

**THE AMERICAN WORKER
IS THE MOST PRODUCTIVE
IN THE WORLD.**

— George Bush

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ALL TYPOS AND MISTAKES
IN THIS BOOK ARE DUE TO
EMPLOYEE SABOTAGE.

INTRODUCTION PAGE 2

You Can't Get There From Here

TRANSPORTATION CHAPTER 1 PAGE 10

bus driver, Preacher
flight attendant, Rita
gas station attendant, Keith
shuttle driver, Antonio
cab driver, Axel
bus driver, Louie

Harvesting the Fields of Plenty

FOOD PROCESSING CHAPTER 2 PAGE 18

pineapple packer, Lance
palletizer, Patrick
fish canner, David
date pitter, Susan
pickle packer, Terry

Terminal Blues

COMPUTER CHAPTER 3 PAGE 24

programmer, Lazlo
technician, Conrad
technical writer, Dexter
systems designer, Stan
scientist, Roger
supervisor, Brian

In the Eye of the Beholder

ART AND DESIGN CHAPTER 4 PAGE 30

mural painter, Harvey
graphic designer, Alejandro
art gallery assistant, Bill

Everything You Wanted to Know

KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION CHAPTER 5 PAGE 36

teacher, Kat
historical interpreter, Private Charles
librarian, Art
information clerk, Chris

Without Reservations

HOTEL CHAPTER 6 PAGE 42

desk clerk, Duncan

chambermaid, Kim
room service waiter, Boris
security guard, Robin

On Deadline
NEWSPAPER

CHAPTER 7 PAGE 48

press operator, Leroy
distributor, Charles
paperboy, Bob
assembler, Denver
reporter, Lee

Inside the Outside
GROWING AND CUTTING

CHAPTER 8 PAGE 54

combine driver, Tad
gardener, William
mill worker, Crowdad
plant nursery worker, Ryan

The Circular File
OFFICE

CHAPTER 9 PAGE 58

paralegal, George
insurance file clerk, Randall
secretary, Alice
executive assistant, Christian
public records researcher, Alec
utility file clerk, Harry
telephone surveyor, Iris
copy editor, Billy
paralegal, Frances
typesetter, Lina
physician relations manager, Barbara

Whitewash
MAINTENANCE

CHAPTER 10 PAGE 68

convalescent home janitor, Herb
university maintenance worker, Adam
cemetery groundskeeper, Jerry
gofer, Spencer

*It's Not Just a Job,
 It's an Adventure*
MILITARY

CHAPTER 11 PAGE 72

infantryman, Jack
corpsman, Ramiro
sonar technician, Michael
mechanic, A.J.
corpsman, Harald

*It's Business
Doing Pleasure With You*
SEX

CHAPTER 12 PAGE 78

prostitute, Jane
stripper, Daisy
erotic dancer, Rico

From the Ground Up
CONSTRUCTION

CHAPTER 13 PAGE 82

demolition worker, Anthony
roofer, Frank
plumber, Pedro
waterproof, Don
model maker, Dennis
truss and tie rod worker, John
roofer, Jeff

Return to Sender
MAIL

CHAPTER 14 PAGE 90

mail handler, Judi
letter carrier, Otis
mailroom clerk, Reggie
mail clerk, Dolores

Playing the Ringmaster
ENTERTAINMENT

CHAPTER 15 PAGE 96

carny, Dino
movie theater worker, Ben
drug dealer guard, Peter
video dating sales manager, Nancy
casino poker dealer, Peggy

The Customer is Always Right
RETAIL

CHAPTER 16 PAGE 102

discount chain store stock clerk, Karl
toy store floor manager, Ron
department store clerk, Paul
grocery co-op cashier, Diane
record store cashier, Owen
department store stock clerk, Victor
copy shop clerk, Alan
convenience store clerk, Marc
visual merchandising manager, Jim
department store material handler, Santa
exotic fish store clerk, Mac

Quality: Built the American Way

MANUFACTURING

CHAPTER 17 PAGE 112

machinist, Burt
coil winder, Jay
carburetor assembler, Eugene
welder, Tait
assemblyline worker, Nick
steel worker, Rich

Seeing is Believing

BROADCASTING

CHAPTER 18 PAGE 118

disc jockey, Tico
master control operator, Hawley

May I Take Your Order?

RESTAURANT

CHAPTER 19 PAGE 122

bus boy, Chuck
pizza maker, Darrin
waiter, Joey
dishwasher, Steve
kitchen manager, Wez
waitress, Carol

At No Extra Charge

SHIPPING AND DELIVERY

CHAPTER 20 PAGE 128

bicycle messenger, Kenny
liquor company shipping clerk, Roy
office supply shipping clerk, Norman
recycling center truck driver, Joe
Christmas ornament shipping clerk, Emmett
air freight technician, Dieter
messenger, Sammy
warehouse worker, Aaron

Prime Interest in Dollars

FINANCE

CHAPTER 21 PAGE 136

bank teller, Jason
stock broker, P.J.K.

At Your Service

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

CHAPTER 22 PAGE 140

probation officer, Saxon
group home counselor, Jesse
youth shelter counselor, Hilary
welfare caseworker, Shawn

*Tightening the Bolts and
Loosening the Screws*

REPAIR

CHAPTER 23 PAGE 146

industrial maintenance machinist, Max
refrigeration mechanic, Ernest
car mechanic, Scott
copier repair technician, C.J.

Units, Lots and Plots

REAL ESTATE

CHAPTER 24 PAGE 150

real estate surveyor, Sam
apartment manager, Kent

Your Tax Dollars at Work

GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER 25 PAGE 154

page, Mike
senior officer, Bruce
records clerk, Zeke
junior federal assistant, Glenn
typist, Dug

Striking a Nerve

MEDICINE

CHAPTER 26 PAGE 158

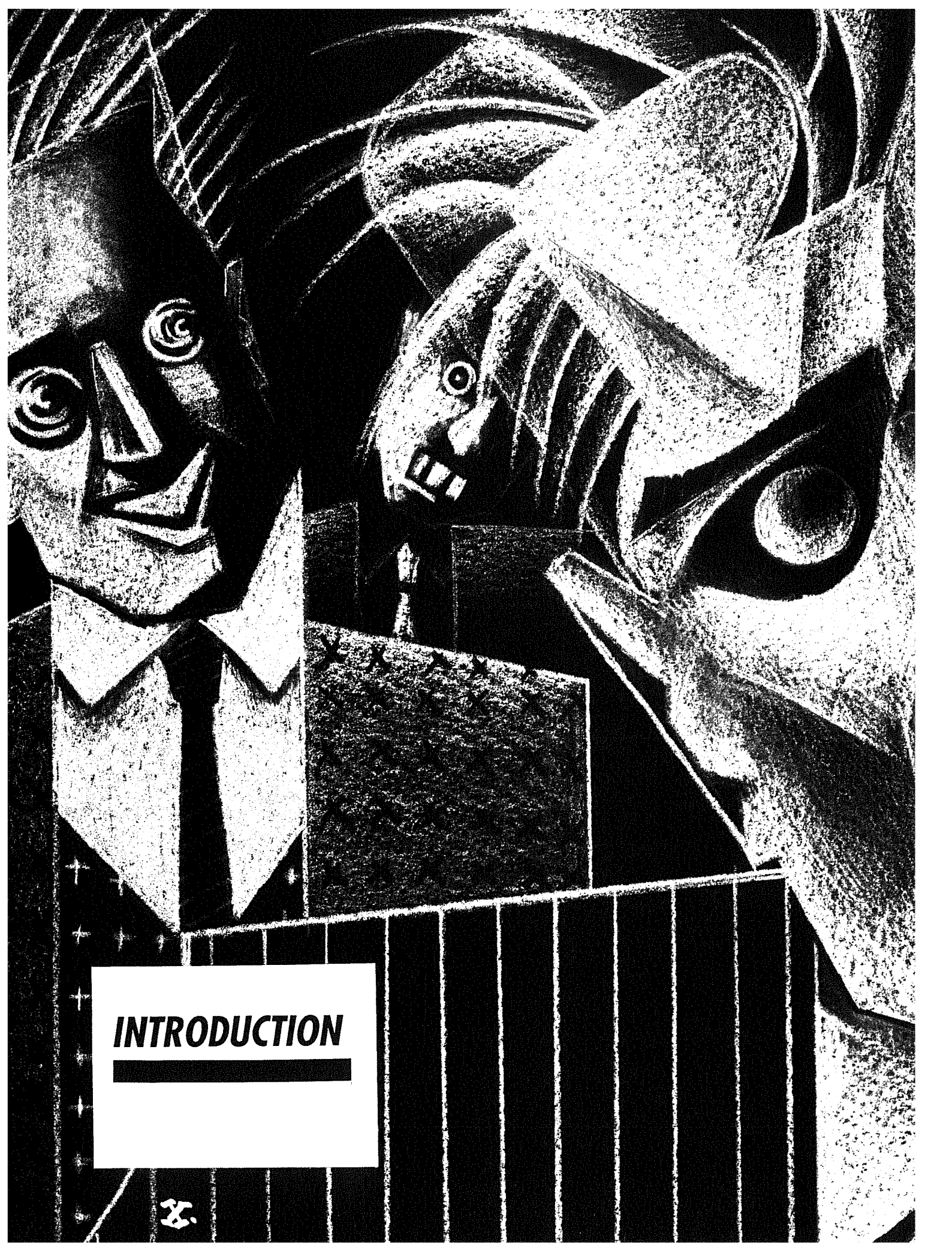
attendant nurse, Tom
pharmacy clerk, Albert
autopsy technician, Fiona
biologist, Mort
hospital personnel, Malcolm
paramedic, Danny
nurse, Ed

ENDNOTES

PAGE 168

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PAGE 173



INTRODUCTION



In 1987, I applied for a mailroom job at a San Francisco financial magazine. Since licking envelopes requires little experience and I was first in line, I got the job. The interview with the office supervisor was just a formality. Our only conversation was about my starting pay, \$4.75 an hour, which was barely a living wage. It was never acknowledged, but the supervisor and I both knew there were twenty others who would have taken the job if I didn't. Like a lot of other people, I was desperate for work, so I accepted the offer. The supervisor gave me a copy of the employee rules manual, shook my hand, and said, "Welcome to the team." I knew I was in trouble.

The company was growing fast, changing and expanding. New departments were constantly set up and old ones phased out. Even at its calmest, the office was chaotic. Although the company rarely gave out raises or promotions, and demanded a lot from the employees, they didn't think twice about firing them. Staff turnover was high, making it impossible to keep track of who was in and who was out. I never saw anyone quit. Most people needed work and any job was better than nothing.

The mailroom was, appropriately, located in the basement. The four people I worked with quickly taught me that the mailroom staff were at the bottom of the company totem pole. We were there to do the mail, but if an executive needed his desk moved or if an overflowing toilet had to be fixed, we were expected to do it. On the few occasions where everyone got bonuses, the mailroom staff got a pizza.

Our commitment to the company was minimal. We were there to collect our paychecks, and that was it. Gradually I realized that all the departments had the same attitude. Dissatisfaction started with us in the basement and rose all the way up to the desk where the CEO's secretary worked.

Discontent was matched by an equal amount of sabotage. The company postage machine, long distance telephone lines and expense accounts were considered public domain. Office supplies couldn't be kept in stock for more than a few days, and furniture, as well as a couple of computers, vanished. People took long lunches and slacked off whenever possible. Some employees found more unusual ways of expressing their dissatisfaction. The morning after word got out about possible pay cuts, the staff were greeted by an office fountain spiked with bubble bath. It flooded the reception area with white suds, and most of us struggled to restrain our laughter as the office managers stared in disbelief. As usual, the mailroom staff were called in to clean up the mess.

My two years with this company provided the initial inspiration for this book. There I was in a typical American office, witnessing sabotage done by almost every level of staff. It was a clear reflection of how they felt toward the company and it made their jobs more tolerable. Sabotage was part of most employees' daily routines, and so widespread that it was barely noticeable. I doubt that even the most observant of managers had a clue about what was going on.

The basic idea behind the book — to document reactions to the day-to-day frustrations and conflicts of earning a living in America — hasn't changed. I knew what I'd seen at the magazine job wasn't unusual. In fact, almost anyone who has worked knows that dissatisfaction is a part of a great number of American jobs.

Because I wanted the book to include a wide range of anecdotes — encompassing different types of sabotage, people and jobs — I chose to define “sabotage” loosely, as *anything that you do at work that you're not supposed to do*. Even though the bubble bath prank at the magazine makes for a great sabotage story, I was just as intrigued by the straight-laced data processor who always added extra hours to her time card, or the graphic designer who regularly came down to the mailroom and talked when he should have been behind his desk. Then there was the quiet, middle-aged accountant who had me send his Christmas gifts at company expense. Did he do it because he knew he could get away with it, or because he felt the company owed him something?

These aren't the kinds of people that come to mind when sabotage is mentioned, but these are the people who were yelled at when the boss was in a bad mood. Considered expendable by the managers, they were the first to have their salaries cut. I wanted to listen to their stories, find out where they drew their personal line of tolerance, and hear how they defined sabotage.

I wasn't sure what I was getting myself into, or what sort of response to expect, but I was optimistic when I began the project. I made flyers soliciting stories and handed them out and posted them up wherever I could. Few stories materialized this way, so I tried a more direct approach. I spent several afternoons in San Francisco's financial district trying to interview people on their lunch hour. As you might expect, I got more suspicious looks than stories. They must have thought that I worked for their boss doing a company security check. I quickly realized that getting stories was going to be a lot harder than I had first anticipated.

It was obvious that I was going to have to find and pursue my own leads. On the suggestion of a mutual friend, I interviewed Steve, who told a story about working as a dishwasher in Olympia, Washington. I met Jane several years ago when she moved here from the East Coast where she had worked as a prostitute. Jane put me in contact with her friend Peggy, a former casino poker dealer. A.J., an army mechanic stationed in Germany, sat in on my interview in a coffee shop with Harry, the utility file clerk. As soon as I told A.J. what the book was about, we started talking, and our conversation turned into an interview.

As word got out, people started coming to me with stories. A computer disc arrived bearing a story from Dexter, a computer technical writer. In a letter, Bruce described a phone prank he

did at his job as senior officer for a branch of the government. Robin, a former hotel security guard, heard about the book through a friend and eagerly filled a cassette tape with his story. Rita, a flight attendant of twenty years, and the cab driver, who called himself Axel, responded to an ad I placed in a local paper. Flyers were still circulating; Frances, a paralegal, found one in her office cafeteria when, coincidentally, she was feeling frustrated by her bosses. I interviewed her over the phone on her company's time.

After reading about them in the newspaper, I tracked down Ron, the Florida toy store manager, and Louie, the bus driver from the Midwest. Finding them was worth the effort; they both had me laughing when they told me their stories.

I knew most people would be more comfortable telling their stories if they did it anonymously. Each person decided how much detail they were going to provide. In some cases, people who had severely broken the law were wary of letting me record their stories. Others reacted the same way at the thought of admitting they had taken long lunches behind their boss' back.

The people I interviewed have backgrounds as varied as their stories. Some could barely survive, living paycheck to paycheck; others made \$60,000 a year. Their ages range from twelve to sixty-five. Their stories are set all over America, from Los Angeles to remote Alaskan coastal towns, from Wall Street to the North Dakota wheat fields.

Pedro, a plumber in Southern California, had a wife and kids. He had never been interviewed before and was somewhat hesitant, but became relaxed after a couple of beers and some conversation. Alejandro was originally from Mexico; when he couldn't find employment in America, he got a job with an American company in the Middle East as a graphic designer. I spent an afternoon talking to a nurse who introduced himself to me as Ed. He amazed me with his knowledge of medicine and his insights on the routine sabotage done by hospital nurses.

As I did more interviews, I began to see that each person's choice of sabotage and reasons for using it were as much a reflection of their character as of their jobs. The motives behind the acts covered the spectrum between altruism and revenge.

Terry worked on a speeding assemblyline packing pickles in jars. He knew that his co-workers, most of them young kids, were being forced to work too fast, so he shut down the line, giving everyone in the factory an unexpected break. Jeff gave his all to the roofing company he worked for, but he never got the promotion he had been promised. His sabotage cost his boss \$80,000. Barbara enjoyed being a physician relations manager but wasn't able to do her job because her supervisor, threatened by her presence, gave her useless work to do. Barbara decided to read books instead of work. Tico, a former disc jockey, was a troublemaker and prankster. At the station

where he worked, he tried to get away with as much as possible without getting fired. While working at a conservative think tank, Reggie realized he disagreed with his bosses' politics, so he used his position as mail clerk to sabotage their fundraising efforts. Alan and his co-workers at the copy shop felt they were being underpaid so they gave themselves daily cash bonuses from the register.

Along with the highly dramatic, I've included several stories of quiet sabotage. There's Brian, the car mechanic from Rochester who didn't like his boss overbilling the customers. Brian took control of the situation and made it work the way he wanted. Afterwards, he felt better about his job and the customers got a fair deal. Although his sabotage might be considered fairly minor, it had a noticeable impact. Alice, a secretary, used the term "perks" to describe her padded time card and extra discounts on company merchandise. She was a bit shocked when I suggested that her actions could be considered theft. As far as she was concerned, she had never stolen anything in her life. She felt completely justified in her actions. The sabotage was not unique, and I found her rationalization of it to be common.

There's no doubt that certain kinds of sabotage affect consumers. Depending on the act, the customer either benefits or gets a bad deal. Marc was a clerk at a convenience store where products were sold for higher than the standard retail price. Using his pricing gun, Marc gave customers what he thought were fair discounts. Eugene worked in a Detroit factory where he and his co-workers produced thousands of faulty carburetors. He was convinced that if a consumer bought a lemon, they would never buy another vehicle from the company that he hated with a passion. Eugene's probably right. Carol has been a waitress most of her life. While working at one restaurant, she and other waitresses let food spoil before serving it to customers. Most people will probably see her story as one of the most extreme in the book (Tracy Cox was horrified by it as you can tell from his illustration accompanying it). Carol told her story matter-of-factly; to her, what she did was no big deal. In her eyes, the food poisoning was just a way for her and her co-workers to give the restaurant a bad reputation and get even with their boss, who had refused to give them a raise.

I interviewed a number of people who didn't have any sabotage stories. Some had no complaints about their jobs; others took any form of abuse that came their way. I talked to a sales representative for specialty food companies who claimed to have no criticisms of her job, mainly because of the autonomy she had in her daily routine. After an hour of discussion, I called it quits. I did get her to admit that once in a while she took a long lunch—but always made the time up the next day. Fair enough. I heard detailed stories from a former San Francisco police officer, a fertilizer chemist and an appraiser for an exclusive auction house. Each of them had gripes about their jobs but chose to wait the problems out. Although they didn't have

stories for the book, what they told me gave me more perspective on sabotage.

Six months into the project, Lydia Ely had become assistant editor. Together we researched the subject of sabotage. We found few books that provided a contemporary view. Some of the earliest accounts describe American slaves who made sabotage a way of life to protest their ultimate degradation. The slaves deceived their owners by feigning stupidity, incompetence, and slowness — actions which, at the very least, caused the owners irritation and expense.

American labor history books generally focus on struggles from the early 20th century and frequently refer to strikes and walkouts, with little discussion of sabotage. When sabotage is mentioned it's usually linked to the Industrial Workers of the World, or Wobblies. They were the most notable union to officially advocate — or at least consistently threaten — the use of sabotage. Eventually, due to legal harassment and internal disagreement, the Wobblies disassociated themselves from wholesale support of sabotage.

Studs Terkel's *Working* was one of the few books where Americans described work-related frustrations in their own words. Although there have been significant changes in the notion of work since when the book was first published, in the mid-seventies, the attitudes and conflicts that it documents are eternal and will always be as much a part of work as the time clock.

Accompanying the interviews are excerpts from newspaper and magazine articles, management manuals, quotes, poems, proverbs, lyrics and statistics that relate to work and sabotage. Some of these items are opinions, facts, or have historical value, while others are included because of their absurdity. The statistics are rarely factual and are the result of guesswork by consulting firms who profit from producing and selling such information.

During the time that I was working on the book, I was interviewed about sabotage on a radio talk show. The interviewer asked what I thought could be done to solve the problem of sabotage. I told him I didn't see sabotage as a problem, but as a necessary and valid reaction to dissatisfaction caused by work. Since it's not a problem, there's no solution — a point that I hope this book illustrates.

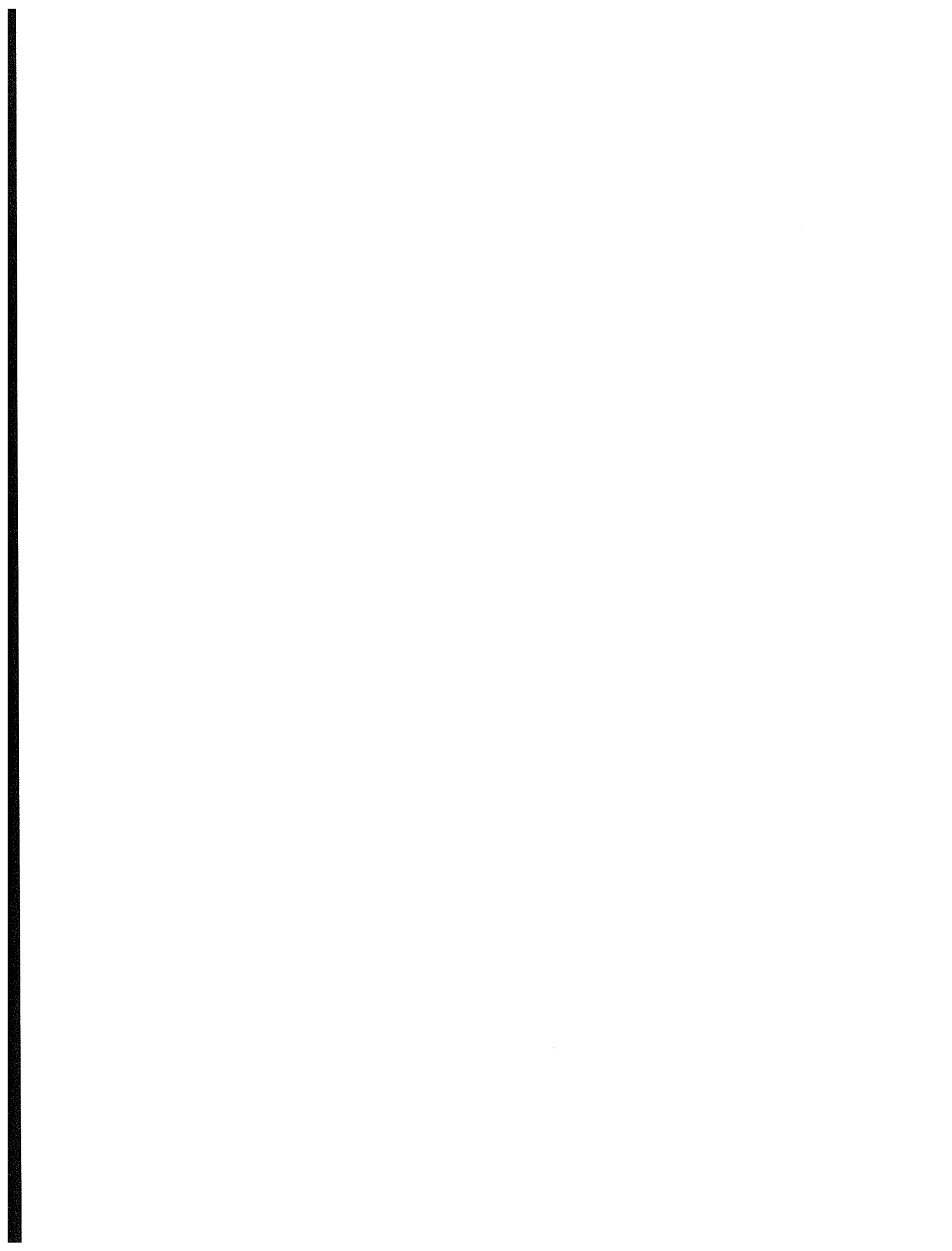
If the cause of discontent in the workplace is obvious, sabotage can be used to improve working conditions and give people greater control of their jobs, as in the instance where bicycle messengers used it to change an idiotic company policy. When resentment springs from general attitudes toward work, there are no simple answers. Very few of the people in this book liked being told what to do by their boss or supervisor and most

were acutely aware of the countless differences between those who gave the orders and those who actually did the work. Several people explained that they felt trapped by meaningless work, while others made it clear they didn't like working for other people. These conflicts might be commonplace but they are also the most basic reasons for sabotage.

As long as people feel cheated, bored, harassed, endangered, or betrayed at work, sabotage will be used as a direct method of achieving job satisfaction — the kind that never has to get the bosses' approval.

— Martin Sprouse, February 1992







1

***YOU CAN'T GET
THERE FROM HERE***

Transportation

x.

BUS DRIVER • PREACHER

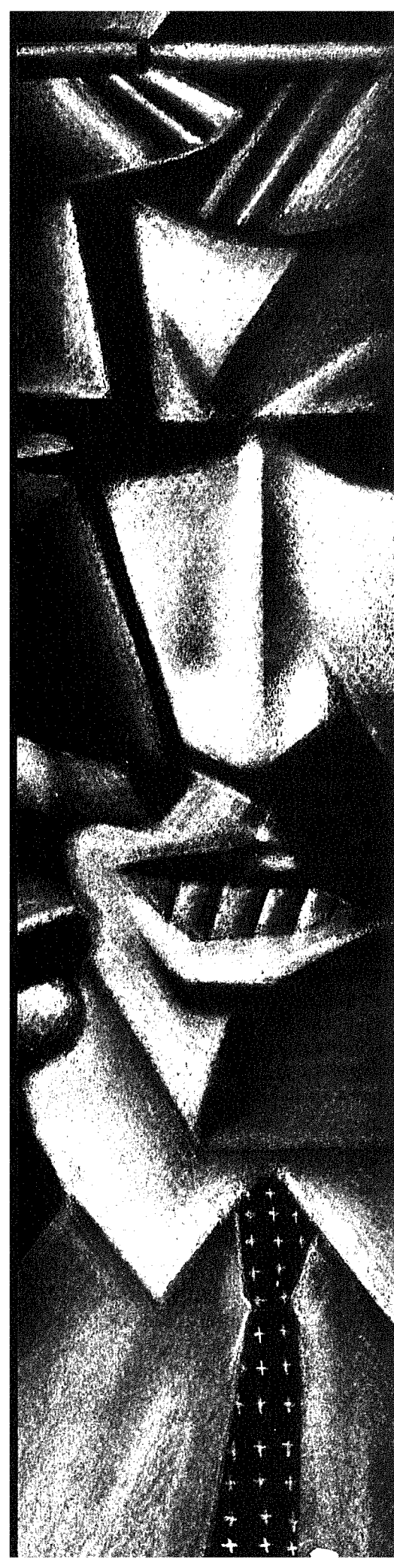
I started working for the Chicago Transit Authority as a bus operator when I was twenty-seven. Later, due to my expert driving ability, I became a line instructor, which meant I continued to drive the bus but I broke in new students on my line. This was a prerequisite to becoming a management supervisor. I worked until I was fifty, but I never made management.

We had threadless, bald-headed tires on those vehicles. I once asked how the vehicles had any traction. They said, "You have double wheels on the rear and the airspace on the two tires provides traction." I don't know how they got away with it. We had a sign-in sheet; at the end of every day, we signed in our opinion of the run and how the bus was going. I would regularly write "bald-headed tires," or whatever the complaint was. I was called into the office about that. They said, "If you want to be a supervisor, see nothing, hear nothing, say nothing," which I wouldn't do. When I became a line instructor they said, "Preacher, keep your mouth shut." If I wanted to be a management supervisor, I would have to be a "company man."

Our depot served twelve routes. The routes that entered into the white neighborhoods got the nicer, newer coaches. The routes that entered the black neighborhoods got the worst, stinking, ten to twenty-year-old buses they had, where the windows wouldn't open in the summer and the heat wouldn't come on in the winter. When they got brand new air-conditioned coaches, they put them on the white lines. I had one shift where I got a brand new coach because the route extended into a white neighborhood off Lake Shore Drive, where Hugh Hefner lives. In other words, six of 100 buses were elite buses.

In the buses, there was a button which dropped a slug into the engine and automatically shut it off. It was for emergency purposes only, like overheating or malfunction. When we got a "raggedy coach" — leaning to one side, with fumes in it, or with poor brakes or poor shocks — some drivers would go to the end of the route where the passengers wouldn't be inconvenienced and take the layover time (when you get to rest ten to fifteen minutes) and drop that slug into the engine, grind it and run the battery down. The mechanic would come and want to know why they did it. The driver would say they didn't know how the slug went down.

"Dragging the street" is when you slow the line down on purpose. One day, it was ten below zero, baldheaded tires, 100 people trying to get home in a snowstorm, Preacher doing the best he can, never had a chargeable accident in the entire time I was with the company. I'm going ten miles an hour, trying to make a stop as best I can on streets that may or may not have salt over the ice. After you made a full stop, if someone in the back of the bus shifted their weight, those baldheaded tires would slide across the ice and I'd slam into a parked car. I was told in the depot, "You're driving too fast for the conditions." So the next day I slowed down from ten miles an hour to five miles an hour. The supervisor's scanning the area to find out why all these buses are late. "There goes Preacher and a few other guys dragging the street again!" So



Workers have been known to boast of "soldiering" or purposely slowing down on a job. Actually, the time lost by workers and not paid for directly is paid for indirectly by the company because the day or piece rates must be higher to provide the expected weekly wage. "Soldiering" may react on both the management and the worker through increasing labor costs that cannot be passed along to the buyer in higher prices, thus creating avoidable losses which may curtail plant activity.

— *Organized Labor and Production, Morris L. Cooke and Philip Murray*¹

Like workers on an assembly line that has been speeded up, flight attendants have been asked to hand out commercial love at an ever faster rate, to more people in the same amount of time.

Unable to keep up, attendants have countered with a slowdown. They could not slow down their actual physical labor — they had to serve meals in the flight time allotted — but they could slow down their emotional labor. And, in a way not quite articulated, that is what they have been doing. Passengers no longer get the steady good hearted cheer promised ever more boldly by smiling young women in ads.

— "Smile Wars," *Mother Jones*²

you're damned if you do, damned if you don't! It got to the point where I didn't care if I went three miles an hour. If you and your momma and your daughter are on the bus, I'm not going to endanger your lives. I'm going to go as slow as it takes for me to operate that bus without hurting anyone.

When a driver retired, they'd retire his run with him. So you had fewer runs on the same route, with more and more volume. A bunch of drivers got together and said, "Fuck this schedule! We don't want to drive defensively" (which means over and above quota). That was our Catch-22; if we went any faster and tried to maintain schedule, we'd be driving in a reckless manner. We would drag down entire streets that way.

When they first got blacks in the position, it seemed as if they had to be super sharp and super clean. The whites only had to get off the buses and into supervision. All they had to do was have a cousin or a relative or a priest or any other form of nepotism. Don't get me wrong — there were black supervisors that were impeccable in their performance, never kissed ass. But the majority of them, if they wanted to be a supervisor, had to skin and grin up to the man's face, more so than anybody else had to. It's like when I see a black pilot flying a 747 — he's so much more superior to the co-pilot than a white pilot would have to be. They want you to be Little Lord Fauntleroy.

I could do my job. They could have my labor. But they couldn't have my soul.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT • RITA

I had fun when I first started. My expectations were that I would jump on an airplane, get off in another city and party. I was going to have a great, carefree time. It never occurred to me that there would be some problems down the road.

When I started flying in 1967, flight attendants couldn't be married. I also had to agree to quit at the age of thirty-five. These things, of course, have since been struck down by employee discrimination legislation. Back then we were seen as party girls, young and single, with no worries at home. A lot changed when flight attendants were allowed to get married, but in many ways we're still perceived as carefree girls. There's still this expectation that we're going to be outgoing; passengers assume I'm going to tell them personal stuff willfully and gladly. Early on, I began thinking differently about what passengers really expected of me. They wanted to pick my brain and they wanted me to be friendly and talkative and constantly available for them.

The company has a set of rules that say we're supposed to make ourselves available and let other people hear our conversations. They want us to give the impression that we are outgoing and loquacious. They want us to speak in complete sentences. It never occurred to me in training that the days would be long, or that I was going to have to deal with people who were rude, dirty, drunk and obnoxious.

When I start to get tired on a flight, I avoid the passengers. I have a friend who has a name tag that says "Oh, Miss." If I hear somebody saying "Oh, Miss," I don't even look back at them. I

In a two-to-one decision, a panel of the Second U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Manhattan upheld a lower court ruling that added six months to the eighteen-month prison sentence of a former Piedmont Airline ticket agent who allegedly stole \$50,000 in airline tickets.

Michael Castagnet was convicted of using Piedmont's ticket-counter computers early in the morning and late at night to issue himself tickets. Although the crime occurred after he left the company, the court ruled that he had abused a unique position of trust with the airline. The appeals court ruled that the past relationship between the ex-agent and the airline "provided the ability to commit the crime" and allowed Mr. Castagnet to create airline tickets "unobserved."

— *Wall Street Journal*³

Emotional labor is the silent work of evoking and suppressing feeling — in ourselves and in others. When you drive a truck or swing a hammer for a living, you give the company your time and sweat. But you don't relinquish your way of seeing things. You don't give the company your face or your feelings. But when you do emotional labor to express the company's disposition toward the public, and to make a profit for the company, you put your feelings to work.

— "Smile Wars," *Mother Jones*⁴

Employees who commit sabotage are not always the chronic malcontents who openly oppose company policies, rules, and workplace procedures. Saboteurs may be smiling, compliant, but furtive individuals who quietly go about their business at work, rarely revealing their malicious intent.

— *Personnel Magazine*⁵

don't hear that little plaintive voice calling me. I avoid eye contact. I do the same thing in the boarding area. Passengers come over to me and want to talk and ask questions about the flight. I don't hear them talking. I look away. I walk away. I consider that on-the-job avoidance. It's not important to me to let the passengers know what I'm all about. I'll do these things when there are a ton of people on a flight and I'm feeling overloaded, when I just can't take one more request from a passenger.

The whole airline business is based on emotional labor — being nice when you don't want to be. I think anybody in a service position does this, but we do it a lot. The company wants us to sell a smile, but giving it really takes its toll. The company doesn't recognize it, my union doesn't recognize it, but those who do the job realize it all too clearly.

I can't say I hate the job. There are some things about it that I enjoy. I like the people I work with. I like the fact that I don't have a supervisor, that I have a different schedule each month, and that I can pick and choose the days and times I work. I get good vacations. I don't think I'm going to find all of these things in that many other jobs. But for these pluses, there are some real minuses.

My outlook has evolved over the years. Instead of trying to do backflips to turn the situation around, I just stop putting out and it's better for me. I've got to do what I can to stay sane. It's not enough to come home and not talk about my job. I need to do something on the job to keep my emotions fairly healthy. I know I was hired because they thought I was going to do things their way, but I can't anymore. There's a saying that we have at work: "The company knows the price of everything and the value of nothing." That pretty much sums it up.

GAS STATION ATTENDANT • KEITH

My boss was a racist bitch who had a severe chip on her shoulder. Most of the people who got jobs there either quit or got fired within three days. I worked for her at this gas station/mini-mart on and off for about a year, and I saw her go through no less than 100 employees. Pretty much everybody I knew in town had worked there at one point or another.

She did inventory once a month. Since I was constantly planning to quit, I usually saved my bigger thefts until right after inventory was taken, so it wouldn't get figured out until a month later. By then, she'd have gone through ten employees who she could conveniently blame for the crime. She never even suspected I was robbing her blind. I was always very nice to her and I cleaned the place spotless every night. I was never short more than a few cents at the end of my shift and the cigarette count never came up short. I was a model employee who could always be counted on and only called in sick once.

Mostly, I stuck to soda, ice cream, beef jerky and that kind of thing. I made sure to swipe plenty of oil, transmission fluid and whatnot. One kid working there would program the pumps so that the price per gallon was one cent, and all his friends would come in and fill up for free.

I pulled little scams that were impossible to pin on me. On

Melvin Raymond Epp, a former employee of Schwerman Trucking Co., is being sought by authorities in connection with a diesel fuel spill at Schwerman's facilities. About 5,700 gallons of fuel leaked from the site because of sabotage and threatened a nearby creek. Epp supposedly did it because of "spite and revenge."

— Atlanta Constitution⁶

*I am working with the feeling
That the company is stealing
Fifteen pennies from my pocket every
day;*

*But for every single penny
The will lose ten times as many
By the speed that I'm producing, I dare
say.*

*For it makes me so disgusted
That my speed shall be adjusted
So that nevermore my brow will drip
with sweat;*

*When they're in an awful hurry
Someone else can rush and worry
Till an increase in my wages I do get.
— "Harmony"⁷*

weekend nights, if I was getting a lot of obnoxious suburban drunks in, I'd just turn out the outside lights, put up a closed sign, and watch TV. If I didn't feel like dealing with someone's shit, I'd just pretend I didn't hear them. I'd just keep on going "What? What?" until they got sick of me and left. We also sold instant lottery tickets at the station and I'd entertain myself by snatching five or ten and try to win big money. I'd usually win enough to pay for the tickets I took and turn a slight profit — although once I did win 200 bucks right before Christmas.

SHUTTLE DRIVER • ANTONIO

I drive passenger shuttles between the airport and San Francisco. I am an independent contractor: I pay \$75 a day rent — "gate" — for the use of a van that seats eight people including the driver, and my gas which is now \$25 a day.

I do many things to rip off the company. I don't pay the gas, or I claim to have transported fewer passengers than I did and say I'm unable to pay the full gate. Sometimes I drive people who don't pay cash, but give me vouchers which are paid by airlines, hotels or travel agencies. I turn in fake vouchers. Some of them are not marked with the number of passengers or the distance or their destination. I can make up the information, depending on the time I called in last. This means I don't have to pay the gate at all.

When I steal time, I try to make it up later to make more money. If I'm late in the morning, my shift is shorter than ten hours, but I still have to pay the full "gate." If my shift starts at 6:30 am, I have to be out at 4:30 pm. Between 11:00 am and 4:30 pm I don't make much money, so I need more time. To convince the office that I need the van longer, I say that I had a "10-6," which is the code for a mechanical problem. The van overheated; it got a flat; it stalled. They ask me if I need a tow. Usually I say, "Oh, I'll let it cool down," or "I'll do my best; I'll be coming in really slow."

When I want to go short shift, I pour water in the gas tank, which makes the van stall. Sometimes they'll bring me a van, but most of the time there aren't any, so I go short shift and don't pay my gate. I can get a flat by punching the tire into a curb. I can break the radio by disconnecting the wires, and someone has to come fix it. Other times at the end of my shift, I put myself in a huge traffic jam. I know where the traffic is; drivers are always calling where the jams are on the radio. I say that I'm in a particular jam. They can't track me, and among drivers there is that kind of camaraderie and cooperation. Even if someone sees me, nobody will tell the office where I am or what I'm doing. I can be talking with the office, saying I'm downtown in traffic when instead I'm at the airport, picking up and dropping off people. Everybody sees me at the airport and hears me saying on the radio that I'm downtown, but no one will tell.

I do these things for self-defense, because the job is stressful and my pay doesn't match the service I furnish. If I didn't do it, I would have to work seven days a week and still be able to barely pay my bills. Everyone is underpaid except the owners, who are very powerful and get money from the state and city. Because everyone is an independent contractor, there is no way to struggle against

Absenteeism at the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority reached a nine-year high in 1988 with the average employee gone 29 days out of the year.
— *Boston Globe* 8

In 1831, between two and three hundred construction workers, mostly Irish, punished an absconding contractor by "wantonly" tearing up track they built. Similar penalties were meted out by Italian construction gangs between 1880 and 1910 and by unorganized railroad workers, mostly native-born repairmen and trainmen, between 1850 and 1880, who tore up track, spiked switches, stole coupling links and pins, and did other damage to protest to changing work rules or to collect back wages.

— *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America*,
Herbert G. Gutman 9

A gang of section men working on a railroad in Indiana were notified of a cut in their wages. The workers immediately took their shovels to the blacksmith shop and cut two inches from the scoops. Returning to work they told the boss: "Short pay, short shovels."

— *Sabotage*, Walker C. Smith, 1913 10

them. Employees burn out very fast.

Sometimes I feel bad about it because I've had other jobs where I was a professional with a work ethic. I'm an immigrant; I have an accent; I have many problems getting work. But I have to make money. This job is not a way to live, it's a way to waste my life. But what can I do? Starve?

CAB DRIVER • AXEL

I was at loose ends as Christmas approached. A friend of mine drove cabs and said I could make an okay living at it. At first I was uncertain because I didn't know what the hell went on being a cab driver. As it got closer and closer to Christmas, I was afraid I wouldn't be able to buy any toys for my kid, so I thought I'd give it a try.

I've been driving for four years now and I still enjoy my job. I'm a talker and I talk with people from all walks of life. I find that about ninety-five percent of the people I pick up are prepared to start chatting with me. I'm great for five, six minutes of conversation and people enjoy the hell out of me. When I'm behind the wheel, I'm the master of my little domain. I don't have a supervisor looking over my shoulder, but like any other job, there's management.

I think cab management is just a little less ethical than drug dealing. When I tell this to non-drivers they're surprised at the harshness of my words, but when I say it to drivers, they say, "So?" because they know how it is. The way the cab business is set up, there is no incentive for management to make it work better for the drivers or the customers. Management gets their money from cab rental fees paid by the driver, not from the customer. So when a customer calls for a cab, it doesn't matter whether a driver gets to that customer or not.

When we're given an order and it's ten blocks away, we're expected to go pick it up. But we don't know how old that order is, we just know someone has called for a cab. The problem is, many times people will call a cab then go out to the street and flag one down. We'll drive up a minute later, ring the doorbell trying to find the person, but no response. It's company policy to try every possible way to locate the person who called the cab, but if the order's an hour old, that person is gone.

It's clear to most drivers that the more you're in motion and the more fares you pick up, the more money you make. When we go off to get an order, someone will usually flag us down on our way there. But if we pick the flag up, the dispatcher is going to yell. So we have to concoct a lie, which is something every driver quickly learns to do. We tell them the original order needs a second cab because they had two people going separate directions, when in fact we had never made it there in the first place. When you first start driving, you pass up flags; then you soon try to find out how many you can get away with picking up.

Our fear is that if the company finds out we're doing this, they'll can us. But if we're completely loyal to the company and follow their rules, we'll be perfect cab drivers but won't make any money.

Two subway workers turned a Transit Authority experiment with sophisticated automated turnstiles into a considerably simpler venture — theft — stealing more than \$50,000 in fare receipts, Robert M. Morgenthau, the Manhattan District Attorney, said yesterday.

"It was really a simple scheme," Mr. Morgenthau said in describing the larceny indictment a Manhattan grand jury handed up against the two workers, Barrington Coburn, a 45-year-old token-booth clerk at the Brooklyn Bridge-City Hall IRT Station, and Jonathan Woods, 34, who maintained the station's two automated turnstiles.

"Woods turned off the turnstile token counters for a period of time," Mr. Morgenthau said, "and Coburn accordingly cashed in the uncounted tokens that were deposited.

"What they kept, they split."

— *New York Times* 11

Drug testing among U.S. employers is on the rise. A survey by *Business and Legal Reports* indicated 33% of employers tested all applicants in 1989; this was up from 21% in 1988, a 57% jump. And it's up to employers to deal with the issue in a way that won't throw the worksite into chaos.

— "The Lows of Being High,"
Michael Karol 12

BUS DRIVER • LOUIE

It's a city-owned bus utility, so it's heavily financed by the government. It's in a college town so drugs are considered part of the lifestyle. Marijuana use is a common thing among the people who live here.

A group of drivers and mechanics got concerned after we got federal orders that all bus utility workers employed by a company getting Urban Mass Transit Administration money would have to be drug tested. People were just saying, "This sucks! The government doesn't have any right to tell us what to do." We wanted to know why we had to jeopardize our jobs for having a joint on the weekend.

First, someone xeroxed a brochure on how to flush your system out. So I started copying that and giving it out. Then a couple of people got information from the American Civil Liberties Union on what our rights were. And interestingly enough, our union, which wasn't a very active union, started getting involved.

When something really hits home, people start to get more involved. We started gathering information which spread around the shop. The level of interest increased as we got closer to the date the random tests were supposed to begin. Some people stopped using their drug of choice until they could figure out what was going on.

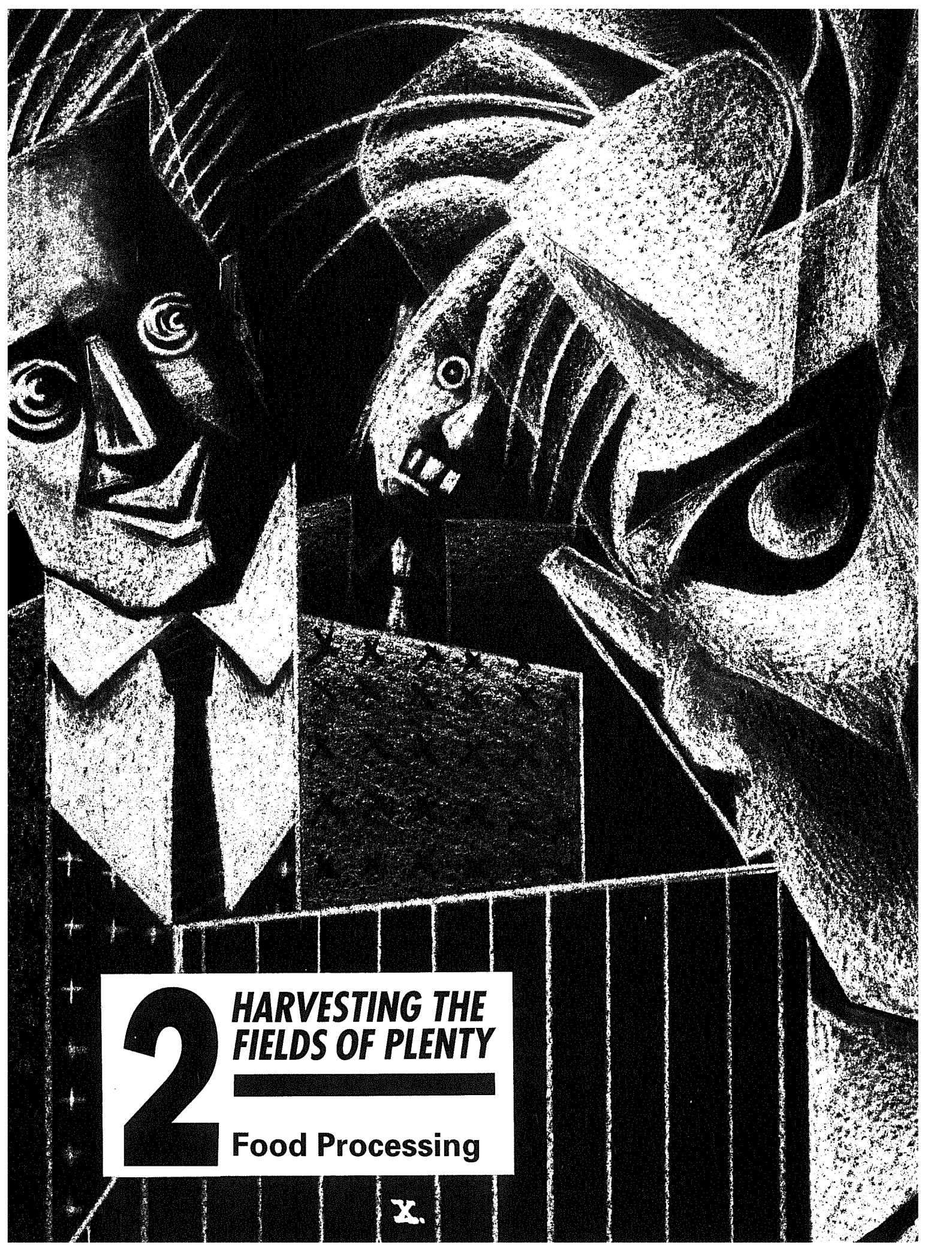
The weekend before the drug testing was to begin, we had an "After-Holidays Party." Somebody — nobody knows who it was, though someone in management thought they knew — brought in a pan of brownies laced with marijuana. Obviously, the purpose was so innocent people would test positive in the drug test, and the results would have to be thrown out.

Once people heard about it they crossed their fingers. The brownies became the hit of the party. The tension grew every time an unsuspecting dispatcher or supervisor ate one of the brownies. Unfortunately, the general manager didn't eat any. Nobody realized what had happened until it was too late. All they knew was that the pan of brownies had been eaten. Management was completely flustered. They had absolutely no idea of what to do.

A couple of weeks later a federal court ruling came down that knocked down the testing requirement because of some technicality. The Urban Mass Transit Administration had to rewrite the rule, so we have a year reprieve. In the meantime, we're trying to get new language in our contract. The federal government can tell you to have random drug testing but it can't mandate discipline. If we don't succeed, I know at next year's party, people are going to look at the brownies and ask themselves, "Do I want to eat these?"







2

**HARVESTING THE
FIELDS OF PLENTY**

Food Processing

Furthermore, there is no need to destroy machinery completely in order to stop it from working: just as the sabotaging of one key machine can cause general disruption, so the sabotaging of one key component of a machine can cause it to come to a standstill.

— *Sabotage in Industry*, Pierre Dubois¹

Around the turn of the century, management destroyed the old craft unions in the steel, oil, and chemical industries and reorganized factories according to Frederick Taylor's principles of "scientific management." The essence of those principles was that management should itself determine the best method of performing the job, then prescribe precisely how workers should proceed. As a result of this reorganization, it is claimed, workers in automated plants are effectively docile servants dominated by management in highly "Taylorized" settings.

— *America's Working Man*,
David Halle²

PINEAPPLE PACKER • LANCE

In Honolulu, most people start working at Dole Pineapple right out of high school. They usually end up staying there for the rest of their lives like my grandparents did. If you don't have a good education, it's hard to find any other job in Hawaii. I'd have to say that for most people, it was just a shitty job. The work was hard and the factory was noisy and hot. No one liked it. The managers were incredibly abusive; in order to avoid promoting people, they switched us around a lot so we never got skilled at any one job.

I worked at the Janacka machine, which cuts the hides and skin off the pineapple. I also worked where they seal the tops of the cans, and then I worked inspection, where they weigh random samplings of cans to make sure they have the right amount of juice and everything.

The Janacka machine was probably the best. We usually worked a straight ten-hour shift, so a lot of people would just burn out. The biggest problem was people falling asleep and getting their hands caught in the machine. To combat that, people would try to get more breaks — we were only allowed two breaks a shift. To do this, they would send a pineapple down the wrong direction, or send a glove down, and it would break the whole machine. If the Janacka machine shuts down, you can't cut the pineapple, and if you can't cut the pineapple, the line can't go on. The whole production line shuts down. It takes at least three hours to fix, so you're getting paid for three hours at least for just sitting around.

There was only one manager for the people who sealed cans, and it's such a huge place that they couldn't check on us more than once an hour. We could easily switch the wrong button and the juice would go into the wrong container, or we could change the levels so that everything overflowed. They'd have to shut down the machine to figure out what went wrong.

There were about five of us working at the inspection place in different shifts. We would collect the pineapple for samples, go into the back room, hang out, listen to the radio for a couple of hours, and then throw all the samples away. It was a pretty common practice.

We never got caught and I don't know anyone who's ever been fired from Dole. First off, it's incredibly cheap labor and, overall, they're making a hell of a lot of money from our ten hour shifts. It was so easy to make a mistake that they'd never know when we did it on purpose. Everyone who worked there knew that people did it. They welcomed the break — they'd be stupid not to, and be ostracized by everyone else.

PALLETIZER • PATRICK

I worked in a food production factory that made thousands of bottles of warm goo a day. I stood at the end of a conveyer belt where boxes with a dozen bottles of this warm crap came whizzing down to me, about one per second. I would stack them on pallets and the forklift driver would take them away. Occasionally, when we got a major shipment of boxes with plastic bottles for the front

Trying to get a worker to do what is an unreasonable amount of work can backfire. Work goals, to be effective as productivity incentive, have to be in the range of what a good worker can be expected to achieve. Unrealistic goals tend to slow the pace of productivity.

— *Supervisor's Factomatic, Jack Horn*³

The supervisor is the first line of defense against the saboteur. If employees know that management is watching, those most inclined to do damage will think twice.

— *Supervisory Management Magazine*⁴

By his very success in inventing labor-saving devices, modern man has manufactured an abyss of boredom that only the privileged classes in earlier civilizations have ever fathomed.

— *Lewis Mumford*

end of the assembly line, the foreman would take me and a few others off the line and send us upstairs to the old wooden storeroom. The boxes would come up on a conveyor belt to us, where we would stack them on the floor.

One day we were called to unload a major shipment. The boxes were coming at us at an alarming rate. Me and two co-workers were running like fools, arms stretched wide, grasping these boxes. We would have to run them over to where they were being stacked on the far side of the wall. It was sweltering hot up in the attic storeroom of this antiquated old factory. We were sweating and running with these boxes, squeezing tight so the middle ones wouldn't fall out. The conveyor belt was crammed with boxes. The foreman, a despicable Marine sergeant type, sat on a stack of boxes and picked his teeth, chiding us to go faster. If one of us fell behind the others, he'd call us "pussy" or some other insult sure to drive us into a working frenzy.

There was no let-up in boxes, and with sweat dripping into our eyes and cardboard dust irritating our skin, the three of us exploded into open revolt. Tim punched a box off the conveyor belt, and in a matter of seconds, we were punching them all off the belt. Boxes and plastic bottles were flying all over the floor. As the boxes kept coming from below, we kept punching them off. One after the other in a wild, deliriously happy frenzy. We ran to the stacks of boxes and started pulling them down with a dull crash onto the old wooden floor. The foreman was grabbing at our arms, trying to stop us, hollering as loud as he could over the din of the boxes and conveyor motor.

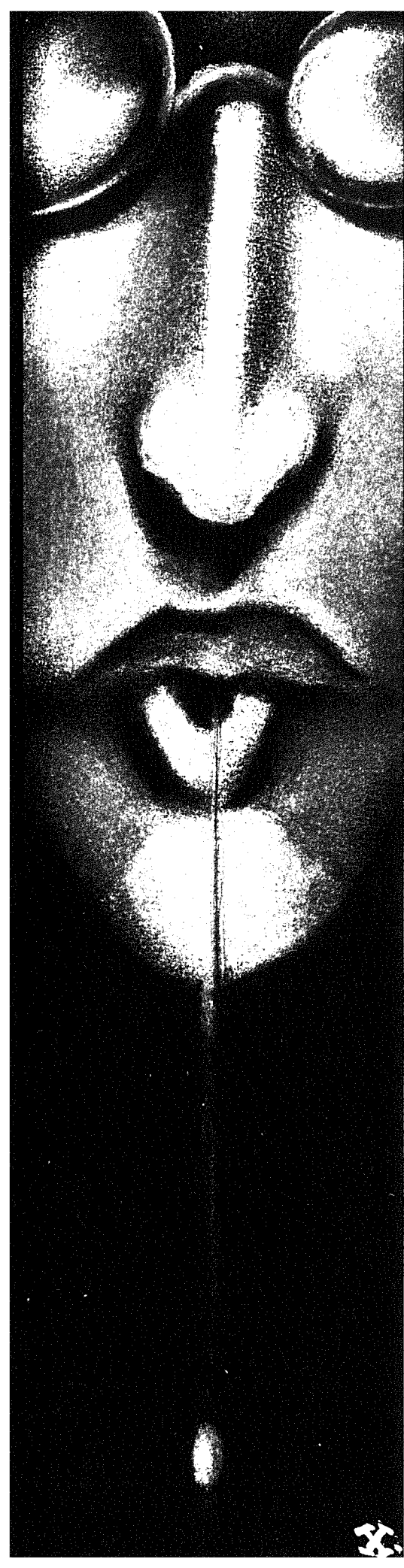
Finally, with big sheepish grins on our faces, we stopped. The boxes had stopped. The foreman told us to take the day off, to go home. The next day we came to work as if nothing had happened. I took my place on the line. The boxes of warm crap came whizzing down to me, about one per second...

FISH CANNER • DAVID

I worked in Alaska at a cannery in a very remote, isolated location. The place was pretty terrible. The living conditions were at best a step above camping. The plumbing didn't work, and there was no hot water. We were well-fed, but beyond that, the company's attitude was pretty oppressive. Generally, the idea was that we were making a big chunk of money, and that's where the company's concern for us stopped. "You're paid well. You can't make this kind of money in the lower forty-eight, so beyond just giving you this paycheck, we don't really care what happens to you." A lot of the workers were sorta young, so they had the ability to let it slide off of them.

It was very much of a Christian bible camp atmosphere. The Sunday services were always well-attended. I wouldn't say that I was in the total minority in the sense that I didn't attend, but it was strongly recommended that you make your pilgrimage every Sunday to the prayer service.

The first job I had there was in the can shop, which was the beginning point of the assembly line for canning the fish. In some ways the can shop was easy because it wasn't very physical. But the



noise and the heat and the mindlessness of it were really punishing. Essentially, the cans were assembled first by stamping machines and then they went down the line and were filled with fish. Then they were sealed and stacked in a warehouse. I was at the beginning of that line. In any given line there were fifty people. I had to take big stacks of can lids that I pulled out of these boxes and shove them into the line a handful at a time. Once I had the can lids on top, I'd push the spring down vertically and somehow some part of the conveyor belt came along and grabbed the can lids.

It was a union job so there was the standard fifteen minute break every four hours, but if you spread that over a fifteen hour day, that's four breaks. We were given a lunch and a dinner but it was still pretty monotonous and horrible.

It became clear after a while that the system would just break down. More often than not, it would break down in the can shop itself. Even if just one can lid was put in upside down, the entire system would jam. They would have to send mechanics in, open up the system and pull out this errant can lid. That would give us about a fifteen minute break.

This happened all the time. After having a few of these breaks and sort of milling around talking with people, we found that most of what was happening was being done on purpose. It became this accepted thing that the line would be shut down to give people a break. It was pretty ridiculous because it wasn't very difficult to get the lids in right to begin with. They came in a stack, in the right position, and the only way to get them turned around was to physically put your hand in the stack, take one, and flip it over.

I don't know what the management was thinking. I guess that it had been like that for so many years that they accepted it. As long as it didn't repeatedly come from the same line, it was accepted that it was a part of the process.

Every time we shut down the line we got some satisfaction out of the fact that we were spitting back at management in some way. The whole thing just seemed so alienating that I could justify doing practically anything. It was probably one of the most miserable experiences of my life, and somehow what I did helped make it a little more livable.

DATE PITTER • SUSAN

I used to be a pitter for Land of Plenty Dates. I probably still would be if I hadn't been fired for incompetence, or rather, competence.

I took the job on a dare. I had just graduated from high school. All my girlfriends were humming the wedding march. My parents were beginning to wonder when I would start to date. Then I saw the ad: "Wanted: m-f date specialist — pits." I applied immediately. The interviewer was afraid I was overeducated, but I quickly disabused him of this illusion. I asked if the process was painful for the dates.

My first week at the job was uneventful. A machine did most of the work. I just had to oversee the operation: regulate the flow, make sure the contraption didn't jam, and help out the boxer,

Incidentally it might be said that sabotage is the only effective method of warding off the deterioration of the worker that is sure to follow the performance of the same monotonous task minute after minute, day in and day out.

— Sabotage, Walker C. Smith, 1913⁵

Maggie. She looked strong enough to take on Mohammed Ali. As the dates plunged at her, she would make up little poems about them. She must have answered the wrong ad.

After the second week, I began to get a little ... fruity. Maggie's ditties about dropping crates of dates down grates and spitting pits were driving me up a date tree. Finally, when I was about to walk into the office and tell everyone where their dates would fit, I hit upon the ideal solution. A pitted date has a hole in it, right? An empty space. Why couldn't I roll up little pieces of paper and stuff them inside? They would be like Chinese fortune cookies! I could write all sorts of messages and send them throughout the fifty states plus Japan — our market area.

My first message was very innocuous: "Hi, I'm your pitter. Do you want to pitter-patter with me?" I didn't get an acceptance, but I didn't get a rejection either. I sent out about a thousand more of these date surprises. Then I laid low. Three weeks later, I started inserting my name and phone number. I thought of adding my measurements, but 31-28-37 doesn't excite many people. Maggie had been replaced by Hubert. He polished each date before boxing it. I didn't see a bright future for him at Land of Plenty.

Six weeks went by and I still hadn't heard anything from my note receivers. In despair, I switched tactics, cramming "Stuff it!" into the ugly little monsters. I was busily working away when I heard through the partially open office door "Aaaggghh!!!" What had happened? No one ever ate the dates. They all knew better.

"Miss Dudley!"

So I'm back in my bedroom reading help wanted ads. All my girlfriends have been married and divorced since last June. Hubie is taking me out tonight. I guess I couldn't have been all that incompetent if I ended up with what I was really after.

PICKLE PACKER • TERRY

In the part of Michigan where I lived, if young people were desperate for a summer job they worked at Aunt Jane's Pickle factory. For many of them it was their first job, so they were sincere, full of energy and worked hard. The company took advantage of this. They knew that children could be subdued fairly easy and wouldn't complain with force like adults do. This place was a sweat shop where the working conditions were poor; it was non-union so the people that worked there had no rights. The foremen made sure everyone looked straight ahead and didn't socialize. Profit was more important than anything else.

Most people worked on the assembly line, the worst of the jobs there, packing pickles in jars as fast as they could until their arms were aching. I studied that factory well. There were seven main conveyor belts that brought pickles into the factories from the trucks. The belts brought pickles to other belts that brought the pickles to the different packing stations. I found the controls for the belts and slowed down the belt for the packers and sped it up from the trucks. So I was overloading the main belt with more pickles than could be packed. Every day I would increase the speed

A person has no business on a machine who can't break it down anytime he/she wants to.

— Miner's proverb

a little bit more. I noticed that the bearings on the belt were worn, and the speed-ups only put them under more stress. I started throwing pickles under the belt to add to the stress of those bearings. Finally the belt started ripping and I threw more pickles under it and then the belt snapped in two. Everything came to a halt.

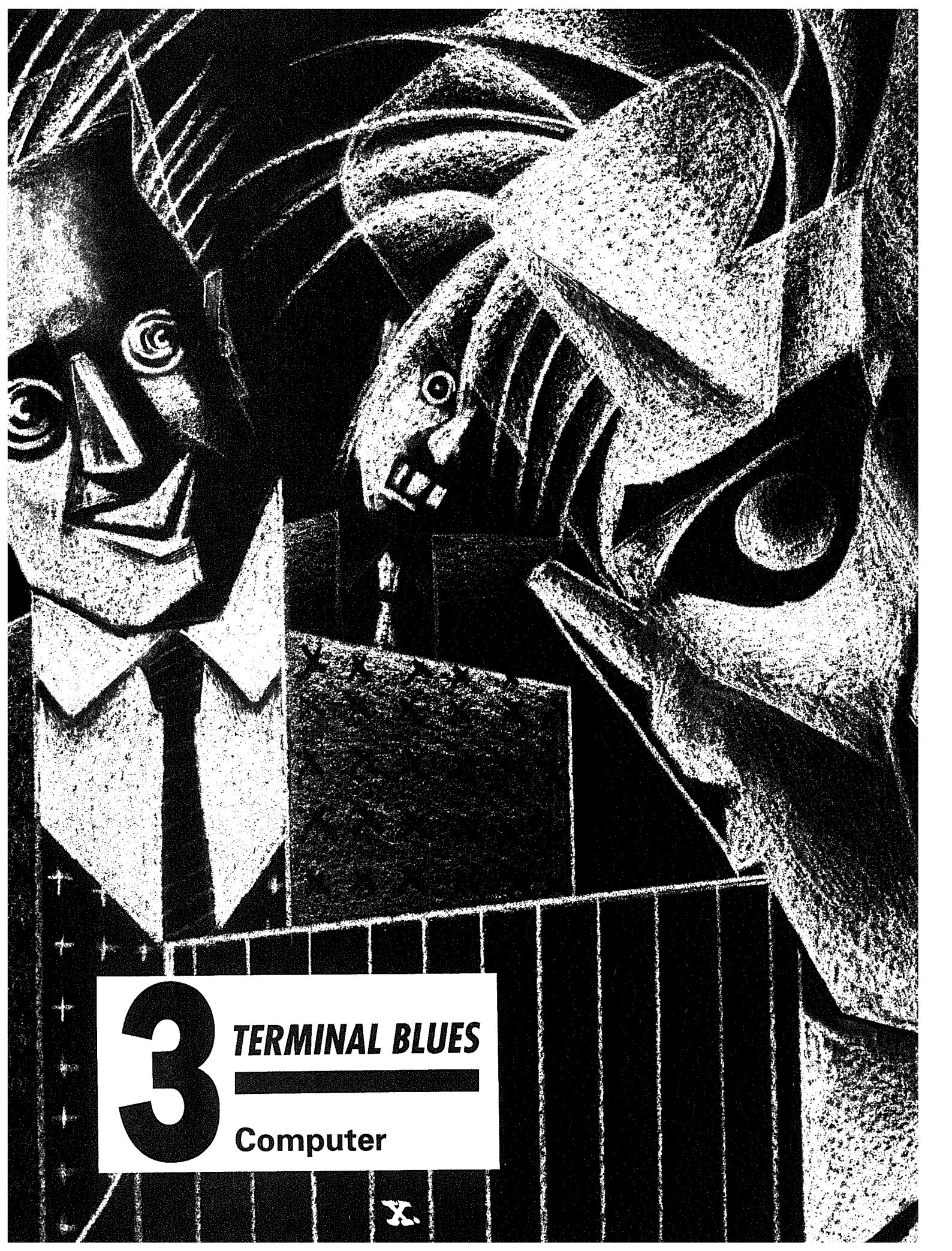
After the belt was fixed during lunch break, I took a whole case of jars and threw them into the tumbler. The jars would go through this first, which would put pickles in the jars at random, as the packers on the lines finished the packing. Lo and behold, when production started up, the jars in the tumbler were smashed. There was so much noise in the factory that you couldn't hear a thing. Consequently, glass ended up in the jars. It took a while until someone noticed, but by that time it was too late. The foreman in charge of our line shut everything down for three days in order to clean out the tumbler. The company had to throw away three complete pallets of packed pickles to be sure that no glass was sent out to the public. The foreman took us off the line, put us against a wall and asked, "Which one of you son of a bitches did this?" Nobody knew except me how it happened and of course I denied everything. So, no one got blamed and the company lost thousands and thousands of dollars.

During the time that I worked there, the line that I was working on lost a significant amount of money because of the machines being broken, parts that had to be replaced and the amount of jars and pickles that had to be thrown away. The beauty of it all was that I was a clean cut young man that looked forward when the foreman told me not to socialize. When he told me to be a robot, I was a robot. But I was a thinking robot.

One cannot walk through a mass-production factory and not feel that one is in hell.

— W.H. Auden





3 **TERMINAL BLUES**
Computer

An employee planted a logic bomb in a proprietary program used for oil exploration. The programmer used a timed logic bomb that could be defused only by a code word that had to be keyed into the system every thirty days. If the code word was not inserted on time, the entire program and accompanying database would be destroyed. Shortly after the employee was terminated for unrelated reasons, the firm discovered that both the program and the database containing millions of dollars worth of data had been destroyed. Oil exploration and pumping had to be suspended until all data had been manually reentered into the system.

— *Personnel Magazine*¹

A suspended computer operator who worked for a communications company entered a number of unauthorized commands, taking thirty-two tape drives off-line. The following morning, the company found that it was unable to serve its customers.

— *Personnel Magazine*²

Where there is the most labor there is not always the most life.

— *Havelock Ellis*

The supervisor should not be required to decide which excuse for lateness is acceptable and which is not. He can start with the premise that no excuse is acceptable. Neither snow, nor hail, nor gloom of night. Nor should broken down cars, public transportation strikes, or whatever, be an acceptable excuse.

— *Supervisor's Factomatic, Jack Horn*³

PROGRAMMER • LAZLO

I worked on Bank of America's payroll program, interfacing a clumsy old in-house system. It was one of the worst designed systems that I had ever seen. It was using a wasteful amount of computer time and had a very bad user interface. It made me ashamed to be a programmer. I thought, "Look at this piece of shit." It insulted me that I was supposed to make the system work better, but I wasn't allowed to make any fundamental changes. I could only patch things up.

Because I was restricted in the amount of work I was allowed to do, I was having a lot of problems implementing the system. It was a real pain in the ass. Bank of America started being pushy because I wasn't getting the work done as fast as they wanted me to. When the higher-ups in the bank wanted to know what was going on, the computer supervisors said I was incapable of doing the job. They put all of the blame on me because they didn't want the bosses to know how shitty their computer system really was. They made me look really bad, then went a step further and stopped paying me. I got so pissed off at them that I planted a logic bomb in the system, a kind of electronic "Fuck you!"

I had all the passwords that I needed to do it just right. I got into the payroll program and wrote a new program that would delete it. The next time the payroll program started running, it slowly started disappearing. Once it started failing, all the other programs started deleting themselves. The logic bomb had a chain reaction effect. It started out small, but then all of a sudden the entire system was corrupted.

On payday, nobody got paid in Northern California's PayNet system. Granted, I fucked with the workers, but I really ruined Bank of America's credibility. A couple of the supervisors got fired. Heads rolled and that's all that mattered to me. They knew I did it; I even admitted it, but this was before there were laws against these types of things. Technically, I didn't commit a crime. All I did was destroy data. I didn't steal anything.

TECHNICIAN • CONRAD

It was a new computer company, and I was one of the original twenty-five employees. I was hired as a field technician, which meant that I installed computers, trained customers how to use them, and integrated different hardware and software.

I had never done any actual maintenance or repair on computers. I hadn't even taken a computer apart before. I only knew them from the operational point of view. I had been hired expecting to be trained, but I didn't get any training at all. I was just thrown right into it.

The first time I was sent to a customer's office, I was supposed to figure out what the problem was with their IBM mainframe and fix it. I had no idea of what to do. I was under a lot of pressure and had to act like I knew what I was doing. I had to do this complete charade while the customer was standing there looking over my shoulder. I knew I was going to have to open it up. I noticed the

sticker on the back: "To be opened by qualified service personnel only or warranty is invalid." I mentioned this to my boss and he handed me a screwdriver and said, "Now you're qualified." But I did it. I'm a smart guy and I figured out what the problem was. The point is, the entire company was a sham.

At some point, I realized that the efforts of all twenty-five people in this company were funneling through me as the one who actually ended up executing the deals. They had five or six salespeople whose job it was to make wild promises of what I was capable of doing. These people had no technical experience and made promises that were impossible to keep. If I was successful, either I was extremely lucky or stayed up all night poring over manuals. I would be put in situations where I'd be driving to a site with a manual on my lap trying to read it and drive at the same time, so I'd have a chance of knowing what to do when I got there.

Everybody was led to believe that if they helped get the company off the ground they would be rewarded with remarkable opportunities in the company's future. We thought this was our chance to make it in the world. The company kept asking us to give more and more. We were all killing ourselves for this company. I literally worked thirty-six hour shifts without sleep in order to fulfill the salesmen's absurd promises. The raises and opportunities never came and that's when we started to realize we had been used. One by one all the original employees felt they were just going to die if they worked another day for the company.

I wanted to get fired so I could collect unemployment. I started coming in at noon instead of 8:00 am. They yelled and got upset, but they didn't fire me. I started to constantly contradict the salespeople. They would tell the customer something ridiculous about how a certain computer system could do more than it actually could. I would go to the customer and tell them not to buy it because the company wouldn't be able to live up to its promises. Most of the customers took my advice. This would get back to the boss, but they still wouldn't fire me because they were absolutely dependent on me.

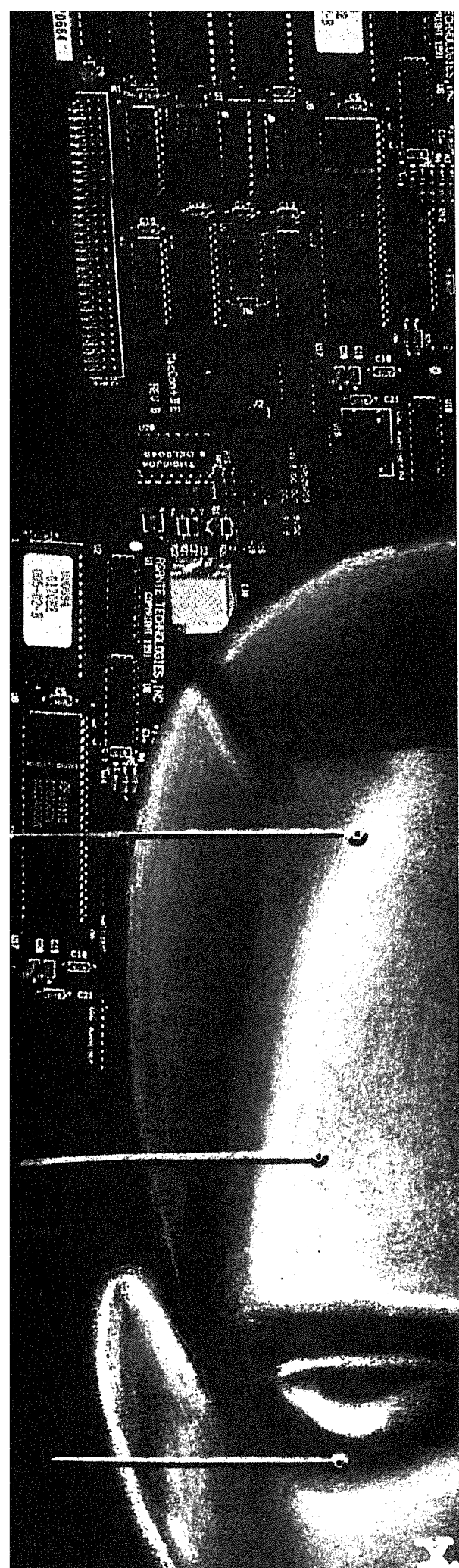
For years they had twisted things around so I felt that I was dependent on them. I thought I had to stress out over every little thing or I'd lose the job of a lifetime.

The company is still there, bigger than ever, but I know that their growth was achieved on the backs of hundreds of people.

TECHNICAL WRITER • DEXTER

I'm at my place of employment right now as I type this into my Macintosh. I could be working. At least it looks like I'm working. Since I'm a technical writer, it's only natural that I'd be filling up my screen with words. However, for the last four years, I have spent only one-third of my time at work filling the screen with work-related words.

At my job, I write, edit and format all manner of technical documents including user documentation, service manuals and advanced development specifications. To accomplish this, I regularly communicate with engineers for hardware and software, physicists and marketing people. The people and the technology



Of all computer criminals, 99 percent are employees of the companies that suffer the losses. In a recent survey, 70 percent of the respondents listed unauthorized use by employees as one of the three biggest threats to the companies' computer operations.

— *New York Times* ⁴

In earlier times the individual worker's possession of a watch was seen as breaching the principle that working time belongs to the management. It was not unusual once for factory owners to forbid workers to bring their own watches to work. The present-day practice of presenting a retiring employee with a gold watch symbolizes the emancipation of the worker from this kind of control: henceforth his time is, quite literally, his own.

— *Cheats at Work, Gerald Mars* ⁵

Work is a paramount means of self-discovery; our personhood is realized in responsible work.

— *Theodore Roszak*

The white collar criminal works in a make-believe world in which valuable assets are represented by pieces of paper, entries in books or, more commonly today, by electronic impulses stored within a computer.

— *Controlling White Collar Crime, John C. Carroll* ⁶

There is no worse mess than a computer mess.

— *IBM executive* ⁷

are interesting, and I really do enjoy technical communications. But I am quick to find ways to not work. I have mastered many writing, communications, and desktop publishing skills, and this mastery usually allows me to do a week's worth of work in about two days. In two days' time — spread out across the week, of course — I can do whatever they expect to be done and even a little more sometimes, since it pays to seem industrious.

My philosophy is this: I'm a generalist, a person with diverse interests which multiply daily. Left alone and well-financed, I would produce voluminous amounts of creative stuff in a variety of media. But alas, society doesn't cater to such capricious and irresponsible thinkers. So I circumvent society's shortcomings, and still pay the bills, by doing my techno-artistic projects at work, on company time. In the last four years, I have written a novella, a workbook for a major publishing company's science textbook, two travel narratives, and countless smaller things. I have explored computer music, art, and animation at work and have even written a computer game. I have spent at least a couple thousand hours of company time on my projects, and at a pretty good salary.

Most of my company work involves text and graphics, but so do my projects. Most of the time, my co-workers think I am working for the company. I'm never too cautious. Over-caution leads to paranoia, and paranoia dampens the hedonistic spirit. The co-workers who catch me have mixed reactions. Some of them subscribe to the old ethic and think you should devote all your work time to work. Others wish they could find the time at work to do non-work-related stuff like I do. My various bosses have never caught on. So my co-workers tolerate or admire me. They are usually too caught up in their own activities to pay direct attention to mine. And my bosses are content that my productivity is up to or beyond par.

My situation is a by-product of the company environment. I will try to get away with whatever I can for the sake of creativity. The company is benefiting the whole planet by subsidizing my creative efforts without even knowing it. Sort of unconscious philanthropy.

SYSTEMS DESIGNER • STAN

I beat "the system" by helping to foul up a computer system for the largest bank in the United States. I did it, well, sort of accidentally. I've always felt ill-at-ease with the intentional stuff.

I started working for a savings and loan several years back, in the systems department. Frank, the resident computer expert there, was six feet tall and impeccably groomed — the very image of conservatism. He was the one who taught me the art of corporate sabotage.

Whenever there was a bug in the system, he took me to the computer room on the fourth floor. Most big corporations have their computer rooms protected by guards, pass-keys and special ID devices. Not this place. We just asked the old, revered receptionist to give us the key. She kept it in the unlocked top drawer of her desk. Once in the computer room, Frank and I would find five huge consoles blinking and whirring. When we — or rather, he — figured out which console had the problem, we would switch it off

and on really fast. This erased loan data from all over California. But at least the computer system was working again.

Ironically, Frank left the company to become a consultant. Now it was my job to take care of the company's computer hardware. It wasn't too long before the system went down again. I trudged to the fourth floor and asked the old, revered receptionist for the keys, which she surrendered gleefully. But I had a problem. I'd long since forgotten the procedure for figuring out which computers worked and which didn't. I could think of only one solution. I turned them all off and on really fast. I reminded myself to take a look at the list of company job offerings on the way to my desk.

A few minutes later, a co-worker told me that everything was now working fine. He congratulated me for having absorbed so much during my short tenure in the systems department.

One of the things I learned from all this is that the less you care about your job, the easier it is to indulge in sabotage. But there's a paradox to it. If you're doing something you really hate, why in the hell are you doing it?

SCIENTIST • ROGER

I'm in the Civil Service for the U.S. Army. Civil Service means that I work for a branch of the government but I'm not in the military. Military personnel run our facility but most of the people I work with are civilians like myself.

I'm a computer programmer. I design software for various weapons systems and see that it gets developed and installed into computers in very remote locations. I've been doing this for about twenty years.

I get reasonable pay. It's not as good as what I can earn on the outside because the benefits aren't as good as in the private sector. Sometimes I think about working for a private company, particularly when friends have left and gotten twenty-five percent pay raises. It makes me think, but I choose to stay because I enjoy my work.

I travel in my job, and for certain projects I travel an awful lot. In the eighties there was a period of time where we were required to keep track of all of our meal expenses. It was a pain in the butt to keep track of what I spent for breakfast, lunch and dinner. It was much easier to just claim standard amounts of money even though I actually spent less. I learned that if I put down a certain dollar amount I got reimbursed without any questions, because it was within the maximum that the government would pay. No matter what, I would always spend the maximum.

It's hard to say what would happen if they found out. It would be difficult to prove that there was some discrepancy of what I recorded and what I actually spent. I could claim that it was a record-keeping error. It was a system based on honesty, but it really was just a convenience to the government. I don't think I was taking advantage but it sure made my record-keeping easier. Technically, I was doing something wrong, because I was supposed to sign the log sheet and say that I spent the exact amount I said I did, but I don't see it that way.

And while working on that expense account, you just can't remember how much you forked out in tips. So you just make up an amount, right?

These are the kinds of questions you can expect to find on "integrity tests," which are being used by thousands of employers to curb an estimated \$20 billion a year in employee theft.

— *Washington Post* ⁸

The study provided the following results:

Half of the supervisors reported that the music seemed to raise morale and decrease workers' tension. The eight supervisors estimated that productivity increased 2.5% after the installation of Environmental Music by Muzak. Ninety-five percent reported that they liked the background music and wanted it continued. Seventy-six percent also indicated that the music made work more enjoyable.

— *Research Reviews, Muzak Corp.* ⁹

One case involved a series of "head crashes" that were damaging the computer disks of an insurance company. The electronic heads that read and write data normally float about a hundredth of an inch above the disks. For reasons no one could explain, the heads kept crashing into the disks, gouging them and destroying data. Next, the computer began to have unexplained shutdowns, five or more times a day, which resulted in all of the users being "locked out." Four months passed, yet a steady stream of technical experts still was unable to solve the puzzle. Finally, after installing a hidden camera, the company caught its own operations supervisor in the act. The man, it turned out, was angry because of the company's hiring and work policies.

— *Science Digest* ¹⁰

It is difficult to estimate current levels of employee sabotage. Corporate personnel and security managers are often reluctant to discuss or to publicize acts of sabotage for fear customers will lose confidence in their firm's products or services. As one security expert remarked, publicized incidents represent only 'the tip of the iceberg.'

— *Personnel Magazine* ¹¹

SUPERVISOR • BRIAN

I worked in Los Angeles at the world headquarters of Carnation Company, the milk people. I worked on computers in the insurance department. I was the one who knew the ins and outs of the computer system. I did overnight — running reports, doing checks on the computer printer, and cleaning up the garbage that had been retained on the computer during the day. I had to run it at night because everyone else had to be off the computers.

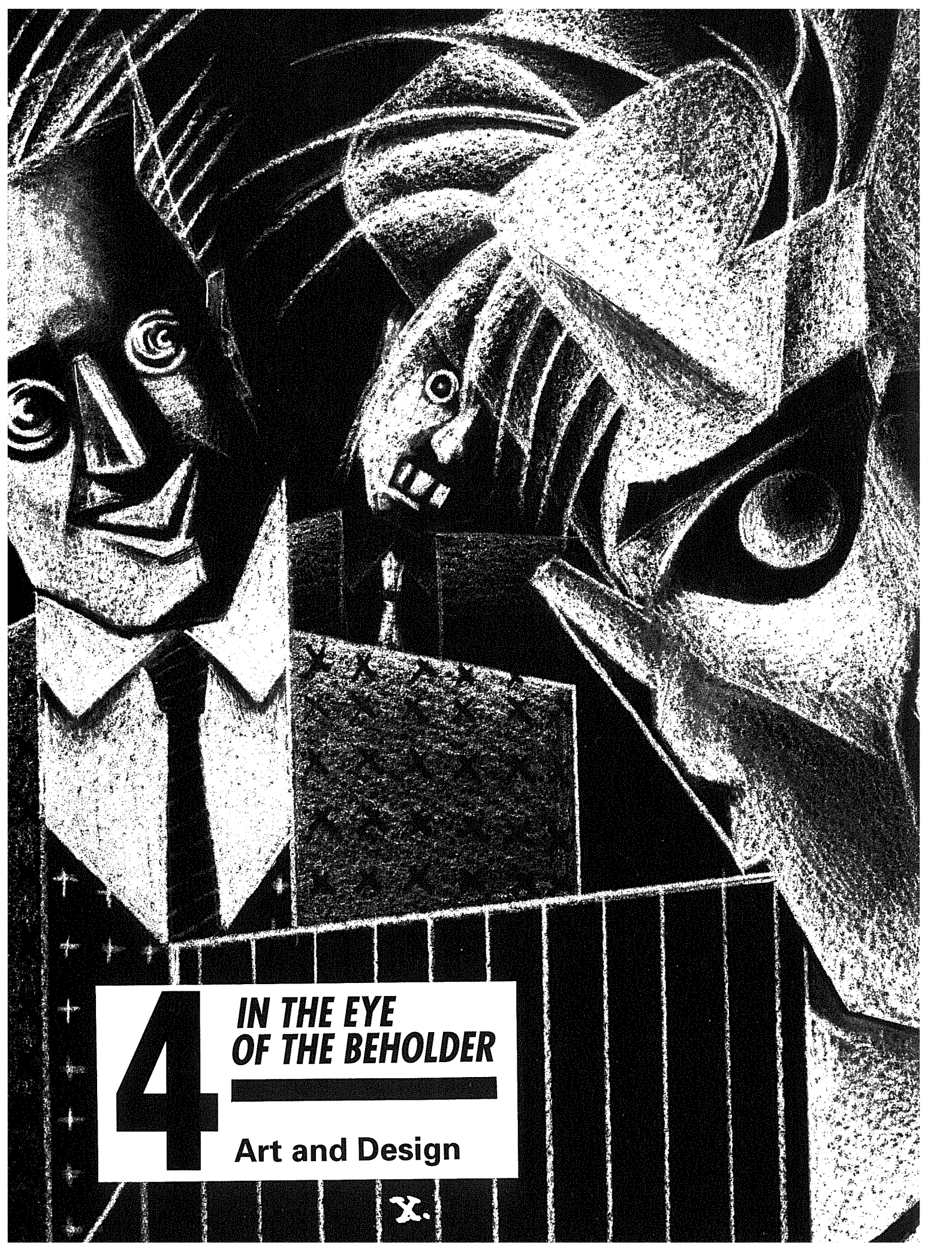
The company installed a Muzak system to keep the employees brightened up, to keep them going. In the morning they played Muzak that woke everyone up without being too upbeat. Just before lunch it got a little smoother. After lunch, when everyone was getting narcoleptic, it was real upbeat, like, "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Around the Old Oak Tree."

The Muzak was played twenty-four hours a day. When people were in the office, the Muzak was just background noise but when there was no one in the office, it was horrible. It would be louder and brighter than usual. I couldn't concentrate on my work while listening to this shit. I thought about asking my supervisors to turn it down, then I thought about what would happen if they said no. I would be fucked. So, I climbed on top of a desk, pushed up a section of the acoustic tile ceiling, and with a pair of scissors, snipped the wires to the entire Muzak system.

Everyone came in the next day and no one noticed the Muzak was gone. That was the amazing part. It wasn't discovered until my bosses realized they had missed a couple of the retirement parties which had been announced over the building's speaker system.

I immediately became a suspect. I got called into the top guy's office. He asked me if I knew anything about it. I said, "No, I don't know anything about it. There was some construction going on at one point. Maybe one of those guys accidentally did it." The boss had a good idea that I did it, but knew he couldn't prove anything. He just gave me this look like he was going to watch me really closely from then on.





4

**IN THE EYE
OF THE BEHOLDER**

Art and Design

x.

MURAL PAINTER • HARVEY

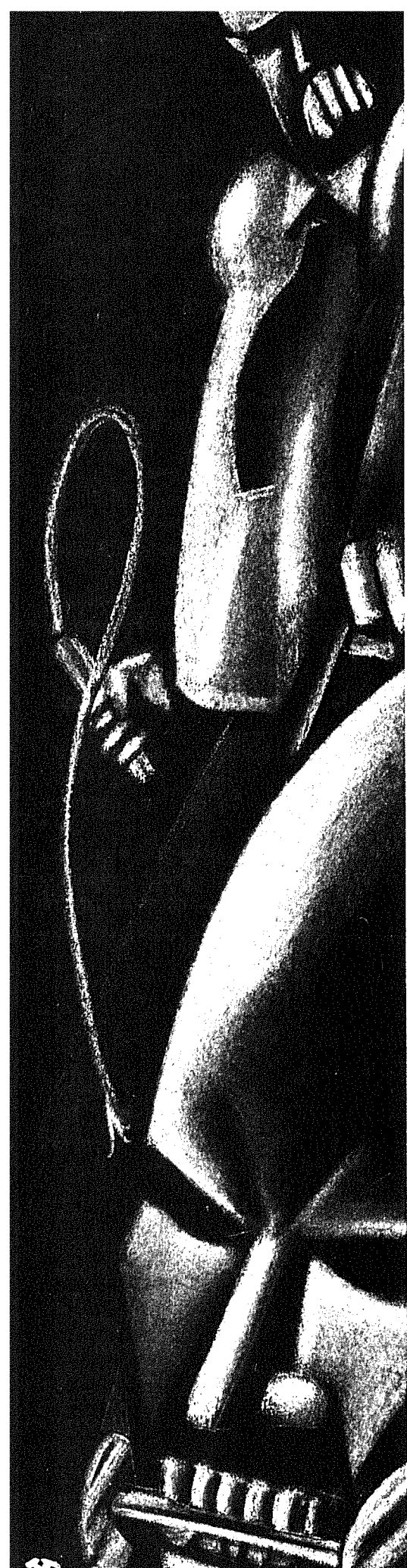
I work for a company that produces custom murals and decorative paintings. We do a lot of work for cruise ships, hotels, restaurants and casinos in Vegas and Atlantic City. As far as I know, there aren't many companies that do what we do. Art consultants bring us jobs from all over the world.

We mainly do pictorial murals. We don't do anything abstract. My bosses have a real chip on their shoulders against anything conceptual whatsoever; the more vapid the subject, the more they like it. In fact, they try to keep human figures out of the compositions as much as possible because the human figure can be a very controversial thing. If the painting is in a public space and it contains a group of figures, you're almost guaranteed to offend someone. The piece we're working on right now has absolutely no figures in it at all. It's a big architectural painting of classic Greek columns with a landscape in the background. It has a couple of animals in it. It's impressive to someone who doesn't want to think about an image and just wants to be struck by its surface as they glide past. It's made to sit against the wall as a whisper instead of a shout.

I do my best not to focus on the down side of my job but I'm not a hopeless optimist either. I have to watch it while I'm working there because if I let my cynicism be known I'll just fuck myself out of a job. It's more important that I keep this veneer of calmness and satisfaction.

Since I'm able to do more than just paint, I don't really fall into a monotonous routine. I think the frustration with my job comes more from the fact that what I consider to be worthy and beautiful art is opposed to my bosses' opinions. They put a lot more emphasis on money and let their artistic standards be dictated by it. I'd like to think that mine are associated with something other than cash. True, it's a business, but they love to pose as artists. My bosses' notion of what good painting is really annoys me. It's all fluff. All false. We have to pump up the colors in the paintings to these absurdly tacky proportions. I can have this twisted grin on my face, just wallow in the cheesiness of it and really run with it, and my boss will think that I'm really into it. In reality I'm mocking it. I play the role and ape my boss. Then it ceases to be fun, and it becomes dreary and I have to look for other ways to keep myself amused.

Recently we did a job for the Walt Disney Corporation. They specifically requested the Great Gatsby as the theme, which basically is about rich people in the good old days. The idea was to make the people look happy and create the ideal that people off the streets should strive to get a white suit, Panama hat and a croquet mallet. One of my favorite scenes was a hotel scene where people were seated at tables. In the background there was this balcony where I painted this little SS Stormtrooper. It was my little comment on what was happening in the rest of the world while the Great Gatsbys were whittling away their hours with cocktails. My boss noticed it and said that it looked like a soldier, but I convinced him it was a security guard. He dropped it at that. All of the people that I worked with noticed it was a Nazi right away.



It is said that while Giotto was still a boy, and with Cimabue, he once painted a fly on the nose of a figure which Cimabue had made so naturally that, when his master turned around to go on with his work, he more than once attempted to drive the fly away with his hand, believing it to be real, before he became aware of his mistake.

When the episode became known in all the artists' workshops, the painters must have enjoyed turning it to account. One's attention, once alerted, soon discovers an abundance of flies in Italian painting of the late Quattrocento.

— "A Fly in the Pigment: Iconology of the Fly," *FMR Magazine* ¹

Productivity heads into the 1990s at slowest pace since 1981-82 recession.

— "Desperately Seeking a Dose of Productivity," *Business Week* ²

I changed some of the pictures as I worked my way down the panel. The scene had framed pictures hanging on the background wall which I changed to paintings by Francis Bacon: weird-shaped monsters with pear-shaped bodies sitting on a wobbly table with claws hanging over their heads. My boss didn't say anything about those either. There were some very large figures of two men and two women in the foreground which I improved by adding a psychological element. I made it look like the two men were ready to fight it out in sort of a territorial mating battle over the women. There were fifteen people painted into the middleground who were all looking very alarmed, shocked and dismayed. The foreground had the two men about to fight, the middleground had these shocked onlookers, and the background had Francis Bacon paintings and a Nazi. My bosses repainted the foreground figures but never fixed anything else. It's now installed in a hotel. That gave me a lot of satisfaction. It's pretty minor but it did make me feel better.

I did a series of reproductions of Pompeii wall frescoes for an Italian restaurant in Vegas. I changed figures in that too. I painted one guy with cloven hooves instead of feet, and put a knife in his hand. I painted a few severed heads in that one, too. When I worked on some paintings of the New Orleans French Quarter, I was appalled that these paintings had to go over slot machines and compete with them for attention. So I put three figures in the balcony scene. One is pointing at the person who would be below at the slot machine; one has a martini and is looking very aristocratic and sneering at the slot-machine player. Then there's this other guy who is more of a caricature: he's got big buck teeth, a monocle, and an iron cross pinned to his lapel and has his head back, also laughing at the person playing the machine.

It's really hard to get away with anything more. I've been told to repaint fruit in still lifes because they were too suggestive. I didn't do it on purpose, but once they called my attention to it, I started to figure out ways that I could do it and get away with it.

GRAPHIC DESIGNER • ALEJANDRO

In 1981 I answered an ad in the newspaper for a graphic designer. Five months later the company gave me a call and asked me if I wanted to go to Saudi Arabia.

I ended up at a naval base in Jubail, Saudi Arabia. The company I worked for had just won the contract to train new recruits for the Royal Saudi Navy. Most Americans working there were rednecks, ex-military types, pirates and mercenaries — people who couldn't get a job anywhere else. I didn't like my job because I didn't really like the people that I was working with, and I didn't like the country — it was featureless and there was nothing to do there. I felt like I was doing time in prison but I just accepted the fact that I was there because I really needed the money. I was getting paid a lot better than I would have been in the States. A friend of mine said I was a "wetback with a vengeance" because I went all the way to Saudi Arabia to get a good-paying job.

I worked in the audio-visual department designing training aids for the school. I did things like make big wall-sized mock-ups

of .45 caliber pistols, cross-section drawings of cannons and gun mounts, and charts that showed ten different ways to loop a rope. I put together lots of slide programs, from how to fight a fire to explaining basic electronics.

Forty percent of what we did was write the names of students on graduating certificates. For every class they took (and each person took about fifty to sixty classes) they got a little certificate. So, we would spend a lot of our time writing Arabic names in calligraphy on these certificates.

Every once in a while, the Saudis would get a hair up their ass and open up the training contract for bidding. After I'd worked there for three years, our company got outbid and lost the contract. The people in my department needed money as bad as I did; so, to keep ourselves fully employed, we started to misspell the students' names on their certificates. We'd get some guys whose names we'd end up writing over and over again. We messed up as many as we could. Sometimes we didn't even need to fuck them up because when you write something in Arabic like Mohammed, is it Mohammed or Muhammad? There's no way of translating it literally. We were able to extend our contract for three months because we had to finish all of these certificates.

ART GALLERY ASSISTANT • BILL

There's no real concept of my job description because the manager and owner see me as a worker and themselves as the ones who sell the art so I have to do whatever they want. They don't care. They just pile shit on me. In that sense my work environment is tense. The boss has no idea what it's like to work and be bossed around. Not that that's atypical of any job.

I'm called the shipping manager. I don't manage anyone, I just manage the shipping. But shipping is just a small portion of my job. They really need two people to do the work but they only have one doing it, and that's me. My job involves everything from hanging art in the gallery to getting paper cups for the kitchen to shipping art all over the world.

The gallery is owned by a woman, and her husband manages it. He does all of the business stuff. He is an incredibly uptight asshole who does not trust anybody. He's always suspicious about the littlest things which is reason enough to hate the guy and not really give a shit about doing a good job.

We handle mainly fine prints by artists like Picasso, Miró, Frank Stella, Andy Warhol. All big names, we don't mess around. We have things ranging from \$1,500 to \$1,000,000. Sometimes people will come in and they have some money that they want to invest, so they get a piece for their house. Other times people don't give a shit and buy what they like. We have a couple of clients who buy thousands of dollars worth of art every year.

I don't have much respect for the art because I see it all the time. When you see the stuff in the gallery or a museum it might be interesting, but to me it's like handling cans of soup. It's just a commodity, an object. I have to haul it around the gallery at the boss' request. I end up carrying this stuff up and down stairs all the time so I treat it like a bag of bricks. When I'm overworked I don't

Employees show frustration with the work routine, coupled with the pressure of the work environment. ... Sabotage also can be caused by the Ivory Tower Syndrome. Workers feel that managers in the Ivory Tower send edicts down without cause or justification. Isolation of the managers in this form allows workers to feel that they do not matter, and as conflict builds, sabotage occurs.

— *Supervision Magazine* 3

care that I'm handling a \$20,000 Matisse because I have to unpack it, log it in the inventory and put it in a storage drawer.

I'm supposed to handle all of the art with cotton gloves so the oil from my hands doesn't ruin the art, but I never use them, I always "forget." I don't bother putting tissue paper between the prints to protect them, so some things get marks on them. I am really careful to dent the frames. I just throw the art in the drawers. I'm supposed to be careful with it, but I have too much stuff to do to worry about shit like that.

I once picked up a Matisse that was matted from a drawer. It was easily worth well over \$50,000. Since the mat wasn't done very well the art slipped through it and ripped. I'm supposed to send any damaged art to the art restorer, but I never do that because it only adds to the backlog of work I have to do, and can get me in trouble with the bosses. So, I took the Matisse, rolled it up, and shipped it to the place it was going and didn't tell anyone.

Recently, I had to send a piece of art to a particular client and there was a small nick in the frame. I should have filled it in with plaster and painted over it, but all I did was color it in with a brown marker. If a print comes back from the framer with a dent or a scrape in it I just ship it anyway. I don't want to hassle the framer about a little nick because he's just a working guy like me. I don't want to screw anyone else. If the client does notice the nick then I just say that it was fine when I sent it out. That's the thing I do, I never take responsibility even if I'm responsible for it. I always remind the owners when they notice something wrong that I'm not the only person who handles the art and if I was, nothing would be wrong.

There's this common illusion that if someone gives you a job, they are doing you a favor. In reality they're going to take you for everything you're worth. So you stop caring. Sometimes you have to get certain things done and it's best just to get them done. Most people have a certain work ethic where they feel like they have to do everything their boss tells them to do. It gets to the point where people worry in advance about not doing a good job, much like ingrained intimidation. But after a while you stop giving a shit and stop getting excited about all of the work that needs to be done. You stop caring what your boss says, and you don't care about being yelled at anymore.

I used to have what I thought was guilt about not doing a good job or not doing things fast enough. Then I realized that what I felt wasn't guilt but rather a fear of being caught and fired. But once you create the illusion of being a good worker the chances of being fired are less. My bosses now say that I seem happier, which I am, but it's because I decided that I'm not going to get uptight if someone is breathing down my neck. I realized that I was being overworked. This is an objective fact. Second objective fact: my boss is a fuckin' asshole and does not have any conception of what my job is like day-to-day. The way I see it, people aren't assholes because they're bosses, they're bosses because they're assholes.

The men who work the hardest seem to do it by making other men do their work for them.

— Reflections of a Bachelor

All art expression can bring to people a new dimension of enjoyment, and a language of release from our highly mechanized world. From the artist can come a real contribution to our culture, but this is possible only when the individuals bravely bring forth their most personal concepts and visions.

— It's Fun to Paint, Arnold Blanch and Doris Lee *





5

**EVERYTHING YOU
WANTED TO KNOW**

**Knowledge
and Information**

X.

TEACHER • KAT

There is no use trying to make ideas safe for students. You have to make students safe for ideas.

— Alexander Heard¹

Just before the First World War the International Harvester Corporation prepared a brochure to teach its Polish common laborers the English language. "Lesson One," entitled "General," read:

*I hear the whistle. I must hurry.
I hear the five minute whistle.
It is time to go into the shop.
I take my check from the gate board
and hang it on the department board.
I change my clothes
and get ready to work.
The starting whistle blows.
I eat my lunch.
It is forbidden to eat until then.
The whistle blows at five minutes of
starting time.
I get ready to go to work.
I work until the whistle blows to quit.
I leave my place nice and clean.
I put all my clothes in the locker.
I must go home.²*

I do not like work even when another person does it.

— Mark Twain

When I finished college, I started doing secretarial jobs and I just hated it. One of my best friends was going through a teaching program and I thought it would be a good idea because I definitely didn't want to be a secretary for the rest of my life. So, I went back to school and got my teaching credential.

One thing about teaching in general is that there are too many kids. If you have more than thirteen people to a teacher, the learning curve goes down. We have between thirty and thirty-five kids. You have to compromise your ethics to teach at all. It really feels like the power structure doesn't want people to learn things. I don't think this is anything new, but to be teaching and knowing that, it's a big compromise. Sometimes I just feel like a martyr, that I'm getting fucked over just as much as the kids are. I think there's a lot of frustration among the teachers I know. There are a few who are exceptional, whose hearts are really into it and are able to do fantastic things with children and make being at school interesting. I think that most teachers just want to survive. A lot of them treat it just like any other job.

I substitute-taught for about two and a half years. The job was very tedious and I was treated poorly by the staff and the administration. As for the kids, the more I had to discipline them, the more we were pitted against one another. Most of the time there were no lesson plans or they just had boring stuff to do, so they just goofed around. I struck a balance with them: I let them get away with so much and let myself relax and not do as much work. I did this to survive because substituting is a very hard job. I often came away from it not feeling too good. More than once the administrator got mad at me because the class was too noisy. The best part of the job was that I didn't have a boss. I could walk away and work at another school if I didn't like the place or the principal. I liked the lack of responsibility. That's the only redeeming quality of that job.

I don't think the materials that we use present subjects in an appropriate way. I was teaching history and the kids were so freaked out when they read about Henry VIII. They asked how he could have killed so many people. How could he be a king if he was bad? How does somebody get to be a king and why were there kings? I explained to them that powerful people rule things and it's the same way here. They said that the President could never do something like that. I explained that he could, it's just not as obvious. I often go off on subjects like that.

I ended up teaching sixth grade science this year, and it was the first time I'd taught sex education. It's not really sex education; it's more like education about the reproductive system. I used the teaching materials I was given, but discovered that the way we teach sex education is to say that girls get periods and bleeding, and boys get erections and wet dreams. The material desexualized women by saying that they don't have erections or wet dreams. I told the class that girls have erections and wet dreams too, and periods are a whole other subject. I've never heard any other teacher say this. I don't know how the administration would have reacted if they heard me saying that to the class. Something that's

not in the curriculum, especially something about sensitive issues, might be seen as harmful to the students. I guess one should discuss something new with the administration in order to get some feedback on it; but for me, it was something that wound its way into what I was teaching at the time.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETER PRIVATE CHARLES

I was a member of the Fort Ontario Guard at Fort Ontario, New York, on the shores of Lake Ontario. I had to dress up in Civil War garb and recreate the year 1869. Our daily schedule consisted of polishing our equipment for an hour, flag ceremonies and inspection. Once in a while we had drill, too.

Tourists came and the whole situation was very militaristic. It wasn't set up so that we were performing for tourists; rather, we were part of a drill squad and had to perform in straight military order. Some of the people on guard decided to make the military look as silly as possible. The inspections turned out to be pretty funny sometimes, because the commanding officer had to come up to each of us, inspect our equipment, and ask us all these questions about the different parts of the fort and the different parts of our uniforms. Of course, we always told the tourists that stuff so fast that no one could understand what we were saying. A lot of the tourists knew that we were goofing off and enjoyed it, but the more militaristic people didn't, and once in a while they'd complain.

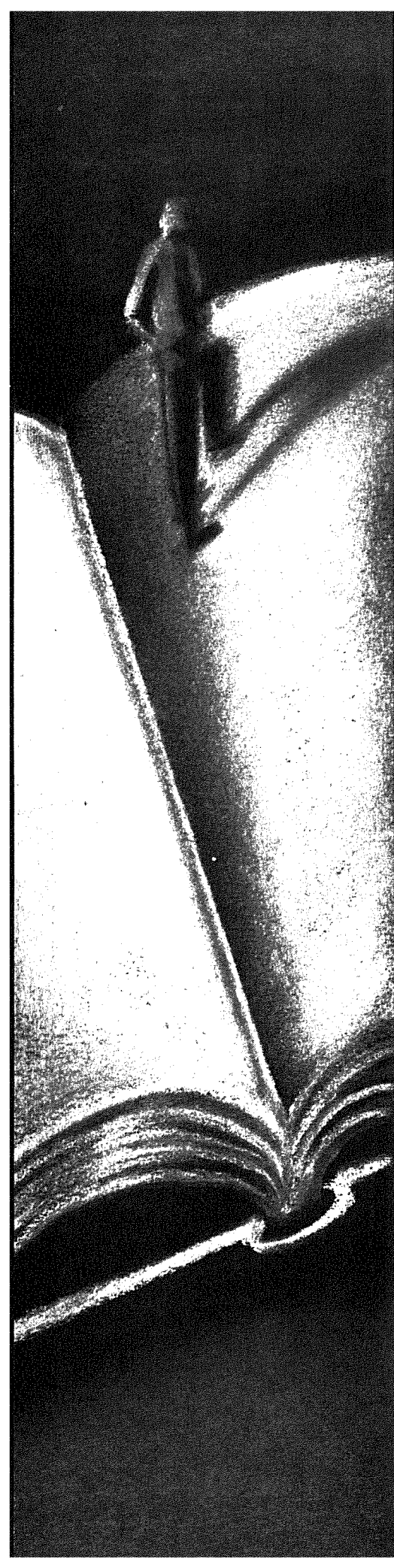
Sometimes, a guard would mess up while we were marching and get punished. We thought that some of the practices were pretty unfair, considering the heat. We wore these huge, thick wool uniforms, and if we messed up a certain number of times, we had to run a lap around this parade ground. One day a guy was marching post and he just fainted. A few weeks later we thought, "Wow, that worked pretty well 'cause he fainted, and we didn't have to march post for the rest of the day." We decided to have him "faint" again when it was really hot so we could get out of marching post. Later we put in a complaint, and somehow the regional office found out about the punishment practices, and they were ended. It was much too much.

The biggest incident was when I was left in charge. I had been there a couple of years and was the second ranking person. Usually the guard was in charge of punishing people, but the assistant manager decided he was going to give out the punishments that day, which was totally out of line. He had a guy march the most brutal post for an entire hour. It consisted of standing stock still in the heat — you couldn't move a muscle. It was one of the hottest days of summer, and the hottest summer in thirty-three years. It was deadly, grueling punishment. I thought, "This is too much," and I took him off post. The assistant manager didn't like that. He also thought that a bunch of us were scheming together.

There were two outhouses that were considered the guards' domain — we used them as dressing rooms, and spent our off-duty time there. The assistant manager decided to punish one of the

The employee has to do the work as directed. Otherwise, he is subject to discipline. If his defense is that the work assignment was hazardous above the normal risks of the job, he is admitting a refusal to do the work. Then, the burden of proving a case may shift over to him.
— Supervisor's Factomatic, Jack Horn³

A little rebellion now and then is a good thing.
— Thomas Jefferson



guards by making him switch outhouses. When he switched, I decided that we all had to switch. Management was stepping beyond its bounds: the assistant manager usually hung out with us, but he was pulling power trips and getting out of control. The whole circus atmosphere had boosted morale incredibly. It created a more tolerable place to work, because conditions were pretty tough. When they started cracking down on that, we ran into trouble. I got fired that day, and later the rest of the guards threatened to quit. The boss showed up at my apartment that night and begged me to come back. I didn't have any choice economically, so I did.

I think that they have been trying to move away from the drill squad concept anyway, because this one historian found out that it wasn't a drill squad there in 1869, but a bunch of old disabled veterans from the Civil War who were serving their last few months.

LIBRARIAN • ART

Long before I started working in the library, I had a vision of it as a universe, with all the possibilities for the literate mind that such a universe contains.

My first library job was working with periodicals. The fellow who sat across from me at the check-in counter resembled a morgue attendant; we became good friends. We had the same wry sense of humor. After several months, without ever discussing it, we simultaneously played the same prank on each other.

In the card file for the respective parts of the alphabet that we worked on, we created strange-sounding titles for serials or periodicals which the library was allegedly receiving. For example, I planted cards for *Public Equanimity: Its Construction and Maintenance* and *Stellar Inquest: the Review of Celebrities on the Slab*. He retaliated with *Roman Orgies: Then and Now*. They were generally of a macabre nature; that's where our humor was. Of course, the cards were supposed to indicate a bibliographer's interest in seeing the publication. We forged the initials of a deceased bibliographer and backdated the cards to cover our tails. Since it was a card system, the only way it could have been detected would have been through a file reading, when someone goes through the file card by card to see if they're in order. Since we read our own files, there wasn't much chance of anyone else catching us.

Having passed much of the last decade working in libraries, I know that our little amusement was nothing unique. In fact, many other library workers I've spoken with around the country play the same game of creating books or faking publications by cobbling together some kind of bibliographic shell. As an intellectual game, it is very appealing to people of a particular bent — or a bent imagination! With the proliferation of on-line computer systems, the possibilities become exponentially richer, because if you use a cataloging utility to create a record for a book that has no previous existence, it can take on a life of its own. I've talked to librarians in Texas and California who have amused themselves by inputting these fake records and following up by observing with great satisfaction the processing of inter-library loan requests for

A young man was working in a company which processed books for libraries. Among its other services, it selected for libraries those of their present books they should discard. This employee discovered that the company was choosing the most valuable books for discarding and then selling them itself. He tipped off the libraries and had the pleasure of watching the librarians enter the warehouse and open up the boxes wherein the books subject to this sophisticated pilfering had been concealed.

— *Common Sense for Hard Times*,
Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello⁴

An editor who had been fired from Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., in Chicago sabotaged the company's computer system and rewrote history by substituting the names of Britannica employees for various historical figures.

— *Personnel Magazine*⁵

Knowledge is the only instrument of production that is not subject to diminishing returns.

— J.M. Clark, *Journal of Political Economy*

these fanciful titles. Admittedly, it does mean some poor schmuck has to trudge through the stacks in vain for a volume that will never be found, but I suppose there are more meaningless pursuits, like banking or law.

In the library world, the "authority file" is a file of names and versions of those names that people use when they write or publish. Keeping them all straight is a cataloguer's duty. You have to set it up so that people can search for it and pull the most number of records of titles by a given author. Because people have the proclivity for using many different names, "see" records are a part of this file, which refer you from one form of a name to another. I heard of one clerk who put a "see" reference for Reagan, Ronald Wilson, that said, "see 666." This made it into the microfiche catalog. It may have been a bit obvious. It was very quickly detected and "fixed."

Another one of my pranks has been to deface existing records with subtle alterations. Around the time Salman Rushdie was issued his death warrant, I went into the record for *Satanic Verses* and put in a special field which indicated that one of the library's copies was the special infidel edition, with an asbestos dust jacket. That particular description remained in the system for over a year, until somebody took it out. I wonder whether some pyro of the public came running to see the book, but I'll never know...

INFORMATION CLERK • CHRIS

My stint at the Downtown Community College lasted a mere three months, but for me it was a turning point for a couple of reasons. For one thing I learned word processing there, which catapulted me from \$5 to \$6 to \$10 to \$12/an hour jobs. It also made me aware that most people, especially in San Francisco, work in offices. I wanted to address this fact, since I, too, was suddenly an "information handler."

As an information clerk I sat right inside the front door and spent seven hours a day telling people where the bathroom was, when and where classes met and about English as a Second Language. The school provided two basic services, both primarily for the benefit of the downtown office world: basic training in office skills, and English classes for immigrants and refugees that prepared them for low-wage, rudimentary data entry jobs.

The job's nemesis was familiar — I wasn't allowed to read, even when there was nothing to do. I was supposed to "look professional," according to my corporate-climbing boss, Ms. Walton. She was appallingly dumb, and as far as I could tell, she hardly knew anything about goings-on in the school. I think she was an image-builder for the community colleges. Knowing little and being self-conscious about it, she was pressured to accomplish things she didn't understand, and she'd vent her fears by admonishing me for reading the paper at my desk during lulls.

I hadn't planned to stay long, and despite the two-year minimum I promised in the interview, I planned on a long summer vacation. About six weeks before I planned to quit, I composed a fake advertisement for the DCC and had it printed up. The ad

summarized all my jaded views of the purpose of this training institute for the clerical working-class. About ten days before I had planned to quit, I began surreptitiously placing them inside the Fall schedules of City College, which I distributed at the front desk. A few days later the shit hit the fan. A co-worker came running up to me and asked if I had done the yellow leaflet that had the entire school in an uproar. I smiled and told her, "No, never heard of it." Nonetheless, it was obvious to my co-workers, who knew I had a bad attitude, that I was the culprit.

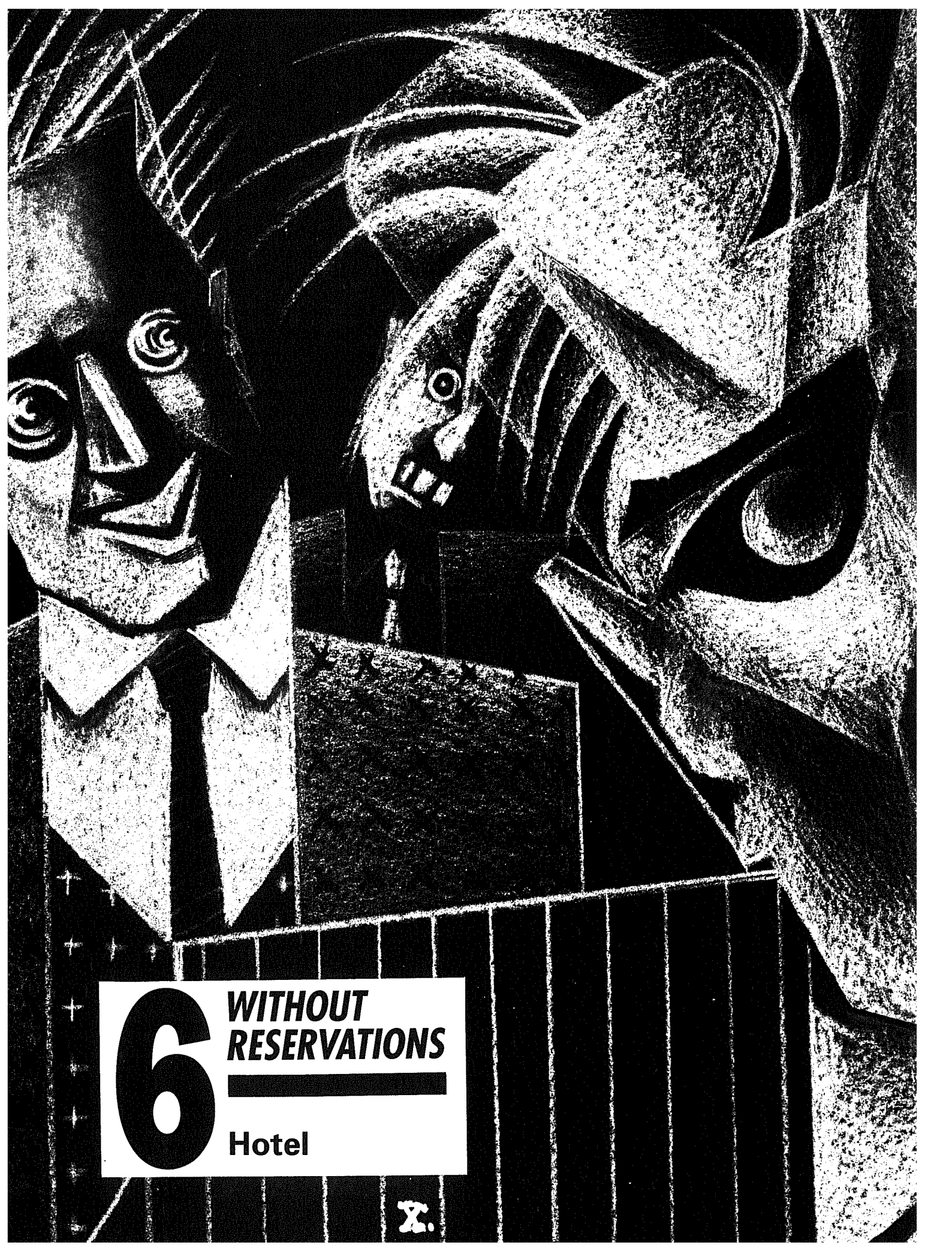
I was absent from my work station when the director, Dr. B., came in. She gave me a dark look as I scurried back to my position. Five minutes later the phone rang, and I was told to come to her office. She looked rather pale as I entered. She was boiling but tried to act calm. She pulled out a copy of the leaflet and thrust it at me, saying, "What can you tell me about this?"

I said, "Oh, is that the yellow leaflet I was told about? Can I see it?" I took it and sat down and slowly read it as if I had never seen it before. I chuckled at the funny parts, dragging out my feigned surprise until she finally exploded, "You are sick! You must be deranged to do something like this. It's damaging to our institute. You're fired!"

I had put her name and the school's actual logo on it, so I denied responsibility just in case some kind of lawsuit ensued. I protested that I wanted to complete my final week, but she told me to go. I felt quite satisfied with the extra days off before my vacation.

*In 1983, Studs Terkel's "Working" was deleted from the 8th grade curriculum in the Washington, Arizona School District. "When we require idealistic and sensitive youth to be burdened with despair, ugliness and hopelessness, we shall be held accountable by the almighty God."**





6 **WITHOUT
RESERVATIONS**
Hotel



By its very nature, hospitality is a people industry — and thereby labor-intensive. To control labor costs, productivity must be achieved without sacrificing hospitality and personal service.

— *Training for the Hospitality Industry,*
Lewis C. Forrest, Jr. ¹

Employee theft has a tendency to be contagious and cancerous.

— *John Case, President of John D. Case and Associates* ²

People get their living by such depressing devices that boredom becomes a sort of natural state to them.

—H.L. Mencken

DESK CLERK • DUNCAN

The place was one-third old people who had lived there forever, one-third male and female prostitutes and the other third were transients who would stay for a night or two at a time. It took me a while to get used to the hours; plus, the wages were really low. The bosses were dicks, especially my supervisor, who was pretty weird. He was perfectly manicured, with permed hair and curled beard, hairy chest and gold chains.

One morning he came in at about seven and started bitching at me for some stupid little thing. I wasn't feeling too well but I said I was sorry anyway. But then he wouldn't let up. He went on for ten minutes. I felt too ill to work so I went home. I crashed out all day and got up just in time to go back to work. I grabbed some take-out food and was eating it at the beginning of the shift. The supervisor was there but not to work. He started hounding on me about the same shit that he had been going on about in the morning. I wasn't really in the mood for it and I told him so. He wouldn't stop. I was sitting in the booth and he was about ten feet away from me. He wouldn't shut up. Finally I yelled, "Shut the fuck up!" and threw my salad at him. It smacked him right in the face; the dressing got all over his beard, his clothes, and his hairy chest. It was wonderful. All the people around really loved it, and he shut up. After that he was so nice to me. Sometimes you have to set your limits with people.

I didn't get fired for that. I got fired later for being humane to the people who lived there. There wasn't a desk clerk there who wasn't an absolute turd. I was nice to people. I'd help them with their laundry and stuff like that. I'd go out of my way to make living there a little more pleasant for them.

CHAMBERMAID • KIM

It's a beautiful summer day, and as we approach the hotel it looks like a medieval castle on an artificial lake, with ducks flown in from some more hospitable land. Limos pull into the front entrance, but we head round back and park next to the dumpster already reeking from the sun. We walk down a concrete passageway with burnt-out bulbs and open a door where a blast of fluorescent light and humid heat hits us: it's the laundry room. We take the service elevator up one flight and there are a wealth of possibilities — effusive light, soft carpets, dark wood and polished brass. With the blue smock on we are invisible in this world — we are "the help."

There are several work crews in the housekeeping department and we're all partial to different kinds of sabotage. At 6:00 am one squad heads down to the bar. It's in a locked room with the inside modeled after an ancient hunting hall. There is little activity here early in the morning. All the lock needs is a plastic credit card and we're in. Workers jostle like newborn animals for position under the beer taps. They continue the day piss-drunk and vaguely happy.

There's a club that subscribes only to pranks. Membership is drawn mostly from the "houseboys," young men and women who

collect dirty linen and glasses from the chambermaids' carts. The sport of choice is throwing breakable items from high places. Some like to loosely wrap a bunch of glasses in a sheet and chuck it down the laundry chute. This creates a beautiful mess down at the other end and the screams of the laundry workers echo the length of the chute. Laundry workers hate the houseboys, but would never report them to management; in a twisted way everyone looks out for each other.

When these activities get boring, houseboys will go up to the roof and throw items directly off the building onto the back driveway. The coup de grace is when someone steals a fifty-pound container of milk from the kitchen. It's nice, quite nice. But all this throwing can get tiring. When houseboys are sleepy they let themselves into a linen closet, one on each floor. Towels and sheets are strategically placed on the front of the shelves and a cozy little sleeping nook is created in the back.

Chambermaids employ many types of sabotage but shirking is the most common. Housekeeping is the hotel shit-job that involves a bizarre intimacy with the customer. Front-desk folk may talk to these people but they don't have to clean up everything from used condoms and diapers to thousands of hairs in the tub. The key to survival is cutting corners.

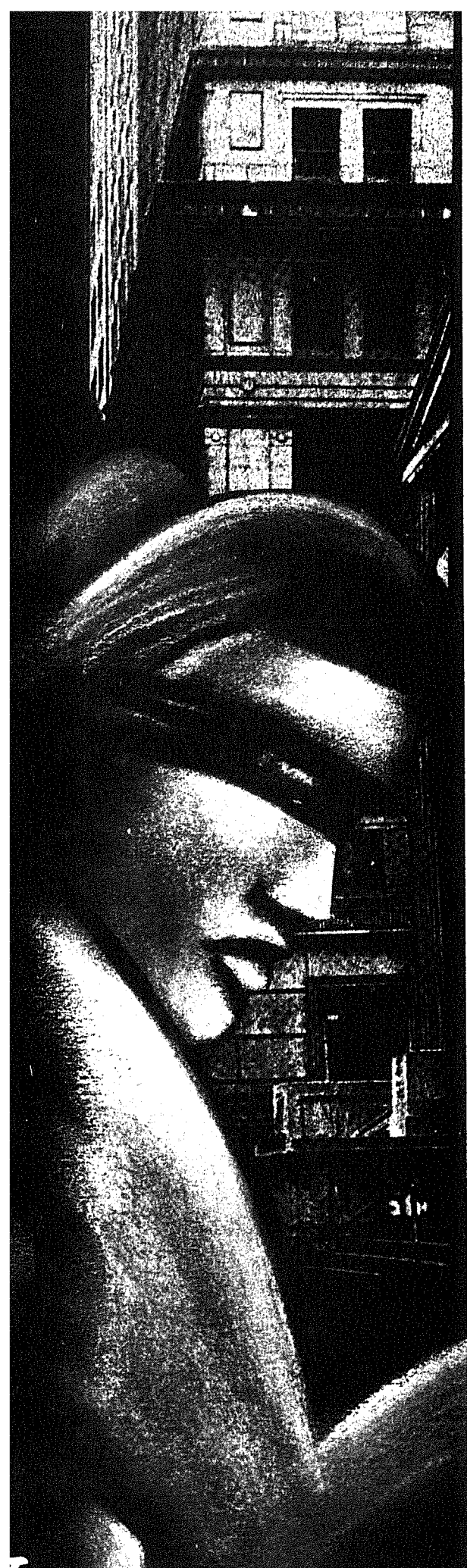
Some chambermaids opt for the lazy approach. Instead of dragging out the heavy vacuum, just drag a broom across the carpet to make it look like it's been vacuumed. We're allotted eight hours to clean around fifteen rooms. If we can finish them in five hours, we then have three hours of leisure time. Chambermaids are skillful at disappearing. The trick is to park your cart somewhere you're not, and escape to one of the vacant cleaned rooms. Lie on the bed in the air-conditioned room and watch hours of soap operas and MTV.

Other chambermaids prefer to do a fastidious and painstakingly long job in each room. Clean a little and then perch on the edge of the bed and read a bit of the occupant's magazine. This is a little more dangerous because that occupant could walk into the room at any time. We have to be prepared to jump up and look busy at any moment. A chambermaid was once blown away while sitting on the bed reading in a dimly-lit room; a man sat up, who unbeknownst to her had been sleeping in the bed.

Members of all the housekeeping groups band together when it comes time for stealing. All bags are searched on the way out, but that's no deterrent. Bags are stuffed full of small items such as soap and shampoo, and the workers walk right out the main lobby door of the hotel. For more major thefts it's back to the rooftop. Workers with pick-up trucks drive to the back of the hotel. Others throw boxes of linen, shower curtains, towels, just anything, into the waiting trucks. A favorite item was the 1000-pack of chocolate mints put on guests' pillows. To this day, none of us can even look at a chocolate mint without gagging.

ROOM SERVICE WAITER • BORIS

For six years I've been employed at one of San Francisco's grandest hotels. It's prestigious, very expensive and prides itself on its fine



service and glitz. Being the type of hotel that it is, there's a big social division between the corporate types and the back house people.

Among the workers themselves there's a lot of respect. With the supervisors, it's kind of iffy. Some of them are well-liked because they don't give the employees a hard time and are amenable to feedback. The ones who do give the employees a hard time fit into a definite pattern: they tend to be people that go to hotel management training school. These people want to become the big cheese, and ways of doing that include handing out layoff slips, shitting on workers and pushing people around. Some tension is built around this.

There was this one asshole supervisor who was stealing really expensive bottles of wine, and everybody knew it. Someone blew the whistle on him. The security guards caught him, but of course he wasn't fired. If I had been caught doing that, I would have been out the door.

The most common form of sabotage we're really big on is eating food that we're not supposed to eat. They don't like people helping themselves. One time I saw these guys running out the kitchen during the graveyard shift and I couldn't figure out what was going on. It turned out that they had helped themselves to the shrimp scampi and didn't want the manager to see them because they would have all gotten in a lot of trouble.

We're constantly doing the sodas and the mineral waters, which are kept under lock and key. I know where the key is. It's a simple matter of waiting until my boss isn't looking and then getting the stuff out. Quite a lot of drinking takes place on the job, especially among the dishwashers. When there's a banquet going, there's lots of wine and champagne. Bartenders and waiters pop bottles open at every turn. When the party's over, all the open bottles go down to the kitchen on a huge cart and the late night dishwashing crew will drink what's leftover. If they're lucky they'll get a waiter to open them up a beer. It has some funny results. A few months ago they canned this dishwasher who got drunk and ended up pissing all over the delivery elevators. I've walked by guys who got so drunk during the late night shift that they'd be asleep in the hallway, oblivious to the world. We usually make them an espresso and make sure they're okay.

Most people who work there have a bad attitude. The longer people work there, the less gung ho they are. They'll do the minimum to keep their job but they'll show up late or hungover. They admit they don't care. Because of the union, it's very difficult to get fired. Once you get sick of it, you just fuck off. For places like that to be profitable, the workers have to give 120 percent. And here, they don't.

SECURITY GUARD • ROBIN

I found out about the job through an ad in the newspaper and I was hired on the spot. Only later did I find out that a security guard is seen as one of the lowest jobs in this country. It's easy to become one and most don't last that long.

Time is the measure of business, as money is of wares.

— Francis Bacon

*A little thievery is a dangerous art
But thievery largely is a noble part
'Tis vile to rob a henroost of a hen,
But stealing largely makes us gentlemen.*
— Representative Samuel S. Marshall

Propaganda, like indoctrination and advertising, conditions employees to act along lines which they like (or imagine that they like). Individuals may then want to do the things suggested for them. Managers may, for example, suggest to employees that "We can be the best in town!" Employees may strive to meet that challenge.

— *Training for the Hospitality Industry,*
Lewis C. Forrest, Jr.³

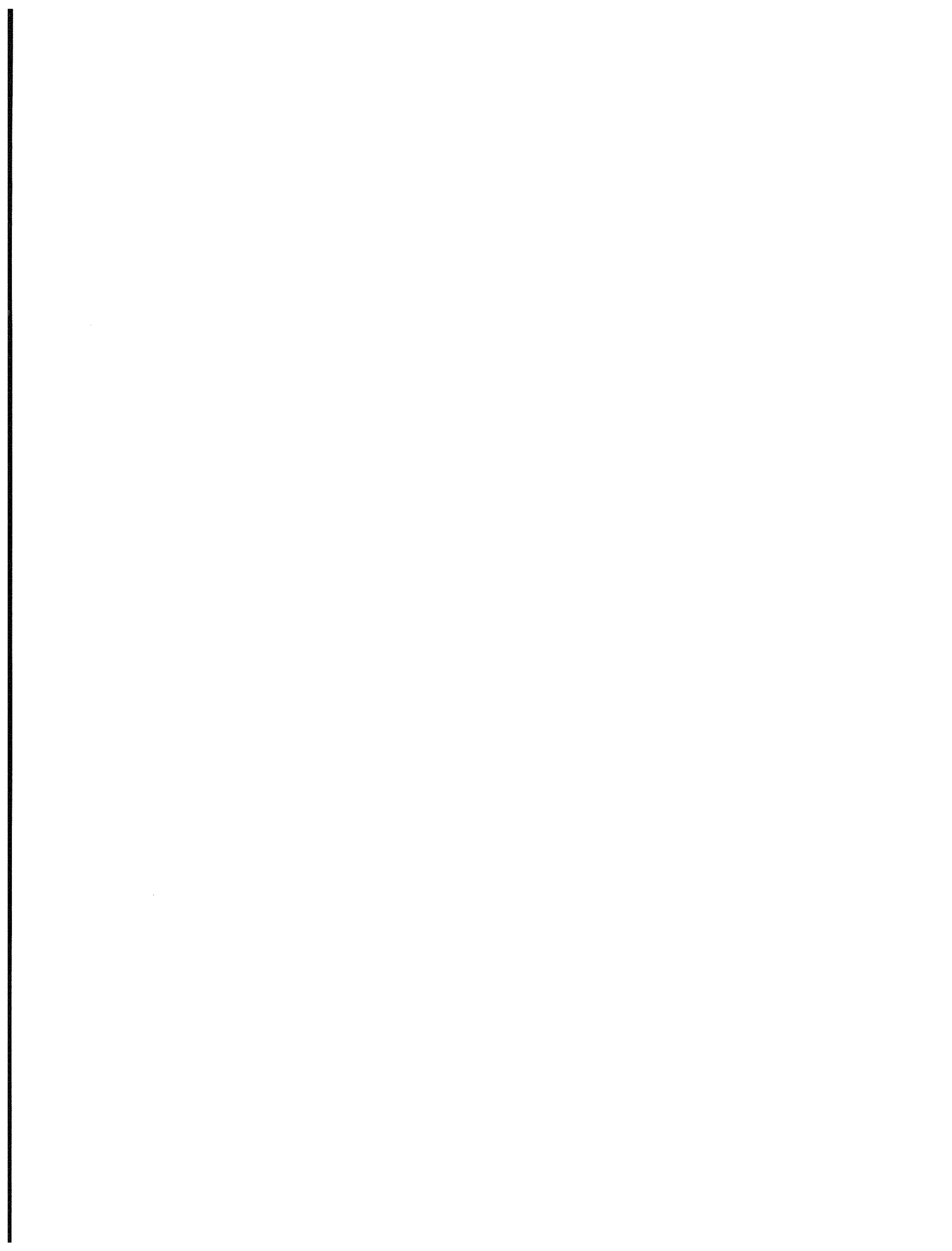
My first assignment was the graveyard shift at a 500-room hotel downtown. I was the only guard there. I had to secure the entire building, keep people from stealing and respond to emergency calls.

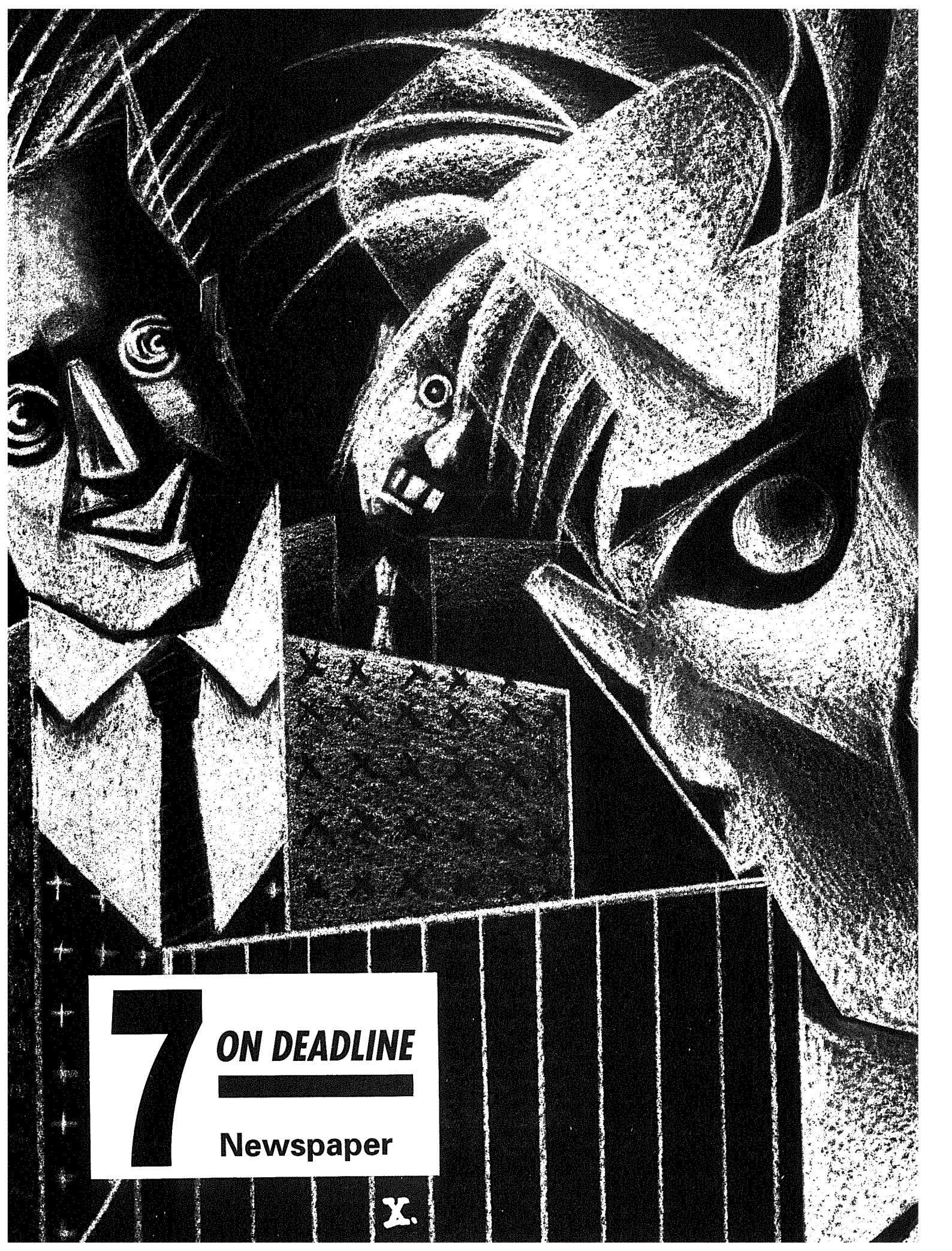
The first couple of months I was very professional and friendly. But after a while, I started to search through the entire hotel for places to sleep. I found two rooms where I made nests with mattresses and pillows. I used to put my two-way radio between my head and the pillow so when my supervisor called me, it would wake me up. I'm sure my voice always sounded like I had just woken up but it didn't really matter because whenever I got called to do something, I'd say I was busy.

I started to get bored, so I began stealing small things like food and beer from the kitchen. But when I start stealing from a job, it's like a snowball effect, an addiction, I can't stop it. I was supposed to make sure all the rooms were locked and secure, but all I did was check to see if a door was open, to see what I could steal. I stole TV sets, lamps, chairs and furniture. I would run from one end of the building to the other to take the stuff to the garage where I parked my car.

I made little plans for myself to steal all of the time because it's the only fun thing I could do at work. My main mission was to steal lots of things, and to see what was the biggest thing that I could take without being noticed. There was one room, which I didn't have access to, where they kept slide projectors and cameras. It was very tempting to me. I had a large set of keys to all of the rooms, but I couldn't get into that one. I figured out they must have an emergency key to open all the doors. I had the key to get into the maintenance room so I went in there, found the big drawer where they kept all the keys, and got the key for that room. I took about \$700 worth of audio-visual equipment. I remember once when I took a slide projector; it took me about fifteen seconds to get the courage to take it and go down the secondary stairs and through the emergency exit to make a short run to my car. When I shut my trunk and knew the projector was in there it was like an orgasmic pleasure. I finally had it. After a while, the stealing got boring, so I quit.







7

ON DEADLINE

Newspaper

X.

*We live under a government of men
and morning newspapers.*

— Wendell Phillips

*As soon as the boss decides he wants
his workers to do something, he has two
problems: making them do it and moni-
toring what they do.*

— *Motivating the Help*, Robert Krulwich

*Salary complaints should be handled
the same way as any other employee
complaints. Let the grumbler talk ... There
is a good chance that the employee will
"cool down" in a week.*

— *Supervisor's Factomatic*, Jack Horn¹

PRESS OPERATOR • LEROY

I ran a web press for a small daily newspaper that is distributed all over the West Coast. I had worked there several months and had become friends with one of the assistants.

My boss was one of the worst tyrants I had ever worked for, and for some reason he hated the assistant, who was very shy and introverted. He took great pleasure in letting him know how small, stupid and worthless he was. The assistant was half Korean, half American, born in Korea but recently arrived in the U.S. with no family or friends. All he had was this horrible job. The boss fired him one afternoon in a frenzy of sadistic hatred. I argued with the boss and he asked me if I would like to be fired too. I said, "No," and went back to work.

It was 11:00 am and the paper needed to be printed by 4:00 pm so it could get delivered to air freight at the airport for delivery. I futzed around the press 'til the afternoon. Around 3:00 pm the boss came down and saw that the papers weren't printed yet. I said the plates weren't ready, there were technical problems, etc. Time wore on with the boss getting more and more agitated as the press sat by silently. Finally, the tension exploded as I started cursing him out for firing the assistant. I walked off the job, with no papers printed and no time for him to get a replacement printer. The "daily" would have to take the next day off.

DISTRIBUTOR • CHARLES

I knew the guy who had the distribution rights for a large daily newspaper. I was going to college and needed a job so I started working for him delivering newspapers. I was making very little money, but since it was a college town and jobs were hard to find, I took what I could get.

To a certain extent, I managed the entire distribution thing because the guy I worked for didn't pay much attention to it. When I started working there the whole thing was a mess. There were six or seven routes and they were all screwed up. The route books weren't up to date. Nobody really knew what they were doing. I made sure that things were running more smoothly. I was doing a lot more work than I was supposed to be doing. I was doing it mostly because I couldn't stand the mess that was there, and also because I expected that my work would be appreciated.

I delivered about 300 and something papers to individual homes and probably 300 to 400 to paper racks. It took several hours, from 1:00 until 7:00 in the morning. I wasn't happy doing it at all, because I thought that I'd be getting more money from it. I asked for more money a number of times. It was always, "Later, later ... we'll see." I did not like the attitude this guy had at all because he wasn't really pulling his weight. If I hadn't done the stuff I did, the place would still be a mess.

My first idea of how to get a raise was to make myself indispensable, so that the place could not go on without me. That in itself didn't really prove possible because he simply didn't care. So then I thought I would make my route so impossible that nobody could

do anything about it. I didn't keep my route book up to date and any entries I made in it were completely confusing. They weren't lies, but they weren't easy for anybody but me to read.

It ended on a Sunday morning. The Sunday paper was a really big job because it was a lot larger and more people got it, so it took two people to do it. I would usually just hire someone for the day, but I told my boss that I couldn't get anybody, so he had to help me. I wanted to make sure he was there with me. Then I gave him an ultimatum: "You give me that raise that we've been talking about for such a long time, or I'll quit and then you're really going to be sorry." I told him that he would not be able to find anybody to do my route because it was so complicated. He didn't go for that. He would not flat out say, "No, I will not give you a raise." I did not really intend to leave that morning, but I decided it was a perfect opportunity because he would really be screwed.

I was so mad at him that that's what I did. He was left there with 500 Sunday papers and a route book he couldn't read. He leaned out the window and screamed at me to come back and not to leave him in the lurch but I said, "Too bad, you had your chance." As far as I know, he was probably doing that route well into the night.

PAPERBOY • BOB

I started delivering papers when I was eleven years old and I did it throughout high school because I've basically been on my own since age thirteen. I had to work, and how many other opportunities are there for a little kid?

I had about 100 customers on my *San Diego Union* route. The route paid fairly well, but since we were called "independent contractors" by the company, they would sell us the papers and we had to worry about collecting the money from the customers. It was kind of fucked because if a customer skipped town, the company wasn't out of the money, a eleven-year-old kid was.

The only way to get back at the company was to not put their shitty inserts in. The paper got dropped off at my house at 4:30 in the morning and sometimes there would be no inserts. I'd just fold the paper, put a rubber band around it, and start throwing it to people's houses. But a lot of days I'd have to put ad inserts in all of the papers, especially Thursday because of the food section. It really sucked when they gave us three ads on the same day. Usually it was one or two a day. If I was running late and had to put these inserts in, I would just say, "Fuck it," and not put them in. Sometimes I would get in trouble because so-and-so worked at May Company and didn't get their ad in the paper that day. Basically, if they treated me like shit, I wouldn't put their inserts in.

They had various ways of treating the paperboys like shit — being ultra-harsh on us if we were a few minutes late delivering papers, or trying to get us to deliver them earlier. I never got them out on time. It wasn't always done on purpose, but if someone got their paper at 7:00 instead of 6:30, I didn't lose any sleep over it. It was all based on an honesty policy and whenever I put out my trash, I'd hide the inserts, so when the delivery guy drove by in the morning, he wouldn't see them.



ASSEMBLER • DENVER

Mailers are responsible for the handling and assembly of newspapers. We operate inserting machines, tying and stacking machines, and other equipment related to the production of finished bundles of papers. We do all the work between the pressroom and circulation.

In August 1988, the Denver Mailers' Union, having failed to sign a contract with the new owners of the *Denver Post*, was attacked with forty-two percent to fifty-five percent pay cuts. At the time, all other unions had contracts. We were isolated and vulnerable. For fourteen months we conducted a campaign against the paper.

We came up with several ideas which we did not act on, because they could have led to prison. Perhaps we should have taken more action — hostile, militant and illegal — but \$8.60 an hour, even if it's far from \$15.03 an hour, is better than prison. We had informational and boycott picket lines. We used a bullhorn to tell drivers stopped at lights to boycott. We leafletted any promotional event sponsored by the *Post*. We had Jobs with Justice rallies. We had radio ads and we were on TV several times. We had a phone bank to get cancellations. We would drive through different neighborhoods writing down addresses of subscribers, look up their phone numbers in reverse directories, and then call them and ask for cancellations. It's just as easy to get someone to cancel as it is to get them to subscribe. And, we worked to rule.

Working to rule means doing just what you're told to do — nothing else. Don't draw conclusions, act like you're expected to act and don't in any way think for the boss. If they ask you to do something, go do it. Did they ask you to come back? How do you know you're supposed to? Maybe they will come to where they sent you and ask something else. If asked to train new hires, train them to fight. Part of learning how to do the work right is learning to do the work wrong. Show them how to be sloppy, not to worry about production. After all, if they cared about production, they wouldn't make us work understaffed and underpaid, so why should we care? Take your time. Take as much time as you can to do anything. You can even do some jobs so carefully, so meticulously, that it amounts to a slowdown. Just be prepared with answers if questioned or hassled. Be polite, unless you're in a situation when the company has made an error according to its own dictates. Then, you can probably get away with causing increased stress for the boss.

Some things which come to mind like a thunderstorm: some machines have sharp corners or burrs. Try to wear them smooth by dragging inserts over them. Also, a thumbtack inside a glove can do a lot of clandestine tearing. Ride power equipment while applying the brakes. This saps the charge. Stick paper in conveyor belts — enough paper will jam it. Load compactors on one side — also good for a jam. It's easy to drop palmed "surprises" into the buckets — any unpleasant item will do. Drop inserts on the floor, kick them around, tear out pages they need like the TV guide. Develop speech impediments for the bosses and stare at their bellies if they're fat. Everyone start whistling different songs if

Direct action means you gain all of your objectives on the job rather than the ballot box.

— Jack Miller, *Industrial Workers of the World*

Sabotage means primarily the withdrawal of efficiency. Sabotage means either to slacken up or interfere with the quantity, or to botch in your skills and interfere with the quality of capitalist production, or to give bad service. Sabotage is not physical violence; sabotage is an internal industrial process.

— Sabotage, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, 1916²

If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing well.

— proverb

It might be said that the ideal of the employer is to have production without employees and the ideal of the employee is to have income without work.

— E.F. Schumacher

there is downtime. Also, laughing together at downtime is good. Screw around with adjustments on equipment. Call office numbers at crucial times, tying up the lines. Remove a stack of papers from a vending machine on Sunday. Return them a week later into the same machine and take out the new ones. Save the new ones for the next week. Be creative, and don't be afraid to take some chances. But don't take chances with your workmates' safety or property. Don't threaten those who refuse to sabotage. Don't damage company property that you need, like sinks, toilets, etc. Do have fun with the sons-of-bitches; it's all they're good for.

REPORTER • LEE

After I graduated from journalism school I got a job with the *Burlington County Herald*, a daily paper in south Jersey. I was making a whopping \$150 a week and wasn't a happy camper. The editor and I did not get along. He kept berating me for failing to write my lead paragraphs in two sentences with one-syllable words. He was upset that he had to edit everything I wrote.

One day he got really mad and assigned me to the police beat. My job was to call up every police department in the south Jersey area and write a recap of the evening's events for the morning paper. I wrote the headlines, the leads and the story, which was very unusual in those days. The editor was again hassling me for my extended lead paragraphs for these minimal stories. It got to the point where he threatened to fire me so I said, "Fine. You want short paragraphs, you got 'em."

The very next day two articles appeared in the paper. One headline read "Dead." This was followed by "Dateline: Medford New Jersey. That's what Harry Serbronski was after his car hit a telephone pole at eighty-six miles an hour." The other headline was "300 pounds burnt." At the time, the police were raiding a lot of pot growers and everybody assumed, after reading the headline, that another pot grower had been caught. But the next line was "Dateline: Marlton, New Jersey. Flash fire went through a farm building killing one obese woman weighing 304 pounds."

The family of the woman sued the paper on grounds of malice. The paper was taken to court over the story and lost. I got fired the next day. I had no regrets. I didn't care.

When a reporter sits down at the typewriter, he's nobody's friend.

— Theodore H. White

Early in life I noticed that no event is ever correctly reported in a newspaper.

— George Orwell

Butte County District Attorney Michael Ramsey said four misdemeanor charges have been filed against Jim Fallbeck, former publisher of the Paradise Post, for "false impersonation of another." Fallbeck, who is involved in a feud with the Post after being fired last year, is accused of filling out magazine subscriptions in the names of Paradise Post employees, said Ramsey. Some forty-five magazines began pouring into the Post's offices in the names of various employees, said Ramsey, who called the situation "pretty juvenile." The current publisher of the newspaper obtained original copies of the magazine subscription applications and forwarded the cards to Paradise police. Police matched the handwriting with Fallbeck's, said Ramsey. Fallbeck, a former owner of the Paradise Post, is involved in litigation with the company. He alleges he was fired without cause and is owed money by the newspaper. The newspaper's owners dispute those charges.

— Chico News and Review³



