily smoked a cigarette on the way to the hospital in 1928).

The penchant for provoking attention wasn't intractable, though. More daredevils cooled into ordinary citizens than didn't. A few fell, fewer still died, and as for the majority of human flies, the world simply ceased to hear about them. Sometime in the early 1930s urban climbing quietly petered out.

In recent years, though, urban ascent has regained a visible profile, catalyzed by George Willig's success on Manhattan's World Trade Center building on May 26, 1977. Building climbs had been on a number of climbers' minds before that, but quietly, like a masonic word. Willig's Trade Center climb would have taken me by complete surprise if it hadn't been for Ed Drummond, who introduced me to the Transamerica Building.

Wily and innovative, Ed had been considering skyscrapers for years. He was thirty-two at the time, coincidentally the age of Harry F. Young when he fell in 1923. Without assembling too many similarities, I should add that Ed's pocket was rarely without his own business card, which advertised his Bulldog Construction Company, a fledgling organization that offered scaffoldless steeplejacking for such jobs as sandblasting and goldleafing. And the steeplejack's wife, Grace Drummond, like Mrs. Young, was pretty and youthful — just twenty years old.

Somewhere in his past, Ed had escaped to America from an unfriendly English climbing scene — something to do with his abrasive habit of renaming already-established routes and generally outraging the local lads. A tall and sturdy poet, Ed espoused a sort of bastard



Edmund leaves the Transamerica Pyramid after abandoning his attempt to scale the 853-foot structure.

men are on fire, living so intensely that they die, they disintegrate in a sudden blaze. His updated version of this character was the intellectually alert climber capable of one-arm pullups with either arm and to survive for days without water. Ed had that once, near the end of a twenty-day stay on the Trolltind Wall in Norway when he and his partner, Hugh Drummond (no relation), ran out of water and had to be marooned in their hammocks until rain.

Ed later repeated his amazing survival act as a ten-day solo of El Capitan's Nose in Yosemite. It's important to concede solitude's value when you're soloing a wall. Three thousand feet above the ground, tied into knots that no one else can check, dependent on judgments that are either right or fatal, you become utterly crucial to your own continued existence.

The plan to climb the 843-foot Transamerica Pyramid was more a civilized heresy than the conspiracy we pretended. In late November 1976, Ed invited me to join him on a solo climb that had been percolating in his mind for a year. I'd never heard of the Transamerica, but the immediate thought of police punishment made me reluctant to consider the project seriously. There were far too many unknowns; yet I listened as Ed methodically laid out the contents of his plan, and we proceeded by agreeing to survey the building. The climb looked furtively possible as Ed outlined its three distinctive features: the columns at the base, the windows, and the red summit. By shimmying up the sixty-degree columns with the aid of webbing, suspended by jamming, liebacking, or stemming, we could get to the windows, and from there take us six hundred feet higher to the red summit of strange metal scales. His wife, Edna, would climb with us, Ed reiterated. I needed her as a partner.

Our research in the next frantic month confirmed that rudimentary strategy. Like Ed's, ours required more and more knowl-

ed, more immediately useless, but in the long range proved relevant to our chameleon purposes. Detailed information was more significant — and more difficult to obtain — than we'd first thought. Exactly how far apart were the jutting window frames? Did they spread near the building or pout open at the outer lip? Or were they parallel? Were there anchors for window washers? Would pairs of window frames take a nut, a piton, or a cam? How did the windows open — up and down, or in and out? How high would we have to climb before we were out of range of firetruck cherry pickers? Should a rope or carabiner accidentally drop, which wall would have the least number of spectators below? Would a Saturday or a Sunday be better than a work day? And in the likelihood of police action, was a large crowd better for us than a small one? The more questions we compiled, the less adequate our speculations and opinions appeared.

Ed and I approached our project from quite different points of view. Intellectually, I was fascinated by the varied architecture, but I couldn't really see making a career out of urban climbing. For Ed, the Transamerica beckoned not only as a climb, but as a manic vocation. In a way that he insisted was incidental, he wouldn't have minded making a quarter-million on a tv contract as well. Failure was highly possible, though, and as a way of dispelling his anxieties about this ascent of the Pyramid, Ed would speak of an even larger pyramid in Chicago.

On one foray to reconnoiter the Pyramid, Ed and I went to the Bank of America Center and took one of the high-speed elevators to the Carnelian Room on the fifty-second floor. Exuding the nonchalance of realtors — though distinctly handicapped by our shabby clothing — Ed and I pulled binoculars and telescope from our daypacks.

Directly across from us, the Pyramid stabbed the misty sky. Set among lesser structures, it swept up from its massive root in a manner suggesting that the building's sole purpose was to support a solitary red dot, the air beacon, on the skyline. We murmured conspiratorially when we saw it, for we hoped to be hanging our hammocks from that very beacon in a few nights. For a full hour we studied the upper third of the skyscraper, attempting once again to decipher the mysterious metal grill on the final expanse. We spied several new variations to our line of ascent as well as two or three blind spots invulnerable to police retrieval. But as the sun set, the upper louvers of the spire still eluded our understanding.

With only a few days left before our secretly scheduled ascent, Ed became ever more inebriated with the project, loping throughout San Francisco for advice, mechanisms, free rope and slings, confidential talks with newspaper and radio people, and meetings with a group of amateur filmmakers who hoped to secrete themselves in neighboring skyscrapers. So much was riding on the venture by the last week of January that Ed went so far as to declare we should not surrender unless the police drew their guns, and even then that we

Compounding the hazards of ascent with guns and arrest didn't appeal to me, nor to Grace. The closer we got to the date of the climb, the more timid she became. The debates about how we should react to arrest exposed my own hesitations, too. Each of us began to assess the commitments we were willing to make, aware now that the game was not entirely a game. Ed insisted that once we started, the police would let us finish the climb, especially if we showed an attractive bravado and style. He pointed to Phillippe Petit — the French aerialist who walked a tightrope between Manhattan's World Trade Center towers in 1974 — as an example of how a city loves its daredevil heroes. When asked to justify his stunt, Petit had explained, "If I see three oranges, I must juggle; if I see two towers, I must walk." He escaped with a slap on the hand and was ordered by the court to perform aerial tricks for children in Central Park. Ed assured me that we could exchange court leniency for instruction to police and fire departments on ways to snatch suicides and future climbers from building ledges. I did not share his conviction that we were going to be heroes. Finally Ed compromised, moderating his resolve to bluff police artillery.

On the evening of January 28, 1977, a cool and cloudless Friday, all the conspirators gathered at the Drummonds' apartment. What had begun as a modest trespass on the Pyramid had swollen to include an eight-person film crew, a newspaper photojournalist, a physics professor from Berkeley, friends with "program notes" to be handed out to spectators and policemen, and letters to be delivered to Mayor Moscone, Police Chief Charles Gain, and Governor Brown. A helicopter with a camera mount was scheduled to make two sweeps of the building at \$250 per sweep. Miscellaneous gear included a rubber chicken, balloons to be released from the summit, and three clown's noses purchased from a local magic shop to keep things light.

That night everything was prepared: The cameras were loaded; portable microphones were taped to our backs, and hammocks, parkas, food, tape for our hands, glass clamps, water, hard candies, and the rubber chicken were all packed into a tattered haul bag. Ropes and hardware were placed into smaller sacks.

At 3 a.m. our tiny caravan drove to a spot two blocks east of the Pyramid and parked. We mobilized. Ed sauntered toward the garden restaurant located beneath the east wall, stood atop the stair rail, and pulled himself onto the canvas awning that tunnels out from the restaurant. Grace was next, then I followed.

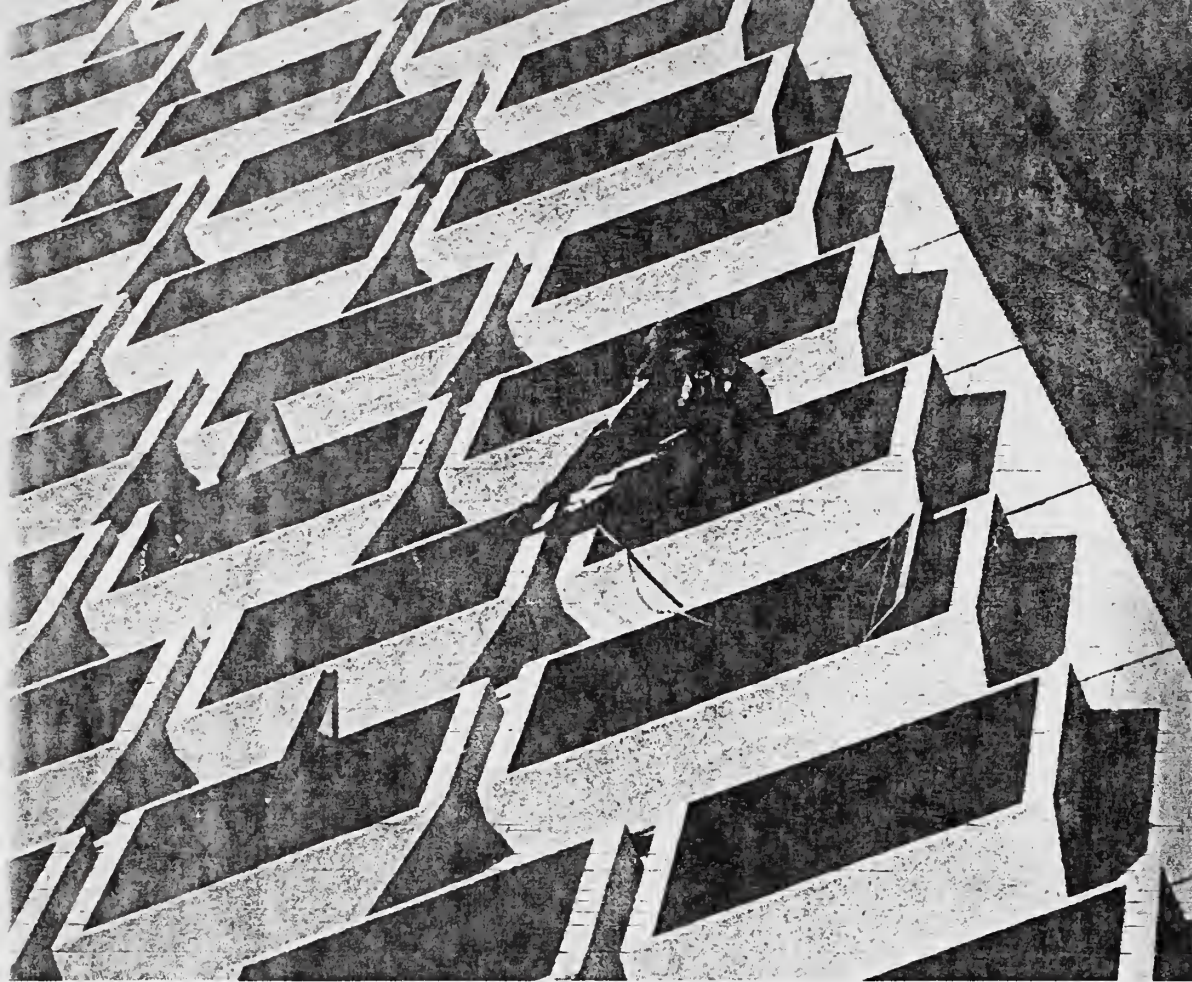
One by one, afflicted with the cold and anxiety, we balanced on the awning ribs and quietly relayed our equipment onto the restaurant roof before sliding up and over the lip ourselves. The pillars section, for which we'd

prescribed half an hour in our timetable, instantly rebuked us. In trying to walk the pillar in the fashion of lumberjacks ascending a tree, Ed's loop of nylon webbing shredded and then stuck on the concrete. Had the webbing allowed more mobility, Ed might have risen twenty or thirty feet only to rocket backwards when the sling finally cut through. The cement was rough and sharp and had us all bleeding after a few touches. While I belayed him from the shadows, Ed next attempted to hug the steeply slanted pillar and scoot himself up. He could have gone higher, but the futility was apparent: Thirty feet up and he would have needed to anchor himself in with slings — without a hand to spare. A half hour had passed.

Nervous whispers from the garden below informed us that the coast was clear, more a report of affairs at sidewalk level than for our benefit. The whispers did nothing but frighten Grace and me even more. It seemed very possible that the cement might have ears. Grace huddled in her green cagoule at the root of the monolith, her smallness emphasized by the immensity of the Pyramid. I considered surrendering to the night while we were still undetected. Some other time we could return with a mechanical answer to the pillar. Grace later told us she'd crawled off to a corner and peed in a trough of roofing gravel "like in a kitty box."

Besides holding offices in its neck, the Pyramid also contains a bank. The significance of this surfaced as we looked at the coffee machine that was bound to lure bank guards to our molecule of activity. Ed and I whispered with unsaid anger, strangely cocked to blame each other. The unnatural silence, the merciless concrete, and the threat of eventual arrest combined to create a sharper feeling of anxiety than I've ever met with on a mountain or rock. We were being beaten by magicians who really *had* made an insoluble architecture, but rather than admit it, we were daring each other to say the profane word "retreat." At the same time, angry as we were, we were racking our brains for the key to the pillars and glass. Then, abruptly and in perfect focus, I spied a way to continue. In pointing out the dubious possibility, I also realized that I was not good enough to perform the maneuver myself.

Before we lost all momentum, Ed snaked across a bridge of horizontal pillars and lodged himself at the bottom of my proposed route. With his rump seated against the pillar, he gently pressed his feet against the ribless glass that hung above him. The counter-pressure was sufficient for him to scoot a little higher, then reset his feet. One misstep concentrating too much pressure on too small an area of glass, and he would have shot his foot through, leaving one sheared leg on the second floor and his body dangling above the pavement. It was impossible to protect his ascent, so Ed gingerly



Ed Drummond liebacks the vertical concrete labyrinth of the Transamerica Pyramid.

inued with an even, apelike meditation. I shed horrified as other, equally deadly, sequences to Ed's motions occurred to me, I didn't communicate this fear to Grace. I lay against a pillar, suffering Ed's boldness out a glance. Ed was halfway up the pillar when she finally admitted that she didn't want to be where she was. She then returned to her position among the packs and the haul bag.

Ed's dare was the sleekest, fiercest act I'd ever seen, and it worked. With ruthless business, he allowed himself to fool the sharp, aggressive contours of the building, glueing and using his hands and feet and body across the glass.

At last he began to marionette two ropes in position, one on each side of a pillar. I tied jumars onto these ropes, which by arrangement draped the pillar on either side, then walked up in opposition to Ed's pace. Fairly quickly I was level with Ed, though fifteen feet distant from him. He peered down from beneath the false ceiling he had created. I looked up at the windows, elevator shaft and headwall as the sun started to paint the sky flamingo pink.

We'd lost two hours and still hadn't reached the windows. I hauled the sack of gear to where I hung, then whispered down for Grace. Dawn was traveling down the canyoned streets, poisoning our cover. We were certain that we'd be caught, though how high we'd reach before the first alarm remained an open question. We still hoped that dangling in a grotesque suspension from the skin of the building, we could persuade the police to let us

would not be until we'd topped out.

We set to work gaining the windows. Failure again seemed imminent after a few attempts, and again retreat was on the tips of our tongues. I fastened a stirrup to what had become a cobweb of ropes and slings and stood in the highest loop. Ed then clambered up my leg and back and stood on my shoulders, then on my upstretched palms, but repeatedly the cliffhanger he was trying to hammer into a seam in the concrete popped out. The joint angled downward and spat out all the inventions Ed came up with. Each time he tried to stand in a stirrup his foot would come slamming down onto my shoulder or head, and I was seriously weighing the chances of a crooked neck if he continued much longer. Another effort and Ed managed to stack two tenuous cliffhangers in the seam. The stirrup held and Ed victoriously squeezed up into a downsloping window well. Like an animal, he surveyed the cliffs and linear gulfs from his private cave, delighted with his own audacity. It was nearly 8:30 a.m. The Saturday-morning city was still restive and hushed.

As we'd hoped, the windows were only moderately difficult, and, of course, architecturally uniform. In minutes Ed was up to the seventh floor, anchoring himself to a window-washer's bolt. He cautiously backed up the bolt with several tube chocks and one of his special wooden pitons, then called for Grace to join him. Steeling herself, Grace repeated her wish to go down.

At that very moment a security guard, alerted by someone, dashed to the garden

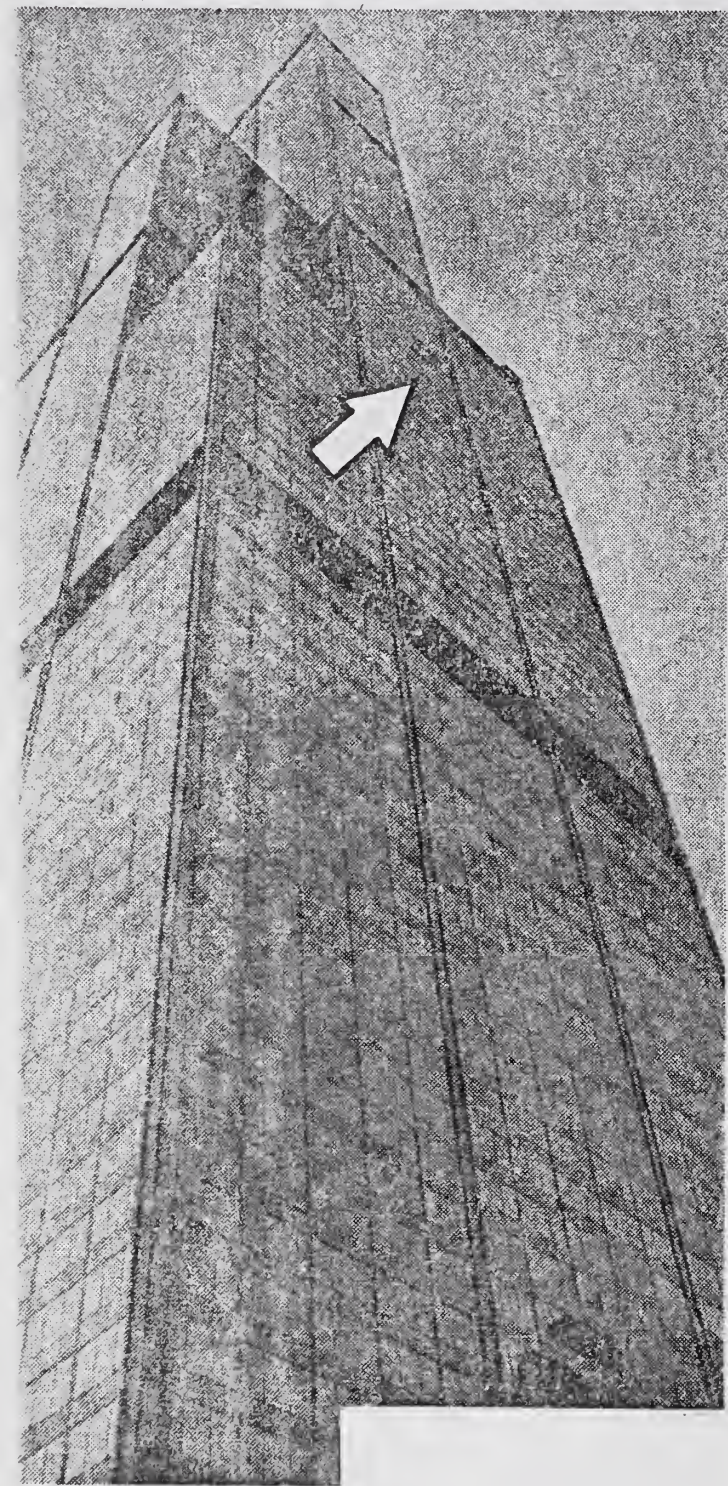
above. It took him a moment to locate us — the perspective was unnatural — and then he exploded with rage. The Berkeley professor, a balding man with a look of husbanded wisdom, stepped up to the guard and tried to soothe him as per plan. This only provoked the guard and he ranted at us for several moments more, then disappeared to call in more professional help.

The stage was set for a race against arrest, but the situation was visibly remote from climax. We were still near the foot of the Pyramid, the climbing was slow, and we lacked dynamism. Again Grace relented and allowed herself to be pulled, hand over hand, up to the seventh-story windowsill where Ed was perched. Below us, reporters and television cameramen had begun to congregate, heralding the arrival soon afterwards of firetrucks and police cars. To my surprise, the crowd was dominated by professional media people and uniformed men — people who channel thoughts and control activity. The people we'd hoped would enjoy the climb with us, the common city dwellers, were uninterested or at best bemused, and definitely in a minority. The moment Grace reached Ed she began crying, scared of the building and yet exhilarated, but also disappointed in having to confront Ed with her decision to go down. She was firm this time: She had faced the Pyramid and now, facing Ed, there was nothing more to fear. Ed lowered her. As she spun lazy circles downwards, Grace looked relieved. We exchanged salutations as she went by, and then she looped gently into a tight circle of newspeople and was gone.

The police flocked beneath us and milled, silently inside the window behind Ed. One officer had set his call radio on the ledge beside Ed. As I got closer, I could hear the static and verbiage of numerous murder, theft, and fire alarms that were thronging the city's airwaves. With the radio imparting a heightened sense of urgency to each successive minute, our arguments for the climb as an aesthetic survey of the Pyramid — and as a climb in itself — seemed incoherent even to me. The idea had been to append ourselves to the Pyramid, to interweave our lives, for the duration of the climb, with the life of the building. Dangling from a rope beside the call radio, I thought that idea sounded very hollow.

And so the city won out. We were citizens, and despite our native instincts, we accepted the responsibilities. We were out of the woods, in a place where the objective hazards of climbing included a felony charge in addition to glass that was fragile and cement that chewed ropes. It startled us both, I think, and still does, that we surrendered so easily. By noon the architecture literally absorbed us: I went first, stepping in through the open window of the seventh floor where a dozen men, looking huge in their uniforms, were obviously pleased to have captured at least one of us. As I passed inside, Ed pursed his lips and histrionically confided that he'd be "soloing on then." His face was bright with the sun. For a few minutes I actually thought he might, too, infected with the conceit of Harry F. Young — the arrogance of the hermit. But with a metallic jangle of hardware, he had already unclipped his knots and freed the anchor. One step and he was inside with the rest of us. □

Towering Feat



UPI Telephotos

**Daniel Goodwin was
shown at halfway point as
he climbed the 110-story
Sears Tower in Chicago**

Highest Building Scaled

Chicago

A 25-year-old acrobat wearing a red-and-blue Spider Man outfit conquered the world's tallest building yesterday, climbing all the way up the sheer west face of the 1454-foot-high Sears Tower in a 7½-hour exploit.

As hundreds watched in the downtown street below, Daniel Goodwin of Las Vegas, Nev., was handcuffed and taken into custody as he reached the roof of the 110-story steel-and-glass building about 10:30 a.m. after defying 40-mph winds and the best efforts of authorities to stop his ascent.

Patrolman Jack Rimkus quoted Goodwin as saying he was "very happy and very grateful to be on top" and that he climbed the tower "because it's the tallest building in the world."

It was the first successful climb to the top of the building. Three other attempts to climb the Sears Tower had failed.

Rimkus said Goodwin carried 50 to 60 pounds of climbing equipment, including metal binders, suction cups and rope.

He said Goodwin would stick one metal device into the exterior slots used for window-washing equipment and twist it until it was tight, then use it as a step. Meanwhile, he would remove a second device from below, insert it higher and bit by bit move upward.

Rimkus said Goodwin also used window ledge clips with ropes attached to his body as a safety line. The suction cups, Rimkus said, also were used for attaching safety ropes to the building and for moving horizontally to evade a window-washer's scaffold that authorities at first used to try to block his ascent.

Authorities finally gave up trying to stop Goodwin and made a deal with him, allowing him to climb unhindered while the scaffold followed closely behind as a kind of safety net.

"The Fire Department requested that we allow him to go up in the interest of public safety," said Sears spokesman Ernest Arms. "The original intent was to stop him, but he had suction equipment with him. He just moved too fast."

As Goodwin neared the top of the Sears Tower, he tried to plant a small U.S. flag in a vertical slot used to guide the scaffold, but the wind whipped it away.

Police said Goodwin told them he was a professional acrobat and gymnast and had bought the \$400 Spider Man suit in Las Vegas. The suit was just like the one worn by the Marvel Comics character whose ability to cling to vertical surfaces gives him the power to run up walls and on ceilings.

Commander Robert Casey said Goodwin was being held for investigation of disorderly conduct, criminal trespass and criminal damage to

property. Casey said Goodwin was in "excellent shape" at the end of the climb.

Another man, James Hackett, 31, of Chicago, was held for investigation of disorderly conduct. Hackett said he was a friend of Goodwin's and helped him start the climb at 3 a.m.

Goodwin was first spotted at 6:10 a.m. at about the 28th floor, and a crowd of several hundred gathered on the street to watch.

Officials had thought of taking out a window to force him inside but gave up the idea because, they said, he could move sideways to avoid it and they feared the high winds would blow the glass into the street.

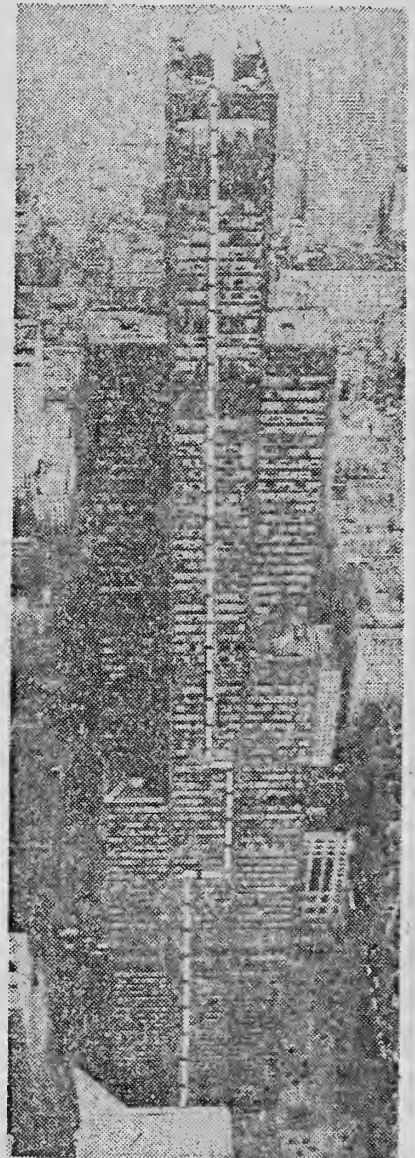
The climb developed into a Memorial Day event in the nearly abandoned downtown area. One enterprising man hawked sunglasses as other spectators took movies.

Richard Harris, 26, said he heard about the climb on the radio and brought his 5-year-old son, Michael, to watch because the boy is an avid Spider Man fan.

Looking through binoculars at the climber — clad in the bright suit with red-orange belt, hood and knee-length boots — Michael said: "Yep, he's the real thing."

Another watcher, Don Saberniak, 24, said he heard about the climb at his Hammond, Ind., home and jumped in his car and "drove like a madman to get here."

Goodwin's climb was reminiscent of another daredevil feat in New York City on May 28, 1977. George Willig, a 27-year-old employee of a toymaking company and amateur mountaineer, climbed one of the 110-story, 1350-foot twin towers of the World Trade Center. He used \$100 worth of equipment of his own invention, including a T-shaped friction device that fit into the vertical tracks up the building's



AP Wirephoto

The route taken by Daniel Goodwin in his climb to top

face used for for window-washing scaffolds. The climb took him 3½ hours.

The city instituted suit against Willig for \$250,000 for purported damage and the cost of police work. But in the face of overwhelming public lionization, the city settled with him the next day for \$1.10 — a penny a floor.



Copyright Richard Derk, Chicago Sun-Times Magazine via AP

Spider Man' Daniel Goodwin smiled as he reached the 83rd story — he had 27 stories to go



John Law and I scouted out the Suicide Club's first climb up the north tower of the Golden Gate bridge.



... ..

TWO NIGHTS BEFORE CHRISTMAS WE LED TWENTY OR SO SUICIDE CLUB MEMBERS DOWN THIS RIDGE ...



... to this flat section just under the Bridge and climbed up a rope ladder to the girders, along which we walked to the north tower ...

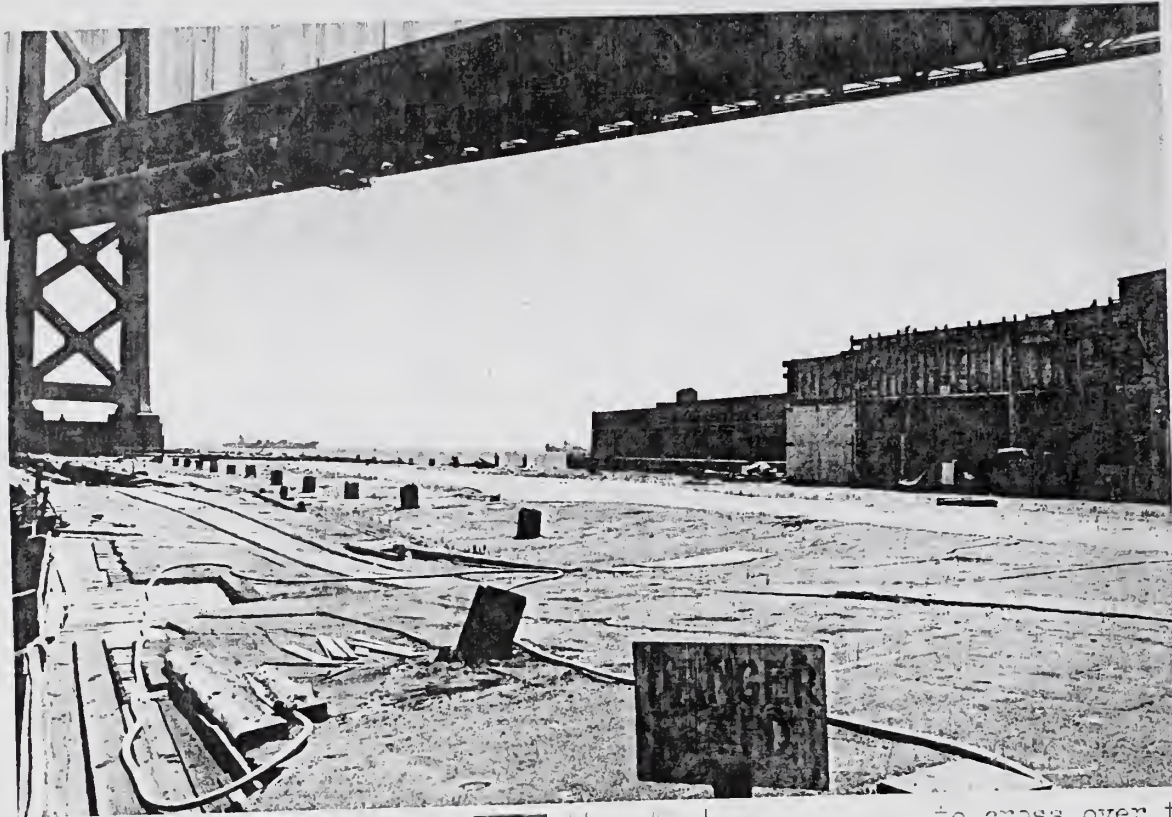


... entered an open hatch and climbed steel ladders to the top. The view of the bridge climbing the hillside when we saw the inside of the tower was painted the same as the rest of the Bridge.

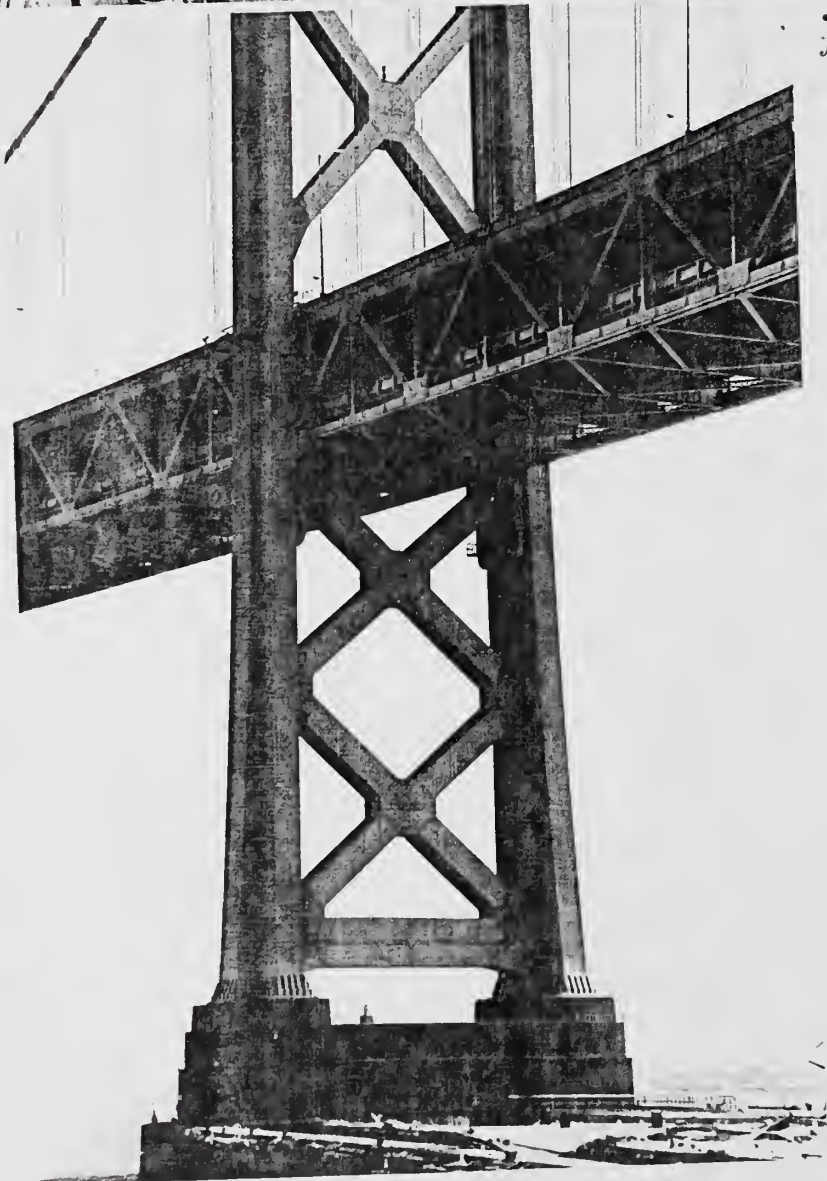
I can't recall when we discovered
this route up the Bay Bridge, but
it was sure as hell easier than
the first one in August.



To ascend the Oakland Bay Bridge
you first climb up this fence and
go over the roof of this little shack
onto Pier 26. Then you walk all the
way around . . .



... to cross over to Pier 24 which
you walk to the end of ...



... to climb up this tower all
the way to the top. And that's
what the Suicide Club did that
night. Didn't live up to our
name, though.



Taking the SF Suicide Club on a Tyrolean traverse.



Rappelling off Harkness Hospital.

I had broken an ankle and my foot was in a cast, but it didn't stop me from setting up a rope team to traverse for a patchwork quilt adventure. That's Deb Soltes who is just now realizing the enormity of her situation. That's John Law in the background.

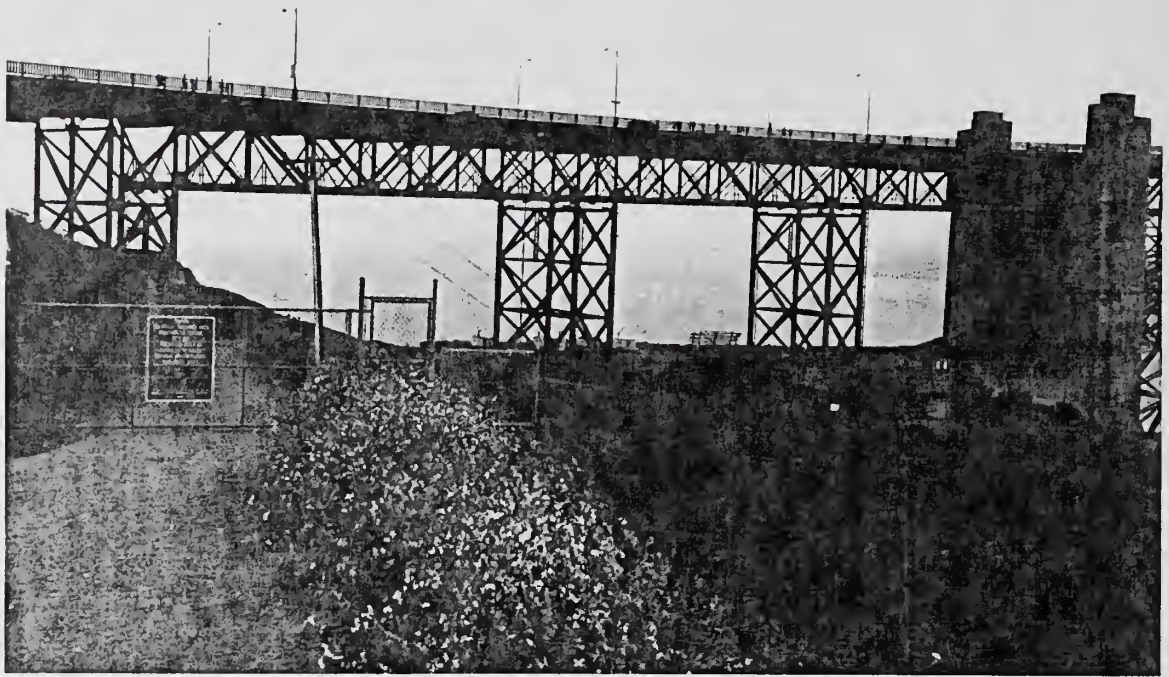
FALL 1981

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This is the San Francisco end of the Golden Gate Bridge.



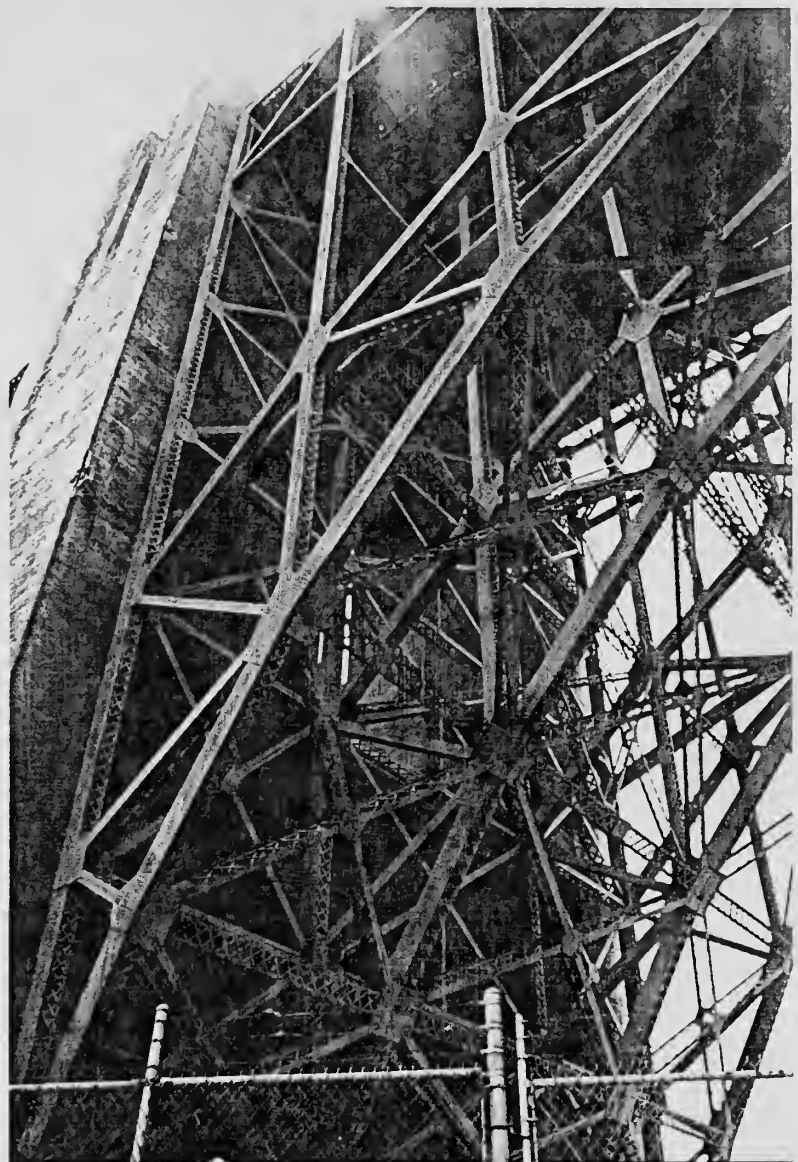
and it is a group of us climbing the steel truss (lower part of bridge) to the catwalk . . .



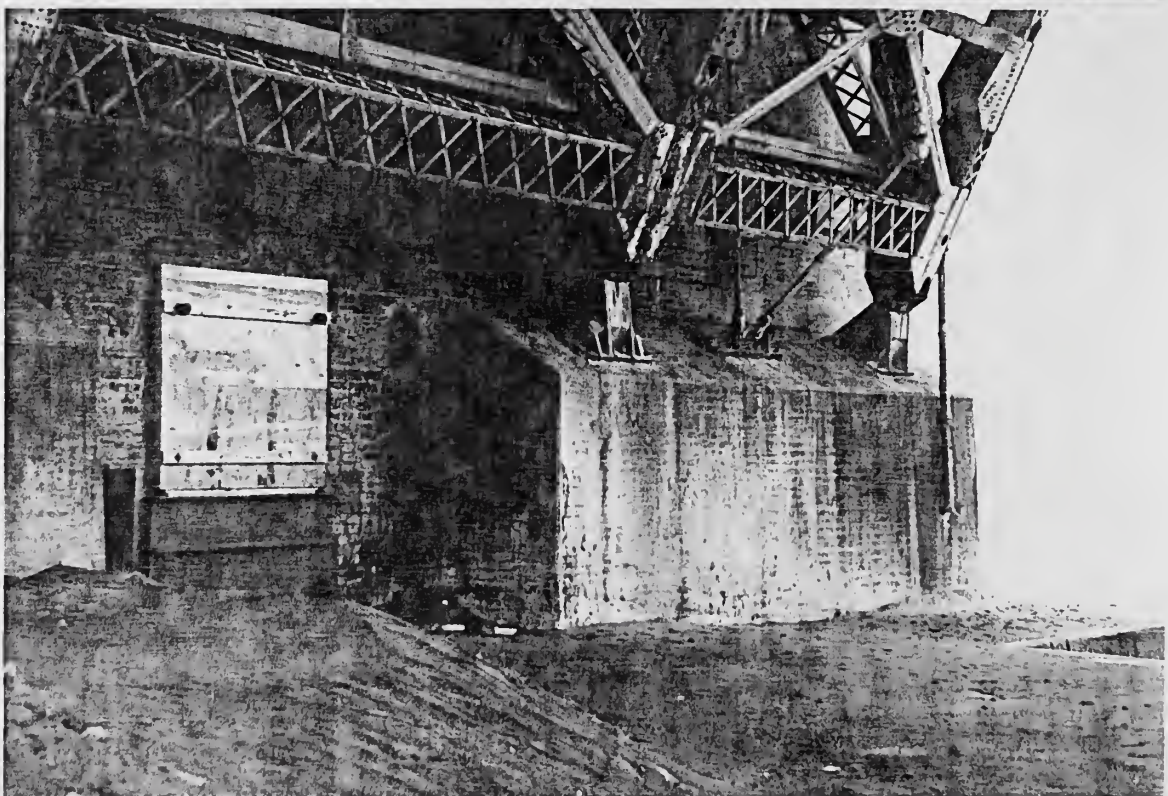
. . . where we walked out to the concrete tower with my 400 foot long caving rope . . .



. . . there . . . I saw the
inside of the base . . .



. . . to the bottom where we
pulled the rope down after us . . .





. . . and exited through this door
(which appears to have acquired a
burglar resistant lock) to Fort
Point and walked away.

in the Haight

HAIGHT ASHBURY NEWSPAPER - DEC. 1978

By LAURIE ARNETTA

Without having to sound like the bearer of gloom while everyone is preparing for the holiday season—I'd like to bring all of you back to earth for a few minutes and hopefully we will all learn a few things about some upsetting disturbances that have been occurring in the Haight Ashbury recently and what we may be able to do in order to prevent any further unhappiness to our friends and neighbors.

It affects all of us but unfortunately women are prime targets. I'm talking about rape, and there have been a few incidences of rape in recent weeks occurring in our community. Nothing new, in this city you might say. Yes, rape is nothing new. Rape has existed in both civilized and uncivilized societies for hundreds and possibly thousands of years. But until our modern society heals itself of its sickness and wipes out sexism, we all have to deal with this and look out for ourselves and one another. The act of rape is the ultimate degradation and violation of one's body and privacy. Yes, women are the targets, and there have also been some statistics concerning male victims. But those figures are very small compared to the rapings of women and how often they occur.

There have been three reported rapings of women in the community during the month of October. The statistics for November weren't ready when this article was written. These reported rapings have taken place in the vicinity of the Panhandle. A number of people have said recently, "Oh, it's the jogger rapist," or "It must be the Harkness rapist" who is attacking these women.

The rapings have all taken place between 10:30 and 11:30 at night. Whether any of the victims were jogging (or the attacker for that matter) in the park before the encounters, we don't know for sure. So the "Jogger Rapist" could be another person for all probability. What I do know, and what I learned from John Murphy at the Crime prevention Unit at the Hall of Justice, is that the rapes took place about one block away from the park. As far as he knows there was no report made on a raping at the Harkness Hospital in October. Harkness Hospital is located at Fell and Baker streets. The police believe it is one suspect, since all three victims related the same details concerning how they met the rapist.

In each case the attacker, singling out a woman walking alone, would place his arm around a woman's

shoulder and point a gun or a knife at her rib. They would appear like a couple. He then would take her out of the park and attack her not too far away. The women are alive.

The description of the suspect is a young Black male between the ages of 17 and 19, 5'7" and husky in built. The case is currently under investigation and the attacker is still on the streets. ~~Don't walk in the park alone.~~ Be cautious if you do continue to walk in the park.

In connection with the Harkness Hospital, John Murphy related to me that some residents in that area were concerned about some people who may be entering the building at night and sleeping in there. "If that's the case, it could be a crime trap." Larry Griffin of Project SAFE (Safety Awareness For Everyone) related to me an incident that he said was hearsay—concerning a woman who had been followed one evening by a man when she was on her way to visit some friends: It was said that this woman was abducted to Harkness Hospital and raped there.

The fear of rape and sexual harassment is not limited to walking alone either. It can happen in your own home. You can prevent that from happening by checking that all windows and doors are locked before leaving your house. Also, be careful who escorts you home, especially if you just met that person the same night. Use your own common sense.

Also watch that no one is following you home even if you are driving. A woman in the community related an incident about how she had been followed to the street where she lives when she was driving home from work around 4 am one morning in October. Ironically, she stopped walking home those late hours and felt it would be safer to drive home instead. A man on a motorcycle has been following her from Haight St. and when she approached Page St. to look for a parking spot—she noticed he was still there. After circling the area and realizing that he wasn't giving up—she decided to drive over to some friends whom she knew were still partying several blocks away. The motorcyclist followed her to her destination. She parked the car in someone's driveway and fled across the street to her friend's apartment—whose door was luckily unlocked.

She was very lucky. But she did leave the protection of her car and if her friends weren't home—anything could have happened.

What anyone else should do in that

case is to drive your ass over to Park Station on Waller Street. The police can send a car out to find the person, and they can also escort you home safely. Another thing to do is to drive to the nearest firehouse—there's always a fire crew there. Honk your car horn a few times to attract attention before you get out.

Perhaps one of the best things to do would be to drive over to the Langley Porter Center at 401 Parnassus in the UC Med Center. They are open 24 hours a day and offer complete medical treatment and counseling for rape victims. Langley Porter services rape victims for the Haight Ashbury, Ocean, Merced, Ingleside, and Golden Gate areas. They've been opened since February and give very thorough treatment and have a supportive staff. The telephone number at Langley Porter is 681-8080.

San Francisco Women Against Rape have a 16-hour crisis line open daily from 3 pm on. Call 647-RAPE. They have an answering service and if it is an emergency they will have a counselor call you back as soon as possible. They offer support counseling and will refer you to medical treatment if you've been raped. They will answer any questions you may have concerning the pros and cons of a police report. They want to do what's best for you. The main stress however is medical treatment with VD being a primary concern with rape victims. If you live in the district 5 you will be referred to Langley Porter, otherwise you will be referred to Central Emergency Hospital. If you are a minor, an excellent supportive staff will treat you at San Francisco General.

Common sense is the key for prevention of a rape. Avoid dark, deserted areas and parks at night. Be cautious and aware. Walk along well lighted streets, walking in the middle of the sidewalk rather than nearer to dark doorways and alleys. If you are attacked, evaluate the situation and look for ways to escape. Try talking your way out of it. If you decide to respond physically, your first priority is to get away. Act quickly and decisively to throw the attacker off guard while you escape.

If there are any readers of this paper who have experiences to share concerning rape, prevention and how to escape these unwanted encounters—or if you have any input at all on how you'd like to see this subject covered in the future—contact the Newspaper Staff at 409 Clayton St. SF 94117 or call 621-9553.

know how often...
abandoned Harkness Hospital to play



A month later John Law, Gary Jarne, Adrienne Burke, and Judy Hait organized a Suicide Club stakeout of the Panhandle where most of the rapes were occurring. I was recruited to be the roadblock radio for this completely insane idea. I thought it just as well to participate, just in case we actually ran across some trouble and someone got hurt. Mercifully, the evening was uneventful.



eli

Morning News Roundup

SATURDAY JAN 20 6pm THE ULTIMATE INVASION OF PRIVACY

The event will be presented in its entirety from 6pm on, discussion will follow until around 8 or 8:30 and those that wish to leave will do so and the event will commence until 1am

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES:

- A contract or agreement-
- 1) You can bring no one with you, this is by invitation only
 - 2) You can mention this event to no one you know for any reason, whether it is to ask them if they were invited, know what "it" is, etc.
 - 3) You can not mention it to any of the four organizers, ask questions, or even make such remarks as "we'll see you on the 20th" or "see you tomorrow" (the day of the event)
 - 4) If you have another event or commitment but could come later, you simply must decide which it is you wish to do more-do not ask us, we can not help you

Thirty + people have been invited for specific reasons and other people deselected for completely different reasons.

\$3.00 -this fee will provide you with equipment you probably dont have and which you will keep afterwards

- 2) Good gripping shoes you can run in
- 3) canvas or leather or mylar gloves
- 4) very, very thick warm clothes-parkas & down jackets are no good for this-navy pea jackets, strong and thick & bulky the best
- 5) Glasses holders if you wear glasses, contacts ok
- 6) A watch, borrow one if you can, still come if you simply cant acquire one
- 7) bring potluck food, snacks, drinks, water, etc BUT
- 8) Eat heartily before you come
- 9) bring no drugs or alcohol
- 10) leave the address and ph # of your parents with your roommates or a close friend if you live alone.
- 11) I.D.

BRING

ALSO:

- FIRST AID KIT
- KNIFE
- CLIMBING EQUIPMENT
- FLASHLITE FROM HENRY
- SMALL FLASHLITE
- #1 IN DIMITES
- WHISTLES (4)
- PAPERS w/ PHONE
- BOOTH LOCATIONS,
- POLICE + MEDICAL
- PHONE NUMBERS.
- 2 HANDCUFFS
- 1 BILLY CLUB

Those of you with vehicles will be contacted earlier than the 20th but even though we will be asking you to do something extra, we still can not divulge the event to you.

If you have plans for the 20th, cancel them

Gary Warne, Adrienne Burk, John Law, Judy Hait

Corner of Page & Masonic at 6pm

We will have a list of the people invited and we will graciously but firmly ask those people to leave that were not invited and those who asked them to come. How will you know who is coming-you won't because you've been asked not to talk about it with anyone-each person asked will receive this write up in an envelope with their name on the front-thru the mail, by hand or thru their mail slot. The "secret" is out after the event

Communiversality PRESENTS



KISSING BOOTH

Bob Campbell and Sandy Hatch at the Kissing Booth.



David Warren organized a very large number of people to stage a Playland revival. On April Fools Day!



Mag, the man with long hair, joins the revival earlier routine.



The woman holds the original Leaning Sol on the suicide club horses while Adrienne surfs walks along side during the revival love on the club.





PLAYLAND PARADE — With a picture of Laughing Sal, the former Playland at the Beach Fat Lady, leading the way on a hearse, participants in Saturday's Playland Lives Commemoration Day paraded past the now vacant

Playland site along the Great Highway. Playland admirers were dressed in costumes to celebrate the fun that once existed at the amusement center.

Progress photos, Don Ivers



HE REMEMBERS — This fellow, "Artful Goodtimes," expressed the sentiment of the day last Saturday during the Playland

Lives Commemoration Day when he wrote, "Playland Lives" on a wall.



PLAYLAND FUN — One paying customer John Law, got a free kiss from Saffron, who worked at the kissing booth, during the Playland Lives Commemoration Day festivities.



10 years later at a dedication for a Playland memorial are David Larson, John Law, Chris Belmont, Laughing Bill Marshall (on loan from the Tom Meadett Museum of Exotic), Steve Lobb, and Louise Corrallo, all survivors of the 1957 Playland disaster.

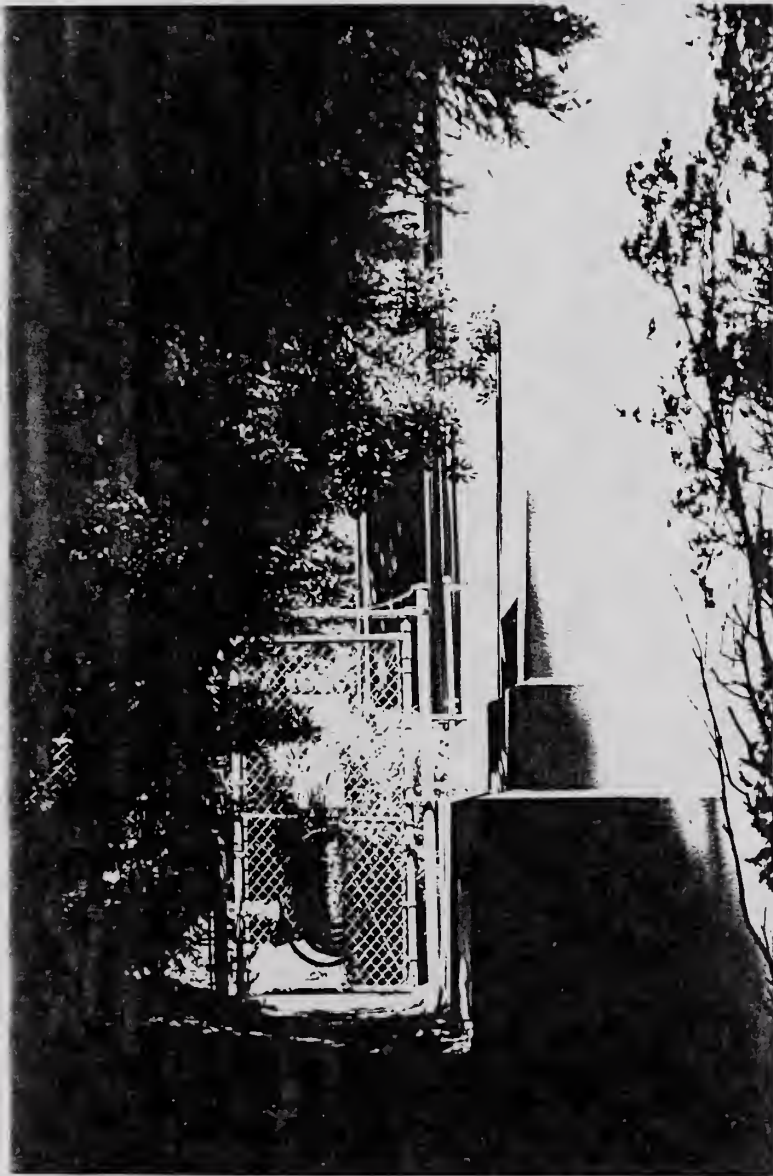


This is the Japanese Tea Garden, which is where R.N. Pepper and I smuck into one night in 1960 to scout out an event he was organizing. It wasn't long before a security guard came looking for us. (After all, the Garden is adjacent to the Asian Art Museum.)

Where was the Chinese fortune cookie invented?

In the Japanese Tea Garden. The Hagiwara family, who operated the Tea Garden from 1895 to 1942, invented the cookie, and local Chinese restaurants adopted it around the turn of the century.





We retreated to this hedge (on the left) and hid behind it as the security guard came down to path towards us (middle of photo) and stopped on the opposite side of the hedge. Then we played hide and seek. He went to his left, we went to our left. He stopped, we stopped. He went to his right, we went to our right. He stopped, we stopped. He reversed direction and kept going, we reversed our direction and kept going also . . . right around to the other side of the hedge where the path was, which we then ran up . . .

. . . with the security guard chasing after us. Pepper took a fall and I had to go back and help him, but we managed to jump this ledge next to the fence to freedom. Just around the corner of the trees was the gate to the Tea Garden where there was parked two cop cars, one with a police dog. Exit stage left.



We played no-holds-barred Kingolevio in
Warkness Hospital (which was still abandoned)
with Gary, John Law, Ted, myself and a whole
cast of macho (and macho) characters. I got my
first broken bone ever trying to take down
Gary.

San Francisco

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWS
THURSDAY, JULY 4, 1996

Chronicle

NEWSPAPER

Some of this article appeared in the July 1 page of the Sunday Chronicle. It was a different bridge, built on the same river. Nothing happened. The girl's legs hit the water.

'It doesn't matter how many times you've done it, all you need to do is screw up once'

— JULIAN HEIDE,
high school student

Kids Take A Plunge Into Danger



Left: An unidentified youth prepared to jump from the Hacienda Bridge. Below: A youth known as Linus leaped more than 40 feet to the Russian River

Russian River bridge's lure

By Jim Doyle
Chronicle North Bay Bureau

It's a three-second drop from the Hacienda Bridge to the emerald-green waters of the Russian River, and young jumpers say the impact can be like slamming into a wall of concrete.

Teenage daredevils have leaped off the four-story bridge for decades. Some even climb to the top of its steel girders to dive nearly 70 feet. And now that school's out, the warm weather is attracting droves of teens and preteens who like to party under the bridge and then taunt each other into jumping.

In the old days, only the most daring teens and "river rats" used to jump off the bridge, but recently it has become a rite of passage for a growing number of Sonoma County boys and girls.

Each summer, some youngsters are badly hurt. Some will never walk again.

"It used to be that just a few jumped — only the pros. Now, it's an epidemic," says longtime Hacienda resident Konstantine Zaharoff.

Notes potter Bob Thistle: "The kids drink and egg each other on."

Hacienda is a popular stop for canoeists, but there's not much for kids to do. The riverside hamlet has a market, a video store and a few dozen homes. Cars and trucks speed across the bridge on Guerneville Road on their way between Santa Rosa and Highway 1.

On hot summer days, dozens of young people gather by the bridge. They get drunk or cranked up on methamphetamine, then jump off the bridge's pedestrian walkway — more than 40 feet to the water below.

Some youngsters have landed titanium to fuse her vertebrae. on canoes; others have hit rocks. Still others simply "land wrong" in the water — breaking their arms and legs, or worse. Five have been paralyzed in recent years.

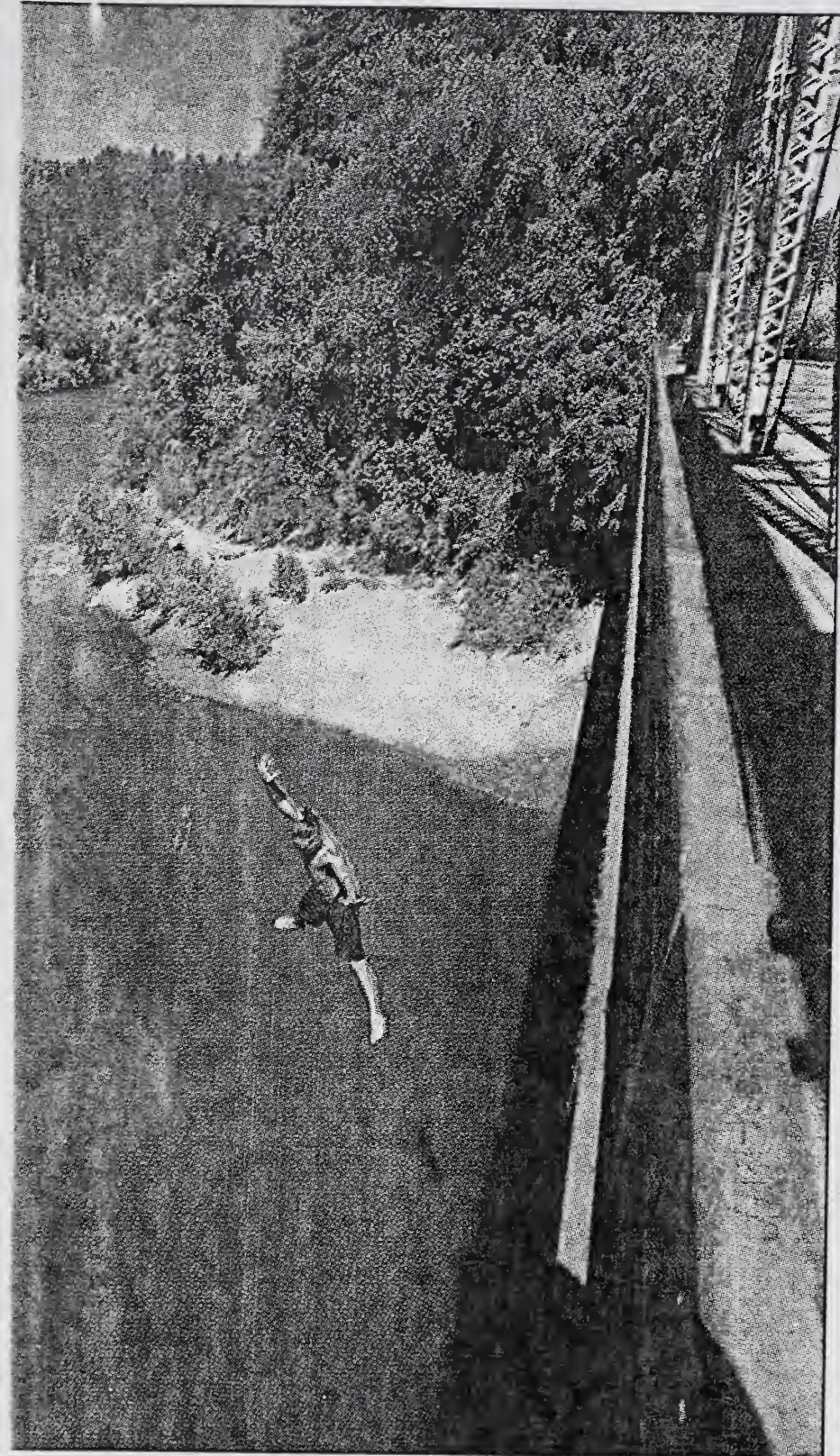
"In the last 25 years, we've had a couple of deaths," said Gary Duignan, Forestville fire chief. "They either jumped from the bridge or fell on the rocks from a rope swing. I've helped try to resuscitate a few of these."

About a month ago, a 15-year-old Forestville girl broke her back.

Serik Wroth — a tall, willowy girl — was reluctant to jump after taking a few sips of beer. So her friends did a "group jump" to show her it was OK. Serik finally jumped — and landed wrong.

"She's one of the fortunate ones. She's going to be able to walk," said Serik's mother, Marnie Wroth. "Thanks to modern technology, they were able to rebuild her. But as a parent, I wish every kid could see what she's been going through."

Surgeons in San Francisco used titanium to fuse her vertebrae. She'll probably be in a body cast for the next year.



PHOTOS BY CHRIS STEWART/THE CHRONICLE

Teenagers say you need to light, like an arrow," said Foremski, for whom Serl as a baby sitter. "But all is a distraction — a truck or someone calling your name and you can land wrong." A serious injury has prompted actions from area kids. A 13-year-old boy said he's jumped off the bridge "at least 70 times in the past two weeks. It starts to hurt after a while, but I joke."

"It's a testosterone thing," said Evan Pigott, 20, who claims to have jumped dozens of times. "Halfway down you can tell whether or not you're going to hurt yourself."

But Julian Heide, a high schooler, said he'll never jump: "It doesn't matter how many times you've done it, all you need to do is screw up once."

Shane Camozzi, 28, of Santa Rosa, agreed: "The last thing I want to do is get paralyzed for the rest of my life."

Many Hacienda residents say the summer crowds of teenagers are getting out of hand. The underside of the bridge is littered with broken beer bottles and graffiti.

Some of the youths are affiliated with criminal gangs. A local teenager was stabbed under the bridge recently by a gang member, and a Hacienda resident passing under the bridge in a canoe a few weeks ago was threatened by a youth holding a gun.

It's a place where peer culture rules, and kids can be heard shouting out epithets to would-be jumpers: "Jump! C'mon, you wimp!"

Julie Aff, who recently spent a weekend at a cabin near the bridge, voiced surprise at the number of young children who were jumping. "Some of them couldn't have been older than 10," she said.

Posted signs on the bridge warn of a \$500 fine for jumpers, but "it's not the easiest thing in the world to enforce," said Lieutenant Bill Henson of the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department. "Our deputies go by every opportunity they can and cut down whatever rope swing is dangling, but they see it replaced in a couple of days."

The county's Board of Supervisors has resisted proposals to install a chain-link fence or sidewalk barrier on the bridge. So far, the board's consensus seems to be: Kids will be kids.

"There is the possibility we could increase the railing height at the sidewalk, but that doesn't mean they won't climb higher to jump," said county engineer Dave Robertson.

The county plans to retrofit the steel-truss bridge next year to make it safer during earthquakes. Originally the span was built for the railroad in 1914; later, one lane was dedicated for automobiles. The train tracks were taken out in 1937, and the bridge was widened for two lanes of traffic in 1947.

Meanwhile, bridge-jumping is part of Russian River lore. "They've been jumping off it for the last 35 years at least, when I was growing up," said Barry Dugan, editor of Sonoma West newspaper in Sebastopol.

"There's pressure to jump if you live in this community," said Vince Johnson, 28, a longtime Hacienda resident who says he's jumped off the bridge dozens of times. "You put yourself in God's hands. And you'd better land right."



It took a New York City street kid named Jim Wiggin to lead a stunningly successful attempt to infiltrate and kill off members of the Suicide Club. It started with mysterious strangers shooting individual members of the club which were followed by confirming anonymous telephone calls by people purporting to be members of "Truher, Inc." I myself got killed off right in the middle of my drinking contest. They were so effective that survivors resorted to packing their dart guns all the time, including me and me in at least one case. I eventually walked them into revealing themselves by getting them to telephone me several times after Jim called me to confirm my own death.

SAN FRANCISCO SUICIDE PREVENTION INCORPORATED

3940 Geary Blvd.
San Francisco, California 94118
Business: 415/752-4866
Emergency: 415/221-1424

6 September 1978

Dear Peter -

I got a call yesterday from a guy who wondered if I'd ever heard of the S.F. Suicide Club. I told him that I would put someone in touch with him. BILL HESS

760 MARKET ST. SUITE 315

SF 94102

See you soon!

Faith



While I was a member of the San Francisco Suicide Club, I was also on the Board Of Directors of San Francisco Suicide Prevention, the people who run the 24 hour crisis hotline. Faith is their secretary and she was the only person there who knew of my Suicide Club involvement. So naturally when she got this call, she sent me this. Boy was this guy surprised when I called him:

Pastrami Politico



By Jerry Burns

A candidate for San Francisco supervisor declared yesterday that the most important issue is not crime, taxes or transportation. It's pastrami.

"I'm the only candidate with the courage to talk about the need for good pastrami," said Carl La Fong. "None of the other candidates knows anything about smoked meats or good delicatessen."

Taking a big bite of a juicy pastrami sandwich yesterday, La Fong explained why pastrami is a key part of his write-in campaign in the 11th District.

"I believe that a candidate for political office who is not touched by the earthy lyricism of hot pastrami, the pungent fantasy of corned beef and pickles, the lusty impertinence of good mustard — is a candidate of stone and without heart, certainly unfit to be elected," he said.

La Fong, who has even challenged his Sunset district opponents to a pastrami-eating contest, insists that he is not a one-issue candidate.

"Pastrami's important, but it's not my only issue," he said between bites. "I'm also in favor of driving the fog out of the Sunset, saving the fake rocks at Lands End and fair play for rabbits."

La Fong proposes that a huge fan be built atop Twin Peaks to push the fog back over the Pacific "or at least over to the Richmond, which isn't in the 11th District."

He wants to preserve the stucco-and-wire fake rocks near the Cliff House "because they're an important part of our fake heritage" and he wants to protect the rabbits that live in Golden Gate Park. The park is in his district so, in a sense, the rabbits will be his constituents.

"I could have taken up the easy issues, but everyone talks about the



SUPERVISOR CANDIDATE GARY LA FONG
The courage to talk about smoked meats

Muni, crime and things like that. I prefer to discuss the issues that are too dangerous for regular politicians," he added. And then he ate a pickle.

La Fong, who learned all about delicatessens while driving a cab in New York City, is one of few candidates who has brought any levity to the present campaign.

Maybe this is because elections are serious business, particularly to the candidates who put their time, money and fragile egos on the line.

Eric Graham, a house painter/student running in the 5th District, has tried to lighten the frantic political scene there by producing a

Monopoly-like game called "The Welcome to District 5 Supervisorial Election Game" and by describing himself in the Voters' Handbook with a poem.

This is Graham's official self-description:

"Oh, I've worked at S.F. General, also at the zoo,

I've been a carpenter, electrician, painter, just to name a few.

I've lived on Portola, Jersey, Haight & Clayton, and now Cole.

For the past 3 years I've grown my own, and I believe in Rent Control."

CARL LA FONG FOR SUPERVISOR

"Make Mine LaFong"

CARL LA FONG, CANDIDATE FOR SUPERVISOR IN THE 11TH DISTRICT,
TAKES HIS STAND ON THE ISSUES

PUBLIC SAFETY

REGISTER SKATEBOARDS

"These dangerous vehicles must be regulated! Every four-wheeled board on the streets should be registered and insured, and riders should be licensed."

THE ENVIRONMENT

GET THE FOG OUT OF THE SUNSET

"For years now our neighborhood has been plagued by the presence of fog. It's time we cleaned up the Sunset and sent the fog back where it came from. By constructing a huge fan atop Twin Peaks we can blow the fog back out to the Pacific, or at least over to the Richmond District."

SAVE THE FAKE ROCKS

"The fake rocks at Land's End are an important part of our fake heritage. In San Francisco, where our skyscrapers, streets and politicians are becoming increasingly fake, we must preserve and protect these reminders of our fake beginnings."

HONESTY IN GOVERNMENT

SSSSS

"I'm no better than the rest. Sure, I'll take bribes, payoffs, special favors and all the other graft a municipal politician is entitled to, but I certainly won't be dishonest about it! I'll give my constituents a detailed accounting of everything I receive. And I promise residents of my district a 25% discount when paying for special favors and patronage. Can my opponents match that?"

CAMPAIGN PROMISES

HOT PASTRAMI FOR EVERYONE

"Perhaps its unfashionable to promise a chicken in every pot. Well, I promise a hot pastrami sandwich on every plate. I know my opponents will skirt the issue of delicatessen food, but I meet it mouth open, ready to eat. I believe that a candidate for political office who is not touched by the earthy lyricism of hot pastrami, the pungent fantasy of corned beef and pickles, the lusty impertinence of good mustard -- is a candidate of stone and without heart, and certainly unfit to be elected!"

WRITE-IN CARL LA FONG ON ELECTION DAY

*Paid For By The Carl LaFong For Supervisor Committee,
615 Frederick Street, San Francisco*

*Printed and distributed by Carl's
Campaign Committee, P.O. Box 1131*

Colson Hit With Pie at Fairmont

By Maitland Zane

Former Nixon aide Charles Colson was hit in the face with a chocolate cream pie in the dignified Fairmont Hotel yesterday.

The thrower was Jayson Wechter, 26, a freelance writer who last year ran for San Francisco supervisor on a "need for better pastrami" platform. Wechter said he hit Colson "because Jesus came to me in a dream and told me Colson was a fraud."

Colson, 45, spent seven months in prison for obstructing justice in the burglary of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist. In 1975, while in prison, he said that he had a religious conversion and became a "born again Christian."

Wechter cornered Colson in an elevator at the Fairmont after Colson gave a Bible breakfast talk to several hundred tycoons of the exclusive Young Presidents' Organization.

Wechter said that he and three friends purchased two pies from Ahrens Bakery for the occasion. He carried one in a green shoulder bag and a companion was toting a second pie "in case Jayson missed with the first one."

"Colson came out of the Gold Room, where they had the prayer breakfast, and got into an elevator. Wechter said, 'It's now or never,' I thought. So I said to him, 'Mr. Colson — one more thing.' He turned and I caught him on the right cheek.

"He said 'Jesus forgives you.' And I said, 'Jesus told me to hit you with a pie because you're a fraud.'"

The pie-flinging caused a commotion in which the walls and carpet of the elevator got smeared. Wechter was hauled off to the hotel security office by a Colson aide, Mike Cromartie. Colson meanwhile left to catch a plane.

The hotel sent Wechter on his way after he volunteered to pay the cost of cleaning up the mess. Susie West, of the Fairmont's publicity office, said that no charges would be brought.

Asked at his apartment on Frederick street across from Kezar Stadium why he really assaulted Colson, Wechter said:

"So I can tell my grandchildren — if I ever have any — how proud I was to hit one of the Watergate conspirators."



Jayson Wechter took the pie out of his bag

