

THE STINKING DESERT GAZETTE



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25¢

Moab,
Utah



Stewart Leaving

The town of Moab was saddened to learn that one of its most versatile citizens will be leaving for greener pastures.

Curt Stewart, Moab City Councilman, club singer and musician, and KCNY Radio DJ, will be leaving Moab to work in Salt Lick City.

The city will struggle without "our guy in the sky" helicopter reporter Bif Barnes, who not only kept us all informed about traffic tieups on our busy arterials but also hovered over the local rapids and dutifully reported the names of every Moabite who had snuck away from work to run the river.

Moabites had no difficulty knowing when Curt himself was out on a raft, as the news of a flip on the daily stretch travels fast on the local grapevine.



City Councilman Curt Stewart, shown above as he addressed his fellows regarding his up-coming departure, was well-known for his flamboyant manner of dress.

Moabites will miss Curt and all the great music he's given us over the years. We wish him well, and we look forward to his return.

Indentured Hamster Discovered in Moab. Authorities Investigating.

The discovery of a pet rodent trapped in the squirrel cage blower of a furnace in a Moab residence was laughingly dismissed as nothing more than an unusual coincidence by homeowner Dale Parriott, but reporters for the Stinking Desert Gazette suspect that this might be more than just a laughing matter. They have offered the results of their investigation to local authorities and were pleased to hear that criminal charges might be pending.

Parriott's wife, Glee, became alarmed when she noticed a thumping sound emanating from the heat registers every time she attempted to turn the furnace on.

Mr. Parriott seemed to be totally surprised when he removed the cover to the blower housing and found Lionel, the Parriott kids' pet hamster, lying in a pitiful heap in the bottom of the blower.

The pathetic rodent was scrawny and emaciated from the ordeal, but was expected to survive.

This should have been the happy ending to the whole affair. However, our erstwhile reporters, sensing something amiss, contacted a local electrical contractor, Al McLeod, for some expert help with their investigation.

With his aid, they pieced together the following scenario which leaves little doubt as to what really happened to the unfortunate animal.

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Poopy Problem Solved

By Frank Cox
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The Homecoming

by Izzie Kiddin

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"Times are tough here in Moab and everyone is looking for ways to save a little money", said McLeod. "Apparently, Mr. Parriott was using the hapless rodent as a means to pare his light bill a little.

"The kids solved the riddle when they revealed that the hamster was often missing from his cage. And his wife confided to us that the family was forbidden to turn up the household thermostat for long periods of time. That clinched it", said McLeod.

"While the furnace was off, Parriott would put the rat into the blower, which resembles the "ratrace" in the hamster's cage. As it "ran", it turned the blower motor, making it a crude generator. The resulting electricity ran backwards through the household wiring and straight to Utah Power and Light, reversing his electric meter.

"I would guess that the hamster was making roughly 18¢ a day for Mr. Parriott", surmised McLeod.

Local SPCA officials are in the process of filing charges, the exact nature of which are still unclear.

NEW GAZETTEER!



SDG Reporter Lew Prowse relates amusing anecdote gleaned from the back of a picture postcard at the post office.

The Stinking Desert Gazette announced last week the addition of another member to their reporting staff, Mr. Lew Prowse, who will work the rumor compilation desk in their gossip department headed up by Buddy Hummer.

Lew came out on top

after an exhaustive series of interviews for the position, exhibiting a wealth of information about local inhabitants.

Lew will work on retainer for the Gazette, and will remain in his present fulltime position as head of the U.S. Post Office in Moab.

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President Reagan, launching his welfare reform program, February 9, 1987.

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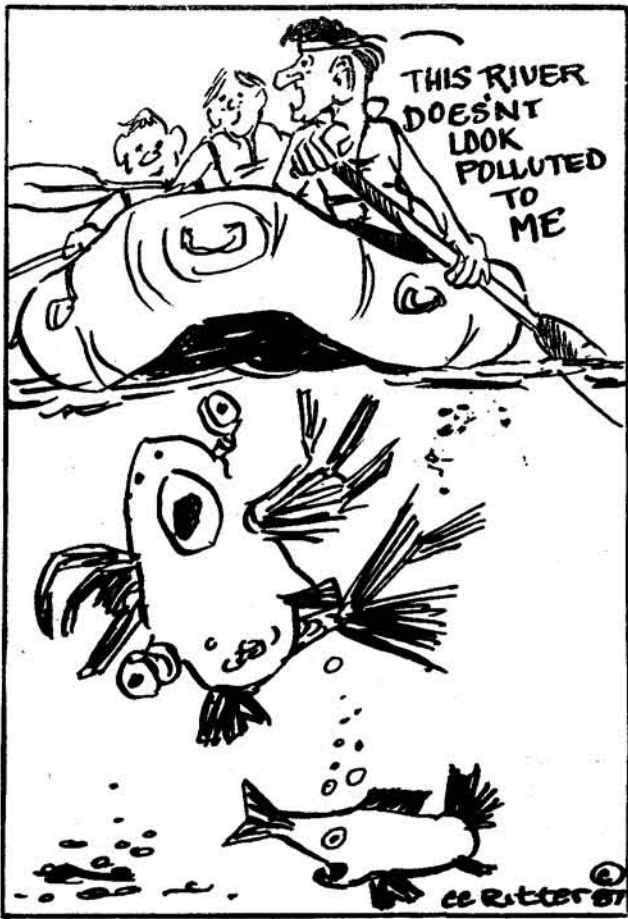
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THE ROCK OF AGES COMICS

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BACKWATER

C.C. Ritter 87

SURE IS A LOT OF PAPERWORK JUST TO APPLY FOR A SEASONAL PARK JOB.

I WOULD HATE TO SEE WHAT'S IN STORE, IF I DO GET THAT DAMN JOB.



There's a deep, round, blue calm, multicolored pool up there! That's right, you know the one - at the far end of the road beyond the striated redrock walls. It's tucked up in the domed slickrock canyon beneath the hanging garden alcove ringed with desert varnish!

Anybody with a bike, jeep, horse or two willing feet can go see it! And if you time it right, the red gold sunlit rocks framed in a blue sky reflect mirror images on the cool still surface of the water. It's a good place to fall asleep, bright cottonwood leaves, warm sandstone, rich-smelling desert red mud, stream trickling from the alcove

Listen! Turn off the engine, lay down the bike, stop walking on the pebbles for a minute. Hear the dripping water? Hear the complete

silence behind it? Ahhh, and now a canyon wren calls.

Springtime. I never plan on making many miles in the Spring. There's just too much to admire. A hundred stops seem to happen on any backroad trip this time of the year.

Stop for the first full view of the shimmering white snowfields in the high La Sal. (Do I see a hint of green budding oak and aspen?) Stop for the first flower in bloom of each different kind. Who cares what they're called, they're beautiful!

Now a budding cactus, then a Juniper clinging to the canyon rim. Here a delicate garden of living soil, and there a spring fed stream full of miniature life.

From below, canyons - red, gold, purple, pink and orange winding through mesas, rising from rivers;

painted walls of sun and shadow. Then look down from above to steppes, plateaus, and mazes of intricate waterways.


Finally made it to the arch! Was I looking to find an arch? Must have forgotten amidst pauses for two deer, a coyote, eagles, rabbits, river overlooks, a dripping seep drink, three echo walls, four potholes and some ancient indian writings. Why not an arch? Another stop to admire the perfect day through a window span of sculpted rock.


Shadows are deepening as colors redden and I remember that I must return. I started the day in a Four Wheel Drive, then took out the mountain bike, soon after onto my two feet, and now no backpack, no shoes, no clothes ... Freedom!

More stops as I return to pick up the pieces of life and to gaze again at nature. But the best part of the day is yet to come. Sunset.

Time to find a high point for a panorama of colors! Silhouettes of stone now appear in front of the deepening blue hues of distant mesas and mountain ranges.

I think I'll hang around for the moonrise. Got some extra time? There's a deep round pool up there, and I hear it glows in the moonlight!




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The Absolute Truth



Philmore Banks, Esq.

Who knows to what sublime degree might the misery and suffering of the multitudes be mollified if it were somehow possible to whisk away from the surface of our fair sphere all the zealots to the land of their dreams.

Grant them their wish. Transport them, Deus ex machina, to their Paradisical Vision, that perfect world where all the inhabitants deport themselves in total accord, and defer not from the divine plan.

It would disturb the sleep of moderate and fair-minded people not one whit to know that each and every zealot thus blessed was in fact condemned, by the natural diversity of people, to a kingdom of solitary confinement

The rest of the world would then be free to fumble along without them, and could settle disputes by dint of reason and compromise.

Alas, no such perfect panacea appears possible. We are bound, in the human condition, to suffer the fools.

A classic example of a zealot's excess is unfolding in our nation's capitol. President Reagan, assuming an infallibility almost papal in dimension, cast aside the roadmap of civil process and progress and drove the country up to its hubcaps into the dismal swamp of deceit, where slithering serpents slide along branches overhead and alligators leer through the dank mist.

The similarity to Nixon is more than ironic, it's endemic to any administration where big business sets the ethical tone for a government that has abandoned its time-honored adversarial relationship.

It explains why Reagan would abandon his oath to never deal with terrorists. In true business fashion, he abandoned principle for pragmatism. He figured to buy the hostages back with arms shipments, and justified it by gouging them on the price.

Even the little hamlet of Moab is not immune to the infectious threat of zealotry.

Reasonable people with a multitude of interests might disagree over the proper role of local government in creating favorable climates for certain kinds of business and development in the area.

County Commissioner Jimmy Walker even wondered aloud if such involvement is proper and ethical.

However, in the political arena, we depend upon the thrust and parry of the understandably single-interest, survival-oriented forces of business on one hand jousting with the willingness of the public to accommodate the effects of such enterprise on the other.

But what of the zealotry recently manifest in the ranks of our local police? Handcuffing people for expired registrations? What are they thinking? Jaywalking tickets on dark and empty streets? Busts for raptor feathers? For dice cups used to play horse, to decide who puts the quarter in the jukebox? Partygoers arrested for not driving their cars while over .08%, but walking home instead? WUIs? What?

Was that a rap at the door? Maybe it's your turn. Have you a bottle of gift liquor without a Utah stamp? Pour it down the drain.

When zealotry goes unchecked in the enforcement of the common law, we are all criminals. And we will all have to live in fear. So sad. So sad.



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An Idea whose Time Has Come

by Frank Cox

I have been reading a lot recently about how the grazing of cattle on public land is wrecking it. This I don't doubt, but I have a more personal beef with the beef on our land.

I hike a lot and get awfully tired of tripping over all those pasture-patties, those meadow muffins -- or maybe I should call them canyon cookies or plateau pancakes -- that are left behind by the skillion cows who always seem to have been everywhere before I get there!

Now, I have read all that cowboy-bull about how cow-flop is "biodegradable," but I just don't believe it for two reasons. For one, I doubt that the cattlemen who have supposedly made that claim can even pronounce the word, let alone understand what it means.

And, as anyone knows who has done much hiking in this high-desert region, cow-cakes laid here just don't degrade, they petrify from the aridity before they have hardly hit the ground.

How do I know this? Well, as if stumbling over thousands of these dessicated dung-drops weren't enough evidence, I took a couple of dozen samples from all over the place and had them carbon-14 age-dated.

While all these squeeze-dried scat samples looked alike to me -- hard as a landlord's heart -- they tested out at anywhere between three hours and 74 years old. Who can argue with pure science? If carbon-14 dating is good enough for archaeologists, it's good enough for me!

So -- it seems that when all those canyon cookies get dropped beside a nice trickling stream or on some shapely aeolian dune or in a slickrock pothole, they waste no time turning into simulated rocks, just waiting to trip unwary hikers.

Why don't they biodegrade, like such noxious effluvia do in, say, Africa or some Indiana farmer's back yard? It seems this arid land just doesn't have what it takes to biodegrade cow flop. No bio. Too dry.

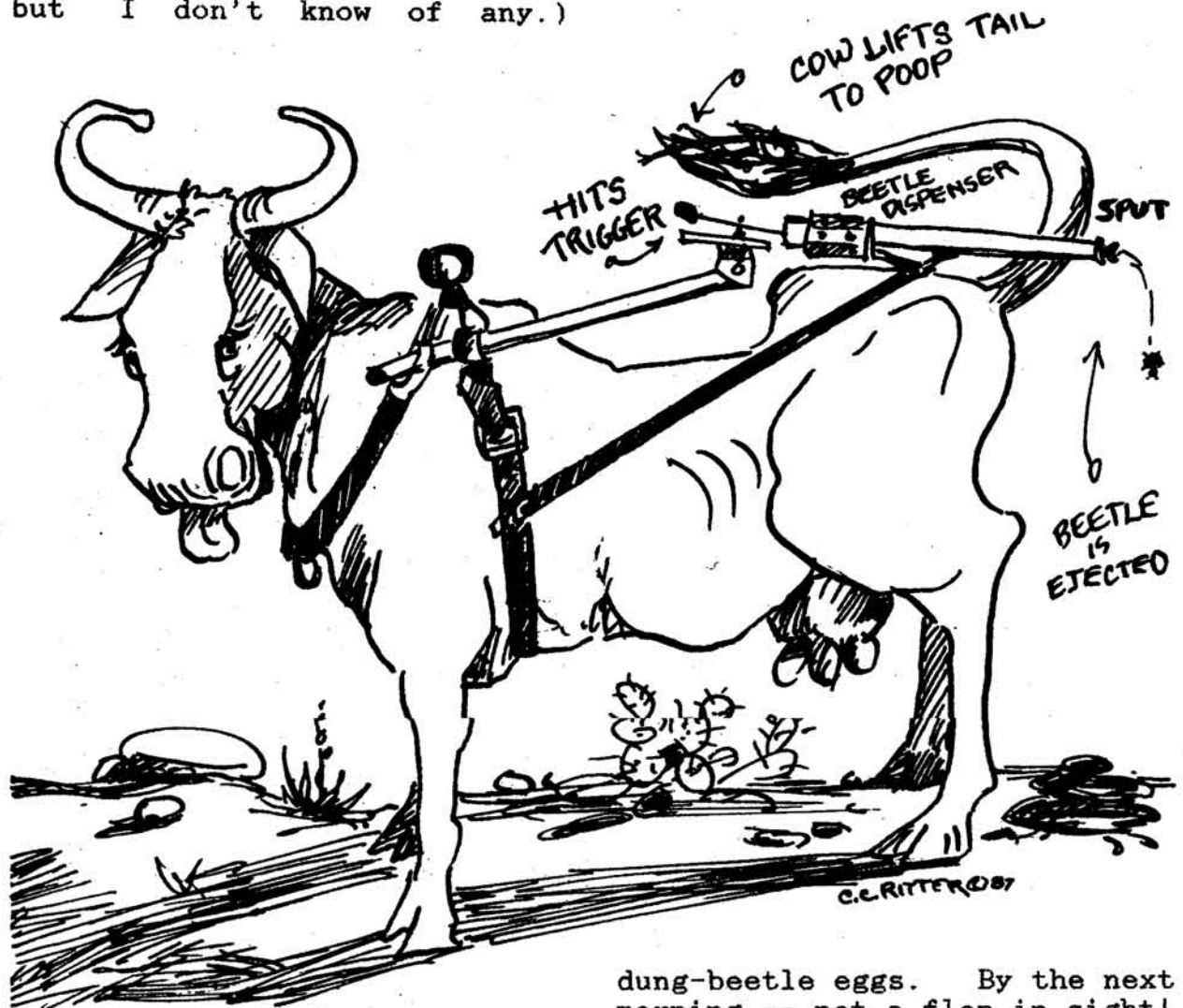
Well -- the other day as I was stumbling through a big patch of these organic rocks near a lovely canyon-seep that the cows seemed to love -- they had churned it into a fine mess -- I got to thinking about a

nature film I had seen on Channel 7 recently. Which gave me an idea -- an idea whose time has doubtless come. It goes like this --

* * * *

You see, I used to live in central California, where they grow figs by the ton. But fig trees, being an old-world species, have a kind of funny sex life. They need to be pollinated by a certain kind of little bug, a tiny wasp, and nothing else will do. (I guess there ARE worse perversions, but I don't know of any.)

After thinking about all those horny fig trees with their little paper bags full of perverted bugs, I thought next about that nature video I had seen, which showed that after a big herd of wildebeests had crossed a stretch of African veldt on their annual trek, all the local dung-beetles got busy rolling all that steaming flop into little balls and burying them, each in its own little hole in the ground, and each with its own little deposit of



What's more, these little wasps are not native to this continent and can't reproduce even when imported. More strange.

So, when all those fig trees feel the primal urge each spring, the fig growers hang little paper bags on the trees, bags full of those special little wasps, imported all the way from north Africa. And when the wasps have done their (blush) little jobbies on the fig trees, they just pass on to that Great Fig Orchard in the Sky, and the fig growers import another batch of wasps the next time their trees start feeling libidinous.

What does all this have to do with cow-flop? Just wait -- I'm coming to that.

dung-beetle eggs. By the next morning -- not a flop in sight! Marvelous!

And in time -- a few days at most -- skillions more dung-beetle babies sprang to life in their dung-ball cradles and soon lay waiting for the next herd of crappy ungulates to pass by.

Neat! Biodegradable flop with a vengeance! The only problem is -- African dung-beetles don't thrive any better over here than those little fig wasps do, especially in arid high-desert country.

But wait -- here comes the idea!

If fig-herders can import African wasps to enhance the sex-lives of their trees, why couldn't cow-herders import African dung-beetles to take care of their cows' natural functions, especially here in

Stinking Desert Cleanup

(cont. from p.6)

arid canyon country? This happy arrangement would at least get all that fresh splatter-scat rolled into neat little balls and buried. Of course, the beetle eggs in all those little balls wouldn't hatch -- they would petrify along with the flop -- but the flop-balls would be safely underground, where hikers like me would not have to stumble over them constantly, prematurely wearing out the toes of expensive hiking boots.

Sure, more beetles would have to be imported regularly, just like fig-wasps. This would help all those least-developed nations. They have more than enough bugs to go around. Catching and exporting a few tons would help increase local employment and improve their sorely-pressed economies. This, in turn, would help them import more of our nice, sagebrush-fattened beef, thus improving our sad balance of trade. Very astute business, that!

And, without all those ubiquitous petrified bovine biscuits making their designer hiking boots look like Pele's soccer shoes, hikers and other tourists would flock to canyon country, making its economy boom like a Jamaican steel drum.

Yes, the benefits from importing a regular supply of African dung-beetles are obvious -- but how to get this economic miracle started?

Simple! The BLM and Forest Service would just need to issue a regulation requiring that each cow grazed on public land wear its own dung-beetle dispenser. The dispensers would have to be designed so that every time a cow raised her tail to take a dump (scenic or otherwise) the dispenser would eject a few dung-beetles in the appropriate direction, all eager to roll up the fresh flop, impregnate it with eggs and then bury it in the sand, forever hiding it from the eyes of man. What could be neater?

Result? No more desert doilies, no more sun-fried flop, no more mummified mounds all over the choicest canyon country scenery to trip over -- and the economies of several nations greatly improved! With no messing up the ecosystem, either, because, like the wasps, the dung-beetles would just do their little duties and then neatly biodegrade themselves.

What?! You think this is just a wild scheme dreamed up by some dewy-eyed tree-hugger?! Not so! Let me assure you this idea has already received the stamp of approval of at least one upstanding and financially-astute Moab citizen.

The idea was presented to Mr. Harold Gaynurd, well-known and very highly-respected philosopher, philanthropist, guru of high finance and all-around bon vivant of Moab and Cisco. His immediate reaction was -- "GO FOR IT! I'll finance the first 100 tons of dung-beetles in return for royalties on my soon-to-be-patented Gaynurd Bovine Beetle-Bustle."

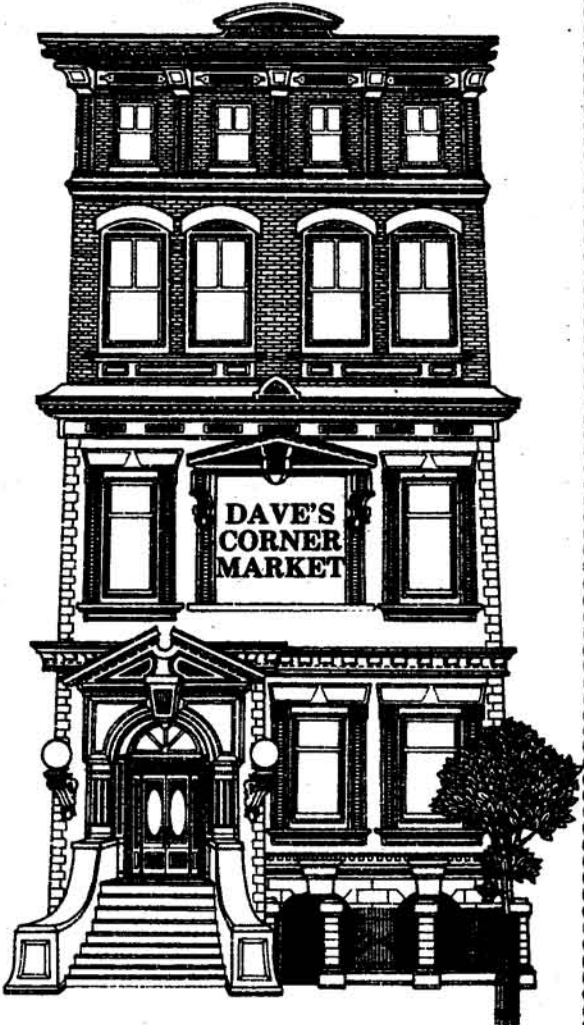
It must be admitted, ol' HG was fast to catch on. No doubt my idea immediately summoned into his head delightful visions of rich federal subsidies for developing and marketing his bovine-bustle. Not to mention the opportunity to set up a dung-beetle import monopoly. As everyone knows, anything remotely connected with agriculture is a sure-thing cash-cow in Congress.

And think of all the economic benefits to grazing lease holders. They could charge the government for NOT fouling up public land and water. They might even get their AUM fees reduced to the point where the feds would be paying THEM to graze public land. They're close already. And they would have lots of fat tax-writeoffs for buying beetles and beetle-bustles from firms in which they would doubtless own stock. Why, the potential for tax advantages from all this would be a tax-accountant's wet-dream!

So there you have it -- everything's settled but the cheering. If ol' HG likes it, who would oppose? Everyone knows that HG has a nose for a sweet-smelling deal. And what could smell sweeter to local financial entrepreneurs and ranchers than a bunch more taxpayer dollars?

And what could smell sweeter to the rest of us than a canyon country free of cow flop? Nothing -- except a land free of cows! Which, as we all know, ain't about to happen until Ol' Uncle You-Know-Who gets bundled out of the White House in a wraparound white jacket.

#



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The Homecoming

By Izzie Kiddin

Chicago via Amtrak. My first visit home to family and friends in Chicago in over six years. I do not relish the thought of flying anymore. There is something unsettling about the search for body parts that I find quite alarming, although I'm sure it would be well beyond my concern at that particular time.

I mean, how would you feel if you were laid to rest, with someone else's lesser organs? So, I take the train.

People ogle me as I get on board at Thompson, Utah. They cannot believe that someone would live out here - by choice!

I hope I don't have to sit next to the fat lady. I'm in luck. It's not crowded.

As soon as I get to my seat, old-timers start sauntering up to me, half-crooked, ready to tell me their life stories at the drop of a hat. I make sure my hat is in place and retreat to the lounge car.

Gaylord, the prissy and proper bartender, keeps my glass full of cheap rose. I've checked out the menu in the dining car, and it is much too extravagant for me. I opt to drink my way home.

Home. To Chicago. Long overdue, as far as family and friends are concerned. New nephews and nieces to meet, old faces and familiar places, home cooking and midnight cruising.

Now, I'm talking about CHICAGO. Not some elite suburb, replete with pink flamingoes on a spotless manicured lawn with the token black jockey statue in an all-white neighborhood. I'm talking about CHICAGO. THE SOUTH SIDE. Steel mill country. Home of the Blackstone Rangers and other gangs whose

graffitti became as legendary as the ghettos that spawned them. The South Side. Home of the electric blues and the deteriorating ethnic neighborhoods. BBQed ribs and Polish Sausage. Lake Shore Drive. Yea...Chicago.

Sitting up in the observation car with my ever-present glass of rose, I watch Colorado sweep before me like a filmstrip going right to left. It is a wondrous sight in the Autumn! How did I ever leave this state and relocate to the desert? What ever possessed me to do that? (Madmen often muse to themselves in this way...)

We arrive in Denver by nightfall. I stumble to the lounge car for one final round, but the place is locked up tight and Gaylord is gone. Where does one go when one is off-duty, on a train? He has probably gotten off in Denver and is a mile high in the Mile High City by now.



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I return to my seat and try to get as comfortable as possible for a little snooze. I'm not really tired, but it is the only way I can keep these senior derelicts from blah, Blah, Blahing me to death. I doze off as we continue heading East.

I'm rudely awakened by the shrill sound of the train whistle, blarring incessantly. The cars are rocking and rolling! I feel we are going at a tremendous speed! Other passengers are awake and alarmed, looking out the black windows, as we make a demonic slash across Nebraska.

I feel like going up front and giving the engineer a piece of my mind, lecture him on twisted wreckage and body parts, but fear I might be confronted by some glaze-eyed character straight out of a Stephen

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King novel, mercilessly grinning at me, blaring on that train whistle. (Riding that train)

I settle back in my seat and slowly drift off to sleep, my only assurance being the fact that this is the ONLY way to see Nebraska. In the dead of night at a hundred miles an hour.

Morning comes, along with Iowa. Redundant fields of corn. The film strip is stuck. The American Farmer, toiling relentlessly under the sun to grow grain for the Nation, and taking his food stamps down to the grocer, so he can have a little something on his table. So much for the American Dream....

Western Illinois is another epic of corn, but slowly the scenery is changing. Rows of corn are replaced by rows of burnt out buildings. Rusted old cars, never to cruise again, sit battered on the side streets, while little black kids stomp out their fury and hopelessness on the roofs and hoods. I'm getting closer to home.

We arrive at the stinking Downtown Chicago Train Station. It seems to be a prerequisite, that all bus and/or train stations, be located in the seediest possible section of town. Chicago is no exception.

The smell of chicken, urine and sweat permeate the air, and I suddenly have an overpowering urge to pee and see if there is a Kentucky Fried, but see my father and brother approaching.

Dad has aged considerably. I guess when you stop drinking, cold turkey after fifty years, you'd age considerably too. Brother looks fit, his face seems about two inches wider than last visit. Everyone I meet will have these new, wide faces. Pudgy is in.

We take the Cardiac Expressway home down Lake Shore Drive. The lanes are jammed and I'm frazzled. I had forgotten how city traffic is. I feel like I'm on some hoary roller coaster ride. You know, the kind where you go real fast for ten minutes, and then you puke.

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An hour of calamity later, we pull up in front of the old house and Mom is waiting on the front steps. Forever Mom.

Already starting into her non-stop monologue of care and worry. It is a bit unnerving to hear her again, after all these silent years of poking about dusty corners of oblivion, but soon realize, it's just Mom. And it sure is great to see her!

Relatives are already coming over tonight, but the trainride, the wine and the expressway have spaced me out to the max. I beg everyone's pardon and crash early, in a familiar room, with familiar fragrances, that can only be described as, a room...at home.

The next few days are spent being dragged about quite bodily, visiting relatives, talking trash, and EATING! Polish Sausage! Vienna Hot Dogs! White Castles! CHICAGO PIZZA! I devour heartily and feel my face expanding.

Next, it's off to me sisters for a few days. Meet my new nephews and get together with 'the old gang'.

We are going to spend a day at one of my all-time favorite places! It is called The Museum of Science and Industry, and I practically lived there as a kid. The kind of monstrous gothic building that houses a million things that go BANG, WHOOSH, WHIZZ, WING, BLAP, PING, BOOM, and a zillion buttons to push to make them do all these things!

Scotty, the younger nephew, is aged three. He says he is going to "rip out my eyes and bash my face in half". Nice guy. Mikey is six. He is much cooler and quieter. Doesn't go in for any of that Stallone mentality.

I suddenly realize that I haven't been to this place in over 15 years, and all the exhibits are changed. I don't know where anything is. The kids

take me by the hand and show me around. I'm at once taken by their boundless energy and love, knowing all along I could never have the patience and energy to be a good father. I'm glad they are my nephews.

A half a day later, we are dead in the car, heading Downtown for a bit of shopping. I sleep on the way, dreaming of all the blues records I'll finally find, that I know I cannot afford.

My brother-in-law treats me to a CD, and I find a Mahler symphony I've been searching for. Hound Dog Taylor isn't on CD yet, so we settle for Mahler #7!

That night is spent with my best friends in the whole world! The old rock and roll band. Not looking exactly like the rock stars we envisioned ourselves to be some eighteen years ago, but not too much the worse for wear.

Most are married and have or are expecting children, and dreams of Marshall Amps and glory are fading now.

Ray-0 shows up last, but starts talking immediately. When Ray-0 talks, you listen, and you listen, and you listen. He talks until you throw him out! We love Ray-0 very much. We would love him more if he had recurrent bouts with laryngitis, but since that never happens, we love when he plays drums. He can't talk and play at the same time.

We toy around with the idea of jamming, but no one is really up for it. We are content just talking and remembering. The Good Old Days. Days of power and glory that musicians and a few other people can speak of. There is something about the stage.

One by one the wives and lovers of these balding ex-rockers start tugging at the elbows. Ray-0 is still talking. We throw him out about three in the morning and get some sleep.

My Aunt Mary has got me the next day. She takes me on a guided tour of the cemetery, pointing out relative's tombstones like so many Hollywood Star's Homes. "Look, there's Uncle Harry!"

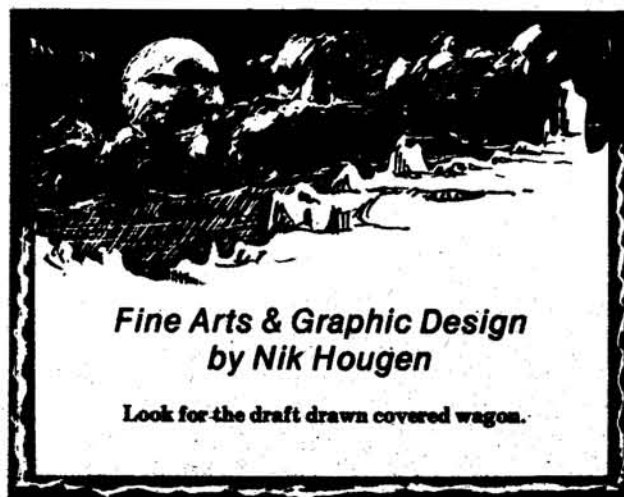
Her husband, my Uncle Earl, paid for my train ticket, but I didn't get there in time to see him. He died, after a long illness. Aunt Mary gives me his favorite white sweater, and I immediately get pretty weepy.

I hope everyone has had, or has, an 'Uncle Earl' in their lifetime. As a kid, he showed me all the boundless possibilities there were 'to have fun'!

He taught me how to drive in that grand old '46 Plymouth. The one with the great radio! I'll never see him again. But I'll remember, I'll remember.

We visit 'Boosha in the White House'. That is what the Nephews call her to differentiate from the other Grandma. I don't know what kind of house she has.

The White House the kids are referring to is a Rest Home. Upon entering I immediately have an intense dislike for the place. Grandma



deserves a hell of a lot more than this! After a few quizzical looks, she recognizes me (she's 98!) and gives me a great big bear hug. We talk for a spell, and I find out she misses her kitchen very much. The thought of her home-made bread is an almost tragic event to me. I should have watched! I should have learned! Ah, but we never give such an insignificant thing like that a moment's thought, until we find it gone.

I say goodbye and tell Grandma I'll see her again real soon. She doesn't think so.. We leave in silence.

Back home, more relatives, more food, but the desert is on my mind now. My spirit is yearning for the canyons. The smell of sagebrush and cowshit. The stinking hot wind that will not cease. The beckoning canyons that always insist you go just a bit farther. It is time to go home. HOME home.

I say goodbye to family and friends. They all say they envy me. I got out of the rat race. Split. Did my own thing. "Hey man, I envy you." Knowing all along that they would never trade places or ever venture out here to my desert and find out for themselves. Some City Folk, are City Folk, all their lives.

The ride back is uneventful. Gaylord is back bartending and we pass the time jiving about Sweet Home Chicago.

Sleeping is even easier, although we still blitz through Nebraska at a frightening pace.

By the time we reach Grand Junction, I feel the energy flowing back into my veins. I nearly shout when I see the La Sals! Skyline Arch is even visible from the train! Still standing!

Oh, those burnt hills forever! Rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!

People ogle at me again as I get off in Thompson, and I wave back to them. Forty minutes later, I'm back home listening to Mahler and hearing the canyons calling.

Back to poverty in Paradise. A lean winter ahead, but I'm ready. Much to explore and little to do. Just the way I like it!

A coyote howls from a nearby cliff and I howl back! Yea guys, you have a right to envy me!

God, it's great to be home again!

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear SDG Editor:

I have been reading your paper for the last several issues and have enjoyed it greatly. It lends a touch of humor and pathos to an otherwise dull and humorless town. I have especially enjoyed your one serious article in each issue. The one in the January issue reminded me of a story I would like to share with you, and maybe your readers if it gets past your censor.

Among other things, the article on the mail history of this town implied that "Moab" is somehow synonymous with "Far Country". I have reason to suspect that "Far-Out Country" would be closer to the truth.

A couple of years ago a friend, who had gotten hooked on redrock and was planning to move to Moab, told me the following story.

As my friend was planning his move, from a highly sophisticated eastern city where he had many well-educated acquaintances, he happened to mention to a university professor of ancient Hebrew history and language that he was moving to the town of Moab, in Southeastern Utah. The good professor immediately burst into uncontrollable gales of laughter, even though he was normally a very sedate fellow.

After enduring several minutes of this odd behavior, my friend interrupted for long enough to ask what was so funny, which triggered the professor into another spell of hilarity. Finally, he calmed down enough to explain a bit of ancient history, part of it biblical, part not.

It seems that way back in Lot's time, the stalwart fellow got into a bit of trouble after his wife got turned to a pillar of salt by You-Know-Who. With his wife gone, Lot, having a few characteristics in common with all too many modern men, got the hots for his own daughter. This unhealthy liason soon produced a child, which was quite against the social mores of the time, just as it is now in most social circles. And, as was the custom at that time, the child and mother were quickly banished from the tribe. What happened to Lot is another story.

Well, it further seems that such illicit offspring were not all that uncommon, again just as now. Over the years, all these outcasts kind of gravitated together into a share-the-misery community, which became known as Mo-ab. Literally translated, the professor explained, this means "from the father". More broadly translated, it means "children who are the products of their mother's fathers".

Thus, if this learned academician is to be believed, instead of meaning "Far Country", which sounds like something the Chamber of Commerce of this ancient town might have dreamed up to improve its image, Moab means "the gathering place for the inbred products of incest". As I said - far-out!

Now, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that the simple folks who named this town were right, and the learned professor of ancient Hebrew history is wrong, but I wonder. It would explain a lot of things, when you stop to think about it....

Anonymous

P.S. I have signed this letter "Anonymous" in order to avoid being lynched by a bunch of Mo-ab-ites. Do you blame me?

Anonymous:

Lot was given wine until he was intoxicated, and was then seduced by his daughters on successive nights. His eldest daughter bore him a son who was called Moab. (Genesis 19-37).

The name Moab next appears as a territory, (Numbers 21-11). The connection between the two may be no more than the specious reasoning of a biased Hebrew scholar. In any case, when I first researched the name Moab many years ago I was highly amused at this bizarre biblical account of censored incest. And you're right. Lot did not reject his

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youngest daughter the second night. From the sound of it, he was probably sitting there with his canteen cup extended as soon as the girls finished dinner. Face it, it was either that, or a cold pillar of salt. But, this was all child's play compared with what was going on the previous day in Sodom and Gomorrah.

However, your reaction to the present town of Moab is much more interesting to us.

You sound like you think that anyone who wasn't born here thinks badly of native Moabites.

You sound like some of the big-city immigrants we've encountered in recent years who, when their sophistry and calculated cleverness failed to charm the locals, got frustrated and began characterizing Moabites as "inbred and stupid". We've heard this again and again from so-called educated people. Educated fools.

Mobites will not lynch you. They smite philistines with big wooden clubs. And all you seem to be furnished with is the jawbone of an ass.

Editor

Dear Stinky Deseret Gazette:
Keep up the good work. Remember, anyone can get it up. The trick is to keep it up.
Don't let the cold water ruin your detail.

Paul Frisby
SLC

Dear Paul:

Keep it up? We're having a hard time keeping it down! Thanks for the sub. See you on the creek.

Editor

—GARDE SHEET METAL SCULPTURES

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hi

Please send me 12 doses of Moab (in the form of the Stinking Desert Gazette). I just finished the Jan. edition which a friend brought down & I need to keep informed. After all, I have an inquiring mind.

Pat Grediagin
Grand Canyon, AZ

Editor:

Thanks for the story about running Cataract Canyon in the winter. Your friends were lucky to have such balmy weather.

A couple of years ago I flew the length of Cataract Canyon in January. In every east-west stretch of the gorge, where the sun didn't penetrate all winter, the river was sheet-ice or ice jams from shore to shore.

Years ago, a friend of a friend who tried to run Cataract in the winter had to walk out - from mid-trip!

Keep up the good work.

Fran Barnes
Moab

Editor:

Say, what's this B.S. about the Stinking Desert? Your publication of questionable merit (and morals) gives one the impression that "The Stinking Desert" is located in Utah, specifically in the proximity of Moab. I, sir, beg to differ with you.

As every schoolgirl on the west slope of Colorado knows, "The Stinking Desert" is located south of Grand Junction, CO; north of Delta, CO; east of the Gunnison River; and west of the foothills of Grand Mesa. Why, we even have our own National Moneymment by that very same name...with a sign and everything.

So, I'm considering a lawsuit if you do not cease, desist and cut it out. I suggest you call your publication the Smelly, or Odoriferous Desert Gazette.

So there. Whatta thinka them apples, Huh!!!

Sincerely,
Dr. Gaylord T. Fochquad III

P.S. My wife really liked the January issue with all them shortes de hombres. Know what I mean!

Dear Dr. Fochquad:

Do you really think that our staff is unaware of the "Fatherland", The Stinking Desert National Monument, across the line in Colorado?

Nobody in Utah has more respect for that definitive, quintessential piece of Stinking Desert, unique on earth for its utter lack of any human exploitation. We confess, our local deserts do not measure up to those rigid standards, and are cursed with beauty and minerals galore.

But, because of this very flaw, we honestly believe that our desert has acquired a riper smell than yours and we are not about to change our name. Your Monument superintendent, Elmo Mepps, is in complete agreement with this.


Editor

P.S. Your wife's little kinks are well-known to several of our staff members.

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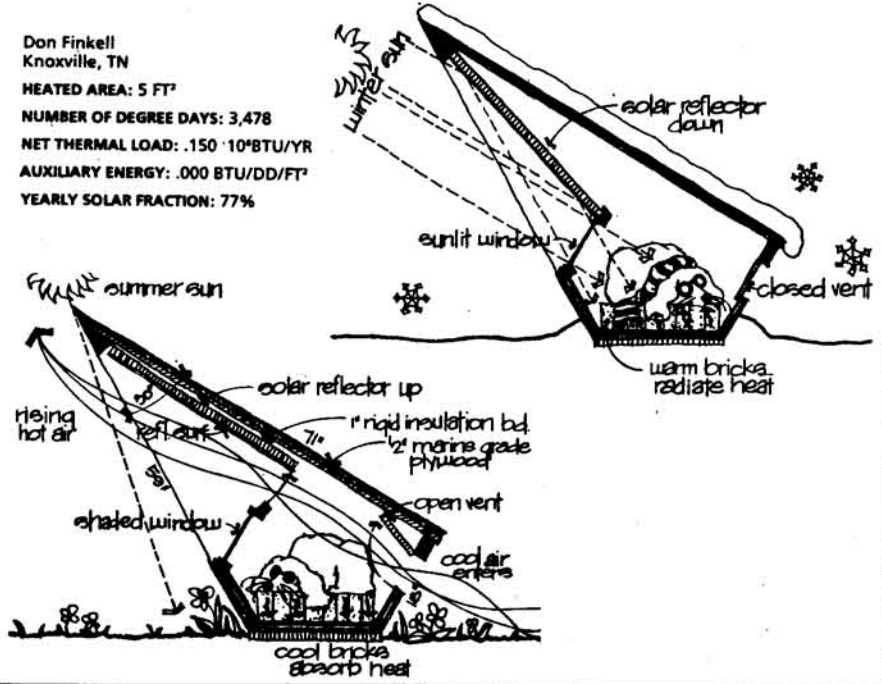
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