ALICE & RAY & YESTERDAY'S FLOWERS

Alice Brock—she owned the restaurant

Arlo Guthrie—he dumped the garbage

Geoff Outlaw—he helped start the commune

Kid named Arlo Guthrie went up to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, a few years back to spend Thanksgiving with some friends named Alice and Ray Brock; and because he is deep into the habit of writing songs about what happens to him as he goes through life, just like his daddy, the late Woody Guthrie, did, he worked up a long rap and guitar-chord thing called *Alice's Restaurant*, which just a few high hip knew about and dug and only FM stations played all the way through, because, friends, it's 25 or 30 minutes long. Then everybody began to like it, it seems, because sales went up to almost 300,000 LPs; and now this 21-year-old kid Guthrie gets $3000 a shot, plus a percentage of the box office. That's pretty weird. I mean, that's *weird*. What happened up in Massachusetts was that Alice and Ray lived in a church—the former Trinity Church on Division Street in Stockbridge—and were used to inviting people into their home just as if they were early Christians. I mean very early ones. And, in a way that few churches are, their church was a real sanctuary. Everybody was welcome; there was room for everybody. It was a real love family. Ray had previously been married and had three grown children of that union—Rebecca, Fletcher and Jono—

a lyrical look at arlo guthrie, gentle balladeer, and the folk who transformed an obscure restaurant into a cause célèbre

article BY SAUL BRAUN

Ray Brock—he was everyone's father figure

Chief William J. Obanhein—he busted Arlo

Ralph Pinto—he dug motorcycles

and
they were there
that Thanksgiving, along
with some big and little dogs
and a bunch of guests, including
Arlo and his pal Rick Robbins. Arlo
and Rick had been traveling together,
Arlo working his way up in folk singing,
booking into places in Chicago and Philadelphia
for $40 a week and expenses, and Rick tagging
along. So they went up to Alice and Ray's for
Thanksgiving, 1965. Guests is the wrong word, though.
A number of people, Arlo and Rick included, were members of the family, and so they were not guests in the usual sense. So when Ray woke up the next morning, he said to them, Let's clean up the church and get all this crap out of here, for God's sake, this place is a mess, and Rick said, Sure. So Arlo and Rick swept up and loaded all the crap—bottles, boxes, cartons, paper, a divan and other junk—into a VW Microbus with the Trinity Racing Association red triangle on the side and went out to the dump, which was closed. So they started driving around, until Arlo remembered a side road in Stockbridge up on Prospect Hill by the Indian Hill Music Camp—which he went to one summer—so they drove up there and dumped the garbage. A little later, the phone rang and it was Stockbridge police chief William

J. Obanhein. He'd gotten a call about the rubbish and went up there to investigate the situation personally and for a couple of hours did some preliminary investigative policework around in the pile of rubbish. "I found an envelope with the name Brock on it," Chief Obanhein said, "so I called them and talked to Alice. I could hear her asking them where they dumped the stuff."

Well, Arlo started looking innocent, the way he does, with his kid grin curling in at the ends and sort of hide-and-seek under his dimples, so you know he could never do no wrong, but, friends, Obanhein couldn't *see* that look on the telephone or that angel's face with a couple of pimples stuck on there for believability, so he asked some more of his investigative questions and Alice tried to protect Arlo, but, well, the truth came out and soon the boys found themselves in Obanhein's police car, which was this blue Ford Galaxie 500 with some rusty dents on the left side.

So they went up to Prospect Hill and Obie took some pictures and on the back he marked them PROSPECT HILL RUBBISH DUMPING FILE UNDER GUTHRIE AND ROBBINS 11/26/65. And took the kids to jail.

Never mind what it says in the song: there was no police brutality, no mistreatment. "I didn't put any handcuffs on them," says Chief Obanhein emphatically, "and I didn't take the toilet seats off, 'cause we don't have any seats. I told the architect who designed the cells you can't have things like that, 'cause when people come in here, they're like to rip them off."

Well, Arlo and Rick sat down on this metal cot in this little room painted green with some chicken wire on the window and no seat on the toilet and pretty soon Alice showed up and Alice, well, she was outraged, she called Obie every name she could think of, and it was very funny from one point of view, because Obie, well, he comes on hard, but not reeeelly hard, he's a decent guy, you know. "I told her if she didn't stop I'd arrest *her*," Obanhein said, and he would have, so she did stop, and handed over the bail money. Then they went over to the town of Lee to the courthouse.

Well, it was an open-and-shut case, anyway; the kids went in, pleaded, "Guilty, your Honor," were fined $25 each and ordered to retrieve the rubbish. Chief Obanhein said he hoped this case would set an example for others who might be tempted to dispose of their garbage carelessly.

Then they all went back to the church, except for Obie, and had a good laugh and sat around, singing, the way they did a lot at the church, usually on Friday and Saturday evenings, or, you know, grooving with each other, rapping, digging grass, and they sort of started to write *Alice's Restaurant* together, pretty much exactly the way it happened, except for some poetic license, which you don't apply for at precinct headquarters. "We were sitting around after dinner and wrote half the song," Alice recalls, "and the other half, the draft part, Arlo wrote."

The draft part begins after Arlo has ambled through the whole garbage rap, lively and sometimes funny, with a sardonic view of control and authority, a lark but with sour juice and lessons all through it. "But that's not what I'm here to tell you about," he says, and, friends, he isn't. Because in the draft part of the song, he tells how he agrees to kill, kill, *kill* for the Army. But, friends, he isn't going to be allowed to burn villages and kill women and children, because he has a criminal record; he was convicted of littering up in Massachusetts.

None of this second part really happened at the time he wrote the song, but later it sort of did. Arlo's draft call came up and he and his mother, Marjorie, and Harold Leventhal, his manager, sat down to work out the strategy of what he would do—see if they could set up some kind of protective barrier between him and the world; but Arlo was determined, he wouldn't be moved. In some ways, he is a very strong-willed kid—he is a vegetarian, because he doesn't believe in eating burned dead bodies, for example—and he decided he wasn't going to take the induction oath and, hell no, he wouldn't go. As it happened, the problem never came up. Arlo is not exactly the all-American kid from New York City, even though he was born in Coney Island. In dress, he is at the epicenter of the unisex-folkbilly gearquake, with crushed-red-velvet Levis and shocking-pink ruffled dress blouse for his concerts, as a good illustration, and his long curly hair hangs down to his shoulders; and when he snaps his head around to keep it out of his eyes, he looks like a petulant East Side rich chick who has just been told she cannot drink in a stevedores' bar in Old Chelsea. His views aren't exactly out of the civics primer, either, what with not believing in killing people to defend the flag or for any other awfully "good reason"; so the Army took a quick look and said, Here's a real bummer, and threw him back into the stream of life, which is exactly where he belongs. "If I were the Army," says Arthur Penn, "*I* wouldn't take him."

Arthur Penn was the director of *Bonnie and Clyde*, which many people, including me, consider one of the two or three best American movies of the decade. It also made enough money to enable Penn to pick virtually anything he wanted for his next film. He chose *Alice's Restaurant*.

"What sort of film will *Alice* be?" I asked Penn. *Bonnie* had anatomized the Thirties, another era when people found much lawlessness in the law; and *Mickey One*, an interesting but not successful effort, had tapped elliptically into the McCarthy-era Fifties. Was *Alice* going to be a social film of the day?

"Yes, yes," he said, "the song seemed to me an exquisitely witty and clever version of what the scene is for the kids today. I was saying to someone that I would hope were I of that age now I would have the courage to do what they're doing."

Penn and scriptwriter Venable Herndon began by attempting to do the record itself, and soon discovered that something more was needed. "Then we found the minister who had actually deconsecrated Alice and Ray's church," Herndon says, "and came to the idea, if they take away the holiness of the old society, can they put holiness into the new one?"

What they added to the plot was the story of Alice and Ray Brock and their life in the church, which does not have any part at all in the song but which is at the heart of the entire experience and all that followed, and all that follows, and all that will follow, both here and elsewhere; for there is a turning now that only the blind cannot see, the generations are turning with a particular vehemence just now, the time bombs popping and blowing incense and pot fumes and soft fragments like soft shrapnel into the body of this big, hard nation: sex, religion, politics, social structures—all turning. Not easily, of course, and not rapidly. History is a behemoth and there is a giant inner nation here that resists all turning.

Nevertheless, it is happening. And Arlo's song lays down the melody and the lyric of youth's turning. Like Arlo himself, the young people are sweetly reasonable and unearthly stubborn as they deal the cards in their deck: They feed our ways and means back to us and the look of disease is on them, disease, misuse, malaise, moral rue. And they are all into this turning, some deeper than others but all into it, turning, floating, mimicking the new technology, trying to be the first weightless generation.

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I arrive at Alice and Ray's church to find the filming in progress. Inside, the church is lavish with color, the beige-plaster walls glittering with colored-paper cutouts in all sorts of shapes—stars, rosettes, moons, crescents, daisies—with helium-filled balloons rising slowly to the heavy oak ceiling beams. Around a long banquet table laden with all sorts of goodies hover a large number of people in extravagant costumes—just what a filmgoer expects to see at a hippie feast, outrageous inventiveness and witty sacrilege. In the nave of the church are a tree and some rock musicians got up in Minsk folk child, desert Semite stud

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and all other sorts of attire. A Wise Man is accompanied on tambourine by a lovely Chinese girl in mandarin robe. The girl is actress Tina Chen and the Wise Man is Arlo swathed to the eyeballs in blue and green felt, plucking a guitar and, according to the script girl, he is not a Wise Man at all but the King of Cups from the tarot deck.

Chief Obanhein is visiting the set this day. He chats with Arlo and they reminisce about the littering incident. Obie tells Arlo that Arlo's father wrote a lot of songs loving America—*This Land Is Your Land* and all that—what would he think of his son dumping garbage? And Arlo thinks about it and says, Jeez, he'd be mad.

Arthur Penn comes bounding for the camera in turtleneck sweater and Levis and rubber-soled cross-country shoes. He is small and wiry, his face bony, muscular, alert. Striations in his cheeks stand out, so that he appears to be running even when he is standing still; but, remarkably, there are no signs of tension or weariness. He wears goggle-shaped horn-rimmed glasses and has a large Upmann cigar in his hand, like a baton, and he struts, and he is like a World War Two fly boy with terrific coordination. He runs flat-out, as the R. A. F. pilots used to say, but effortlessly, with grace and style, suffused with Jewish soul. That is, simultaneously modest and cocky. "All right, let's go for a take on this," he calls out, and all sounds cease; and after a moment, the camera begins to follow Jimmy Broderick, the actor playing Ray, and Pat Quinn, playing Alice, up an aisle hacked out of the crowd of revelers toward the pulpit. This is a scene from real life. Alice and Ray "remarried" in order to reaffirm their marital bond. Penn follows the camera, arms crossed on his chest, his empathic, hard-working face feeding hints and ideas into the playing that may or may not appear on film. There are several takes and then the action shifts to the groaning board, where Broderick and Quinn kiss.

There is an oddity here. Many of the extras were at the real wedding, because many of them are family members, and, in fact, Benno Friedmann, who took the photographs for this article, officiated. Not that he has any credentials for it. He's 24 years old, a loping long-jointed, long-nosed sweetheart. He has curly hair that he wears very long and in his bedroom is a large number of postcards of saints, holy men and holy places; and what Benno will do past 33, I don't know. "Alice and Ray didn't formally ask me," he recalls, "but I just decided I wanted to marry them. I just dug the idea. There was no premeditation to it, because the last thing in my mind was to try to create a mannered ceremony, a churchlike ceremony, because that was the thing I was trying to get away from."

Between takes in which the actor playing Benno marries "Alice" and "Ray" with dialog that is rhymed and somewhat mannered, Benno circulates through the crowd, snapping pictures; and as he gets to the far side of the room, an attractive woman with the mark of much life on her falls into Benno's arms, and he into hers.

She wears a red-and-black-striped floor-length silk skirt and a low-cut ancient cream-lace bodice with much embroidery on it. Around her bare neck is a black-velvet band, like a vow or a reminder. She is very attractive, caught halfway between boundless desire and inexplicable iron restraints, and this tension transmits itself as a large animal presence. She is like a caged panther. She seems to be here but also elsewhere, some crucial part of her missing. She resembles Pat Quinn, a Pat Quinn with air drawn out of her bosom and face, her mouth much thinner, her upper lip stiffer, ungiving. Pat Quinn kisses Jimmy Broderick; that is, "Alice" kisses "Ray" and, remarkably, this woman standing on the side lines pales, her cheeks sinking and hardening. I go over to her and Benno introduces me and, of course, it is Alice herself.

"When the song came out and I was in Boston and I would meet somebody and he'd say, 'What do you do, Alice?' I'd say, 'I used to have a restaurant in Stockbridge,' and he'd go, 'Ha-ha-ha, sure.' " She is forlorn, deflated, like somebody who's made a bad deal and has to live with it, left empty and holding the bag. "Now I'm *completely* unreal." Yet her eyes are always on you, large, round, smoldering, questioning, seeking, panther's eyes. "I had a funny experience the other day. One girl kept tagging around behind me, asking me a lot of questions. She thought I was Pat Quinn and she kept talking about Alice. And I kept saying, 'I'm Alice. *I* . . . am *Alice*.' And she just kept smiling, you know, and saying, 'This is a fantastic story, where'd they ever find this church? I mean, did they make up the story after they found the church?' And I said, 'No, it's true, it's true.' This went on for two days. Finally, I got hold of the girl at lunchtime and I said, 'Look, I'm *Alice*. This building that you're in is my *house*. This is *my* story. It's all *true*.' She hasn't looked at me since. She was horrified."

The film people paid Alice $12,000 for her name and story (and paid Ray $1000 for his, plus $500 weekly rental for the church) and, in the process, gave them a remarkable perspective for self-appraisal. One of the things that Alice now realizes is that their community, their family, was not very democratic. "The way it held together at the church was that Ray and I were very strong. We were really parents. But it was really more than that. Fantasy figures for everybody."

Alice was the librarian at the Stockbridge school that year and Ray taught things like sculpting and woodworking and getting along in life. They were only recently married, an attractive couple. Their style and charisma and beauty captivated the kids. At the end of the school year, Alice and Ray went up to Martha's Vineyard to be house parents at a youth hostel and, Alice says, "Took half the student body with us."

In the fall, Alice's mother gave them a wedding present: a church. Alice and Ray and the dogs and kids who had become their family moved in and they all began remaking the church into a home. Among the Stockbridge school kids were Arlo Guthrie, Geoff Outlaw, Steve Elliott, Mike Lerner, Liza Condon, Rick Robbins and their assorted friends (Arlo's British chick, Carol, among them) and anybody else who happened by who seemed to fit in and who wanted to help build a home.

Ray had worked for a time in an architect's office in Pittsfield. One of the kids calls him an architect of the soul who likes to make spaces. What he did, he built two small rooms by the entrance, leaving most of the great space of the vaulted interior intact. Beyond the room to the left, he broke through to the 70-foot bell tower and turned the ground-floor space there into a kitchen. Then he started up, building stairways and rooms as he went, rising and striving, the hard muscles in his back writhing and the sweat of his labor sweet, as he built a home for his wife and family—first a bathroom, then three small bedrooms, one atop the other, right up to the bell.

I asked Arlo how the community thing had developed. He seemed impatient with the view that any volition had been attached to it, eager to disclaim responsibility or control over events. "There's a thousand different ways to do the same thing and this was our way," he told me, holding his voice momentarily in his adenoids. "It happened to be an unconscious one at first. No one said, Let's have a community. No one said, You do this and you do this, you sleep here and you sleep here. People just started gathering. It just happened that way. There's no reason that it should, except this is the time that we live in."

"And it's happening a lot of other places, too," added his chick, Carol.

"I felt at home," Arlo said. "That's the thing I think we all felt together. I just felt right at home."

"We all love each other very much," Carol added, "and Ray, he goes around talking to trees and helping animals and people. Everything in this church was built with love."

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was a constant trip. Everybody came to do his own thing, to sculpt or paint or trip, like the time Jimmy Jay and Liza and Becka and then, later on, Dougie and Ann tripped up in the bell tower, right inside the bell, or you could just take your pants off and sit on the pulpit and that was a trip, kind of. Like, it's really hard to explain what a trip it could be just being with people you love and trading highs and digging the way a door will close and two people will know the same thing about what it means that it closed just *then*. Arlo wrote his songs, there was swimming in the summer at a great place where nobody else came, so they could take their suits off and that way not hide anything from one another, no secret corridors for power or lust or other ego trips. Lock doors? Lock doors? What for? And there were holidays and feasts—head food—and when there were no holidays, they made their own holidays. Whenever they got together, it was a holiday. Life was a trip, because, as Geoff Outlaw says, you add to yourself on a subway ride and every walk down the street is like an addition to yourself, and that was a particularly complex walk down the street. And there were rituals —no orgies, because nobody was into heavy orgies: sex was mostly private—but plenty of orgiastic dancing, and, of course, grass is a ritual, acid is a ritual and games are rituals, like the time Ray called the hospital and said, "Come on over here and get Mr. Johnson, he's dead," and the hospital said, "How long has he been dead?" and Ray said, "Thirty years."

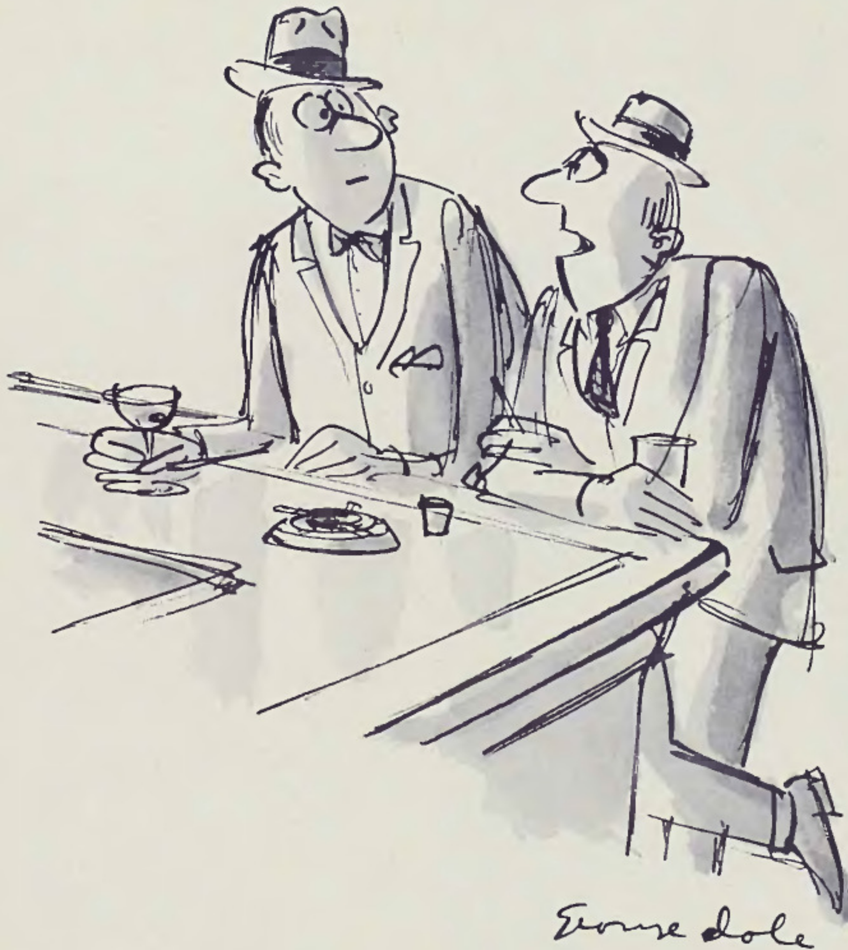
The big ritual was when Alice and Ray got remarried, not like the old way, the old holies hanging over them, but with the new holies, new vessels, new wine, new wafers with little wet spots on them. And how everybody carried on. Benno was outrageous: he read the entire second chapter of *Genesis*, and he wasn't even a Boo Hoo then; and Arlo and Geoff and Ray's son Jono played and carried on, and everybody carried on, and Benno asked for quiet and spoke for a few minutes, paralleling the whole scene up there in the Berkshires with the Garden of Eden, because he was very deep into it, deep into love feelings, warm and loving, and suggesting that perhaps they were moving—well, yes, moving, perhaps—into a potential Garden of Eden. "Not that Alice and Ray were necessarily Adam and Eve," Benno recalls, "but that we were all sort of capable of establishing a near paradisiacal situation and living honestly and beautifully together."

For the kids, it was a second home, living with Alice and Ray, maybe even a first home, since an unusually large number of them came from broken or well-bent marriages. They dropped in, they joined, volunteers for a new life style, a love family rather than a blood family (old contracts loosening, new ones being written, here, in Vermont, in California, in England, Germany, everywhere, around a radical politics or a rock group or a charismatic figure like Ken Kesey or Ray Brock), and a better symbol than a church for a place that a love family can lovingly gather would be hard to find.

Sometimes there would be as many as 14 or 15 people sleeping in the three small bedrooms and they were all warm and cozy and protected from the Berkshire winters and the world beyond. Alice was Mother Earth. Ray was Father Earth. "Well," Alice recalls, "we got wrapped up in the roles and fulfilling everybody's fantasy and our own fantasy about how beautiful we were and what a fantastic couple and what a beautiful building. It was really like a movie. We were living a movie."

But, of course, life is not a movie and things were not always all that groovy in Eden, let alone on Division Street in Stockbridge. And there were days when Ray would wake up and Alice would be throwing off the worst kind of vibrations—angry, black—and out he'd go, out the door like a shot, out of there, because when Alice was bad, she was really something, a bear, I mean, she was a drag, a very aggressive woman; like the time she lit into Obie. That was her act, to be bad, her thing, and nobody ever tried it then except her. "I was a real bitch," she says. "I was the only one who could yell, who could barge in and take anything I wanted. And nobody ever crossed me. Never. No matter what I did. But . . . it's so easy to give and it's so hard to take, if you don't believe you're worthy. And, really, I wasn't gettin' mine."

Take, for example, the business of marital privacy, which, with all those people around there all the time, wasn't that easy to get. It could be impossible. Sometimes Ray would have to lock the door; he'd make everybody stand outside the door for an hour. But that isn't really where it was at; so with all that taking, there were certain things, a certain closeness, an intimacy, that Alice and Ray weren't getting into, and, really, the kids came between them. They let the kids keep them apart, they used the kids that way, and the kids used them as well, used them to re-create and enact



"All I am I owe to my wife . . . in alimony payments."

the death of their belief in the institution of marriage, the possibility of connection through sacramental rite. And Ray was very taken by the family thing. He got very involved with the kids, much more than Alice did, really; and then she felt she wasn't getting hers; then it all seemed to tighten around her, tighter and tighter, until there was no room even to breathe and what was there for her? Who was looking after her needs? Then she would split.

Alice split from Ray several times. It wasn't that they didn't have something special going for them, they did; but the time came and she would have that stuff gushing up in her and she would have to split.

One thing, they had an understanding, they didn't bind each other with proprietary sexual feelings, because, instead of not sleeping with someone because you're married to someone else and it would hurt that person, you would hope that nobody was in the kind of head to get hurt by anybody loving anybody. And, in fact, every girl who came around was more proof that Alice was really where she was at. And Ray didn't have all that many affairs, you know. He might ball a few girls now and then, but there were no affairs. But then Alice got into a thing with somebody and, well, he began to be more important than anybody else to her and that *did* make Ray uptight, very uptight, and so you have to figure that those old marriage feelings were in there somewhere, bubbling, not really exorcised, as they had thought.

It was after one time that Alice had split that Ray and the kids built the restaurant with her, in the back of Nejaimes Store on Main Street in Stockbridge. It was called the Back Room, and the food was really great, but by then things had deteriorated between Alice and Ray; she wasn't living at the church but in the carriage house behind the restaurant, with a few other people.

Then Alice and Ray decided to marry once again and got everybody together in the church, invited everybody, and it was really a beautiful, lovely day, with Benno reading from *Genesis* and saying things like, "Will you take this woman even if she doesn't feel like cooking breakfast or if she goes off and balls someone else?"—a very simple, personal, direct ceremony, very out front, very honest; and maybe for a short time, it seemed as though something would work out. But the hole they were in was too deep and within a couple of months, Alice was in Boston; she had put herself into McLean's Hospital, and Ray went up to the Cape, and it was over.

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Today, I move in with Benno in his old white house in Sheffield. His life style there is modeled after Ray's. The house used to be his mother and stepfather's, both now deceased, and he throws it open to one and all to enjoy, provided they don't drive on the lawn or mess up the records; those are the only two rules. Somebody calls the place Benno's People Farm, and I can see why. At any time of the night or day, there's family around to groove with. Lanky Angus, with his red mustache, and dark-haired, dark-eyed Hetty live here. They met in Haight-Ashbury at the *Oracle* office (Hetty was art editor) and were married last spring equinox in Golden Gate Park, on a golden day, by a friend who was deep into Zen and seemed to them particularly priestlike. Hetty (she lost a tooth to a drunken poet in Tenerife some years back and has yet to replace it) was, according to Angus, the original flower child. "A girlfriend of mine and I used to pass out flowers on the street," Hetty admits. "We picked up a little florists' shop that let us have yesterday's flowers for nothing. They were mostly daisies and marigolds, yesterday's flowers, but they were perfectly good." Hetty has a ten-year-old son living on the Kesey farm up in Oregon.

Blonde, waaaay-out-front Ann McCord lives here with her four-year-old daughter, Justine, and so do a number of in-and-outs like Cassandra Cassandra, a short, engrossed blonde who is always busy at something with her hands; or mushroom freak Jim Byars, in from the Coast, who sits on the lawn and plays a beautiful classical guitar. There are a number of dogs around, including Silky, a bouncy, high-stepping fool of an Afghan with a rangy style and mutty muddy rivulets of reddish hair cascading down him. His hair falls down from a center part, down over his ears. This is just the way all the girls wear their hair.

The house wakes up slowly, with Benno puttering downstairs in his darkroom (where he has, on the wall, a photograph of his genitals—textured legs, forested acre around apple below acorn—below a wall plaque reading, CHRIST OR SELF, HEAVEN OR HELL), while upstairs, his current chick, Gay, a British model in for the weekend, takes a bath and Angus sits at the large oak table in the kitchen, tapping an African gourd and eventually working up to some intricate rhythms with his eyes closed, head bent.

Gay comes downstairs in a loose cotton robe that models her slim flanks, and she sits childlike, yawning, bare toes. When she leans forward, there is a pleasant flash impression of the idea of her small, well-shaped breasts. Benno enters, well hung with cameras. "I broke a year-and-a-half macrobiotic diet with a vanilla milk shake and, like, passed out," says Angus.

"Who can be a member of the family?" I ask. "Anybody," says Hetty. "Richard Nixon isn't, but he *could* be."

Angus says, "Like, in a very deep sense, it's a family by recognition, like when Plato walked into the market place and saw Sophocles and he *recognized* him."

The family and the world. The family and the film people. Ann sighs. "I walked into the whole movie scene and I was so naïve, I'm so used to living with people who are up front, and the movie people, you know, most of them are out to get laid, they're out to make it, all those terms, it's another way of *thinking*. But if you live in the family, it's relaxed and you don't have to defend yourself against all those things. You have to assume that in the family, nobody's *using* anybody, all that being *used* stuff that your mother always said about sleeping with boys."

Liza, who lives with Jimmy Jay (who was Ray's best man at the remarriage), also has some thoughts about the film people. She is a small blonde girl with the bony beaked face of a German scientist and the moral authority of a Pope, absolving herself as she goes. "This movie is going to make us look like very silly people to the people of America," she says sternly.

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Today, Benno and I drive to Millerton, New York, for the filming of some cycle-racing scenes. Like everything else, Ray got into bike racing immoderately. "Ray's a sensualist," Benno says. "He doesn't do anything in moderation."

At Millerton, at the Millerton Scrambling Track, on a chilly New England fall day, Arthur Penn is charging across the rolling countryside amid the endless buzzing of the bikes tuning up for speed ("You can't hear anything," he laments, "and the ideas, the ideas that die a foot and a half from me"). His cameraman, Victor Kemper, is in a big black battery belt, carrying a 35mm Arriflex on his shoulder. Together they hustle around, chasing for camera angles, as the bikes careen and bump across the land. They flop down in the middle of the track and the pack rips past and now here comes number 880. Penn takes a second look and the hair on the back of his neck rises up; something about this driver tells him to get the hell out of there, and he does.

Number 880 is all by himself, last, the rider tense and pressing hard into the bike, as though he means to bring it to its knees. The chatter around me says, like, here he comes again, why does he do that? and, well, that's his thing, and, see, that's the real Ray, who's always last.

Ray takes his crash helmet off between takes and he is nothing like what I expected. But Ann McCord has told me that, well, in the past year, Ray has aged maybe 15 years, he's tired, he's drinking and he's exhausted. He wears the TRA shirt, a yellow T-shirt with a red triangle on it and the sign of infinity. He swings a can of beer and horses around with the

kids, his body compact and hard, his tousled black hair long and unruly; and as he snorts and smokes and chuffs and rolls his eyes and laughs his special noise —*hnng-hnng*—he holds his elbow against his body and is subject to body jerkiness, a twitch that starts at the legs and jumps to the hips, his body arching slightly forward at the waist. His eyes are hung deep in scraped settings, a piercing washed-out blue, encased in opaque flame, like holy relics, the eyes of a burning man. He seems the perfect other half to Alice; they are a pair of doom-laden panthers. Ray is 37 or 38. He has a Czechoslovakia of faces, the footprint of invaders stamped all over it.

Benno introduces me. I ask Ray why he rides bikes. He emits his *hnng-hnng* snuffle-chuffle laugh, sucked out of him, it would seem, by great tamped agony. "Why I ride bikes? Because a bike does what you want it to." His voice is tinny, nasal, slightly Southern. His mouth tends to hang slack during moments of concentration and his gapped teeth show large in his face, whose features bear the same relationship to Jimmy Broderick's that Alice's do to Pat Quinn's: similar but deprived.

"Listen," Ray warns me, "you'd better not ask me any questions; I don't answer direct questions. See, my mind is kinda" —he gestures—"goes this way and that."

Following the next take, Ray wanders over toward Alice. She falls into his arms. He hugs her and they banter, exchanging derisive comments. From behind, she puts her arms around his neck. He reaches back and pats her rear. "This feels like an ass I've felt before," he says, *hnng-hnng*. They press together a moment, enjoying the feel of familiar bodies, and then Ray adds, "But that could be almost anybody's." She recedes from him, not angrily (but she is not surprised, either), and the threads sever and she makes her way up the hill to the food shack, in brown trousers and long black military coat with fancy epaulets, in shades, falling into men's arms as she goes, as though subject to a mysterious collapsing disease. She hugs Benno. She hugs Ralph Pinto, a TRA bike rider. She hugs Arlo. "She likes to turn men on," says Benno. "It's a sexual thing."

Much later, after a long night, much drinking, much music, a very long rap, everybody else has either gone off to bed or fallen asleep on couches or on the floor and Ray is still rapping and only Jimmy Jay and I are left to hear, and both of us are nodding sleepily, as Ray beats out the tattoo of his reality. "I was born in Tidewater, West Virginia," he says slowly, "right on the tip of the tidal waters. And the tide variation was six feet. In the Bay of Fundy, it's forty feet." I mention having been in an earthquake in Mexico City and he says quickly, "Well, I was in a hurricane, on both sides and right in the middle of the eye."

I tell him I have gone up in the bell tower of his church and he says, "The bell was cast in 1835 in Holbrook, Massachusetts. Most bells are in the key of A or A-flat."

The music has died out and the fire has gone out and the house is quiet. I sit up. There are still a lot of things I want to know, but I am very tired and as I watch his face, weakened but determined, I know he can go on all night and, in fact, must go on unless I go to sleep. I have to marvel at his constitution. He's been known to drop acid and smoke ten joints and drink lots of beer all at the same time, and now, here he is (". . . a cheesy soil that goes down something like seven hundred feet," he is saying), so I stand to go and ask him one direct question, which I figure I deserve for going as far this way and that with him as I have.

What are you going to do after the film? I ask.

After the film? *Hnng-hnng*. Commit suicide.

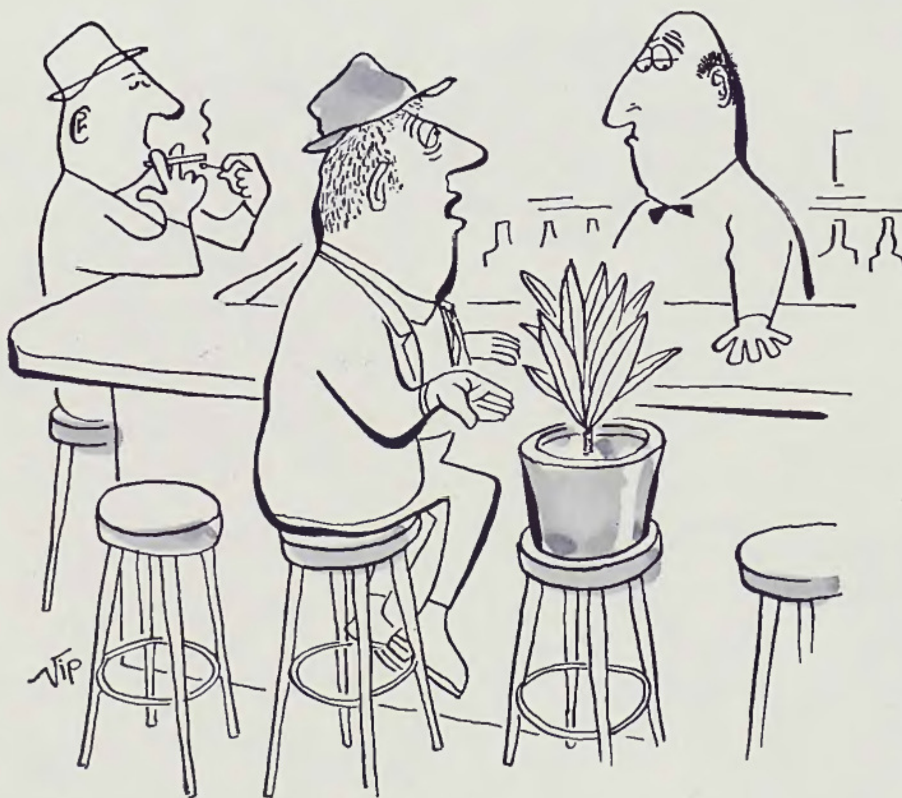
• • •

I am sitting in Benno's kitchen, in the midst of Arlo's community (although Arlo is thought by some to have "left the family" because of his other interests). Liza is shredding garlic; Hetty is making a salad in a soup tureen; the smell of incense is in the air—999 Lord Krishna Pujah Agarbatti—Arlo's sister is curled up, reading *Six Great Victorian Novelists*; the fire pit is blazing outside (Ray having laid the bricks and started the fire all by himself, while his new chick, Leslie, a 21-year-old just out of Radcliffe, walks about shy as a doe, delicately barefoot, in velvet pants and arctic sheepskin coat). Somebody's baby is entranced with Angus' ecstatic drum playing; a four-layer cake has a black-eyed Susan stuck in it; on the stove, a wood bowl is full of honeycombs and the steak is cooking and guitar music is in the air. Very, very American. But not, perhaps, of this century.

And Arlo says, "The hippie doesn't want the TV. Is that a rejection of the TV?" Arlo thinks not, I think so. Yes, I do, Arlo, think that is a rejection of the TV.

What we have here is a generation of well-educated, well-brought-up, well-off people who have grown up not having to worry about survival, knowing they can have anything they want—provided what they want is the vast amount of matériel we have lying about, the TV sets that go on the blink and the fog they emit, the marriages that are full of dry rot and that, increasingly, collapse, and the morality built on certain critical ritual hypocrisies. They can have it all, and they want none of it.

"You can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant," Arlo sings. "You



"I'll have gin on the rocks and, for my friend, a plain water."

can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant. Walk right in, it's around the back, just a half a mile from the railroad track. You can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant."

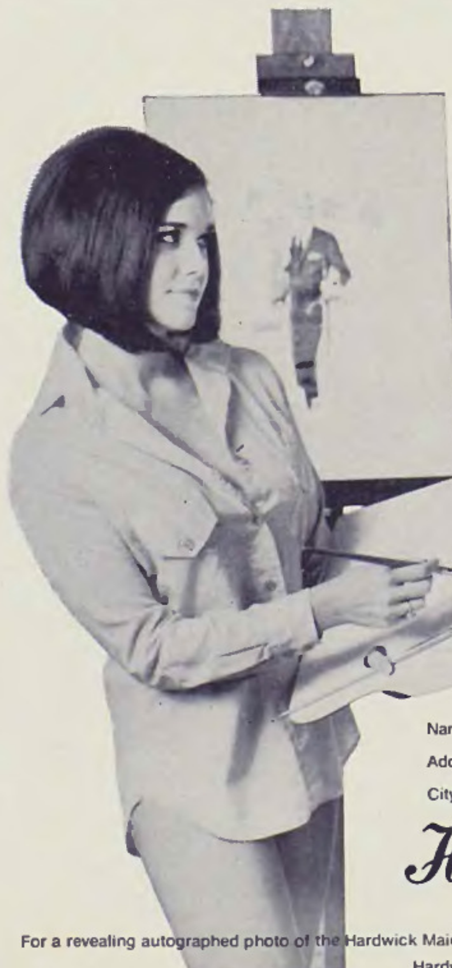
They don't want our TV sets, friends, *and they are not rejecting the TV set.* Hmm. They don't . . . hmm. Utmost paradox with only one resolution; stay stoned and think it out. So I do, and the final scene of this scene is the scene of my head turning.

The dialectic postulated in Peter Weiss' play *Marat/Sade* is the same tension that exists between SDS radicals on the one hand—who want to turn over our system and take our place so they can make a new bad system because somebody has to run things and they are so driven they can't see beyond reproducing those dismal failures, the French and Russian Revolutions—and the new young on the other hand, who are evolving through pot and psychedelics and the new electronic technology, away from Freud and the machine age. "You say you'll change the Constitution," sing the Beatles, "Well, you know we all want to change your head. You tell me it's the institution, Well, you know you better free your mind instead." The radical activists are the same old noise, but the others are new, and, friends, they are turning. Only from within is it possible even to *find* them—and to know that there is a very good chance that what we are witnessing here is a major turning. While our astronauts fly to the moon, these other pioneers fly to a place of altered perceptions and altered relations, of altered being, of *extreme* presentness, virtually without past or future. These particular people I am involved with may or may not be damaged (they are, most of us are) and they may or may not survive, but that is irrelevant. Alice and Ray, and yesterday's flowers, it seems to me, will not survive their attempt to go into a new orbit (their tension is the unresolvable tension between control and freedom), but that doesn't matter, either. I sit in Benno's kitchen and subject myself to a new bombardment of sensory information I never knew I had at my disposal. I am—different. The normal balance between intellectuality and the experiencing apparatus is dramatically altered in favor of pure sensation. I am shocked to discover how little attention I normally pay to my body and its capabilities, how, like a slave, I have allowed myself to be auctioned away from my great family of emotions and sensations. I go deeper, deeper, cleanse myself, cry poison, see better, feel better, feel beloved. Feel well.

• • •

Today, I leave Benno's, hugging and embracing everybody goodbye, elated at being able to express these warm emotions so effortlessly, feeling weightless, a skill I hope to take back with me: and on the road down to New York City, I am stopped by a state trooper. I have been warned that this has been happening to people associated with the film or the family, and here I am, being minutely scrutinized for signs of degeneracy by this stern, dutiful agent of the old dying blood family and the old sexual and political morality. I am well into my maturity, mid-30s, my hair is not long; in fact, it is slowly vanishing, and I am polite and responsive, so there is an impasse. When it appears, finally, that I am not going to be arrested, I ask what it was that caused him to stop me in the first place. There is a longish pause and the trooper says, "You changed lanes without signaling."

As I continue on toward the city, it begins to dawn on me that the hovering presence of police surveillance—even if, in this particular case, it was no more than a coincidence—weighs heavily on all the matters I've been thinking about. The question of control and freedom. We have come as far as we have—civilization has—because of the iron controls we have placed on ourselves. The law and order of which we are so proud, and the probity and the sexual restraints to which we are so committed, are some of



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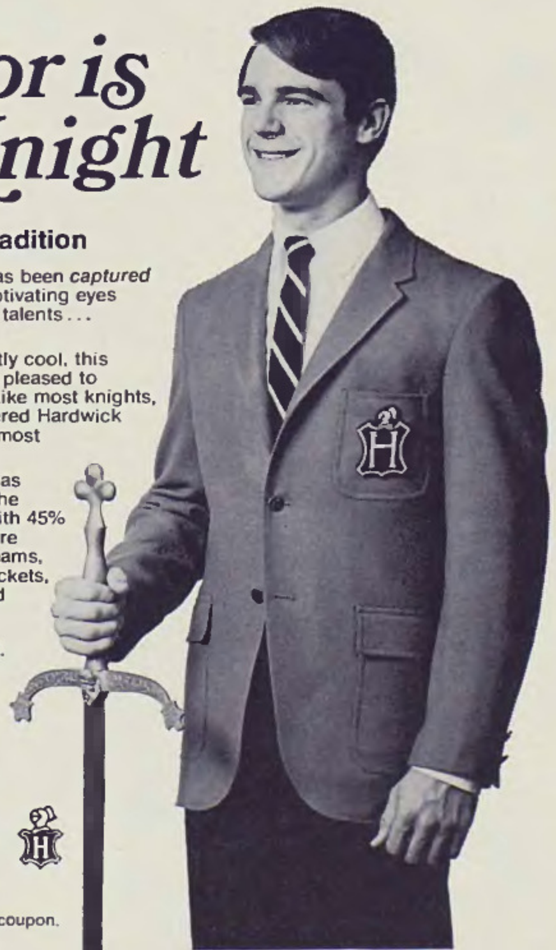

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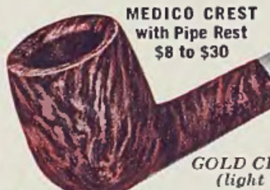

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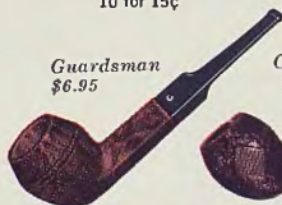

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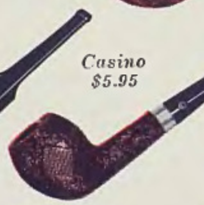

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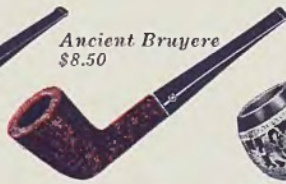

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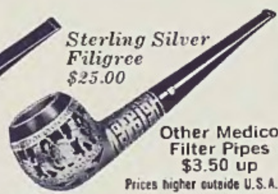

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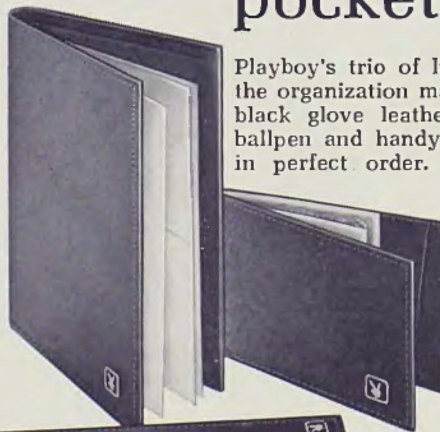

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its many manifestations. As we continued to exercise this control over ourselves, we increasingly expanded our control over our environment, extending our dominion to nature itself; and now we can control so *much* that it is beginning to appear as though truly there is nothing we cannot accomplish, nothing we cannot control. We have reached the moon. And all that lies beyond is not beyond our grasp. And so, possibly, the time is approaching when we can lay down our burden and, finally, not have to control ourselves at all, control nothing and still not be frightened the way our progenitors—poor dumb beasts—so abjectly were.

Cultural expressions that push us along at an accelerated pace—Christianity, say, or psychoanalysis, or psychedelics—make their appearance at appropriate times in our development, just as armaments do for their particular wars, and become ways of identifying the development. The new young are deep into mind expansion and electronics. They say they are ready to relinquish control ("You can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant"), and possibly they are. Who knows? One of the few things we cannot do for sure is stand at the horizon and hold back the sun.

We look at them sorrowfully and say, "You can't solve your problems that way," when what we really mean is, "We can't solve *our* problems that way." But as for them—who knows? They are in a different place. Their heads are in a different place. Like all of us, they must do their bit; they are evolutionary instruments, way stations along the highway leading out there.

Jonathan Edwards, the great Puritan divine, lived in Stockbridge for seven years, speaking as a missionary to the Indians in the area, the painted heathens. That was in the 1750s. He got the Algonquin sitting around and listening about control and law and order and so forth, and he said, "Oh, sinners! Consider the fearful danger you are in; it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it. . . ."

And the Indians said, "Oh, wow, what a trip."

And the Indians rose, one after another, and sang, "You can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant. You can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant. Walk right in, it's around the back, just a half a mile from the railroad track. You can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant."