

The Blotter

August 2004

Set In A Future Where Everybody Bowls Alone

www.blotterrug.com



In This Issue: Diane Manning, Billy Al Silverhorse, Candy Wilhite, Ruth Eckles, Phil Lane, Rick Doble, Craig Kirchner, Natalie Ross, and Garry Somers. Oh Yeah, and the Dream Journal.

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Cover art: detail of *Susy on the Studebaker*, by Diane Manning. See pp. 12-13 for more from this artist.

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This magazine may contain typos or bad words
WARNING! nude human forms presented
 in an artistic context on pp. 12-13! Protect
 your children from our depravity!!

**Items Worth Mentioning
 from the desk of Johnny Pence****Did We Meet Your Expectations?**

I almost had a hard time convincing our cover artist this month, Diane Manning, that her stuff was right for *The Blotter*. It wasn't as if she found our magazine distasteful (bless her heart), it was just that she thought her work was all so ... so *Saturday Evening Post*. She liked us, but thought her stuff was maybe too old-fashioned, too sweet, too ... something.

Well, I don't blame her. But you readers should just get one thing straight: *The Blotter* does not like expectations. Please don't bring them to the magazine.

That's Great!

Last month's cover artist, Eva Rubin, opened her show at Temple Ball Gallery right after the magazine came out in print. My wife and son and I stopped by the show and mingled a little, and I ran into a particular Hillsborough novelist of some regard. We'd met on a few occasions, and she'd been encouraging to me about my work, so I took a few minutes to say hello. It's always a good idea to be polite if you can bear it, and I kinda like her, so it wasn't too much to bear.

Turns out this rather popular writer bought the cover painting. Ha! That's Great!

Errata

First, it was probably a mistake to publish a poem called "Cinda-Fuckin'-Rella" in a magazine that kids could pick up for free, but that's not the error: somehow I let Jaya Mangelou get away with the spelling "*Freaknick*" instead of *Freaknik*. Everybody knows that. Sorry y'all.

Thanks, But Please Don't

It seems someone left a stack of *Blotters* out at the State Fairgrounds in Raleigh. We got a call from them asking *us* not to do it again. Well, *we* didn't do it in the first place. I appreciate the enthusiasm that some reader showed, but our distribution is a fairly well thought-out matter. Please don't move stacks around. If you think we should change things up, just write and let us know.

Rock OUT!

Thanks, thanks, *thanks* to The Cave, Gripweed Manifold, and Stormfront for throwing a benefit rock-out to support *The Blotter*: Friday, August 27. All the money goes to support this barely sustainable magazine, so we'd better see you there. Come by Branch's Bookshop at 7 for the reading, too. Man, what a night!

—editot@blotterrag.com

The Yaller Dog

A partially true story by Billy Al Silverhorse

Editor's Note: I hate dog fights, and the people who fight dogs. It's one of the only things that makes me seriously wish harm and violence on my fellow man.

Appalling though the sport may be, this story is damn funny. I held onto it for months debating whether I could or should publish it, and even though it makes me sick, it still makes me laugh, so there.

Instead of writing me to give me a bunch of grief about how disgusted you are that I would publish such a thing, why don't you give ten bucks to the local animal shelter?

And the next story (p. 5) is one where a dog does good things for a person. Balance.

One time they wuz a buncha fellers had 'em a dog-fightin' club an' they met out in the woods over south uv Salisaw. Seein' as how it wuz agin the law to fight dogs an' roosters' an' such, they tried to keep it real quiet 'cept to say they was "dog an' animal fanciers."

They wuz always talkin' 'bout their dogs, callin' 'em animals like they wuz real cultured or civilized or sumthin'. But the fact of the matter wuz that everybody knew what wuz a-goin' on, even Little Johnny Allen the sheriff. He had some fightin' dogs hisownself, so what does that show you?

Well, one night they wuz a-havin' the fights ... er, uh, *showings* ... an' everybody had their animals tied to trees so's they would'n be a-eatin' one'nother up 'til they wuz ready to "show in the ring." A new feller pulled up in his pickup an' parked.

He hooked a chain 'round his animal's neck an' opened up the tailgate an' jerked him outta the truck bed. All th'other fellers gathered 'round to have a look, an' one feller sez to another, "Now that-there's the ugliest dog Ah ever seen

in all mah born days," an' everybody seemed to agree with him. The new feller did'n say nothin', he jist went on.

Little Johnny heard the commotion an' pushed his way through the crowd. "Howdy Bub," he said, "You new 'round here aintcha?"

"Yup," th'other feller said, "A'hm a-visitin' mah sister over 'round Spiro. A'hm fum down north uv Baton Rouge. Ah heerd tell you got yerself a club where you show yer animals. Now Ah'm shore it ain't a dog-fightin' club, seein's as how that's agin the law." He winked at Little Johnny an' said, "We got us a club too down home iff'n you know what Ah mean."

Little Johnny grinned real big an' said, "Ah Shore do pardner." an' he yelled over his shoulder, "Hey Tommy Joe, bring mah rottweiler over here." The crowd parted an' Little Johnny's son led a big-muscled black rottweiler over an' handed the chain to Little Johnny. He braced hisself 'cause he knew as soon as the rottweiler saw th'other man's animal he'd go after him tooth an' toenail, an' he was shorenuff right.

The new feller's animal didn't even budge or pay th'other animal no nevermind.

Everybody laughed an' one feller said, "Why, that-there dog won't fight."

"Well stranger," said Little Johnny, "Wouldja like to take 'em over to the show ring an' let 'em have a closer look at one'nother?"

The new feller grinned an' said, "Ah 'spose so. What kinda entry fee air we a-puttin' up?"

Little Johnny studied both animals an' said. "What say we each put up a

The Blotter Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

I was plagued by anxiety-ridden dreams last night involving the police storming in on my parents' house because they (rightfully) suspected that one of my friends had smuggled in one or more small contraband trees and several-dozen bootlegged CDs, all of the same album, which I can't recall specifically, other than it was some horrible '80s hair band I think. They probably weren't a real band.

The police busted in, but not before we managed to hide the stuff somewhere. Christina from Myspace.com was hanging out in the living room when the police barged in, but then jumped off the deck and I didn't see her again.

The police went into the basement and began rummaging around in all the boxes of my stuff to look for the trees/CDs, and I was horrified that they would accidentally uncover a huge stash of porn I had hidden there (which does not actually exist).

I was suddenly 10 years old. The cops gave up looking in the basement, and went into the back yard and started digging up the lawn. One of my friends had put a CD in the stereo system in the living room (which took up an entire wall), and was playing a cover version by some other band of the "big hit" from whatever the contraband CDs were, to taunt the police.

My brother appeared, approximately 14 years old. We shrieked in horror as the cops dug around the back yard as they were inevitably going to sacrilegiously disturb the place where our rabbits, Thumper and Snowy, had been buried years before. Christina called to say she planted one of the trees somewhere.

—Mike, Durham

Please send excerpts from your dream journals to Jenny at mermaid@blotterrug.com. If nothing else, we love to read them. We won't publish your whole name.

hunnert dollars an' the winner gits all the cash an' the other feller's animal?" The new feller spit on his hand an' stuck it out to Little Johnny an' said, "That suits me right down to the ground."

They led their animals to opposite sides uv the ring. The rottweiler wuz a-snarlín' an' a-barkin' up a storm but 'is opponent wuz as calm as a duck pond on a summer's day. He wuz low-slung an' a real ugly yaller color, the color ya might wanna paint a house with. But the most unusualist thaing 'bout him wuz he did'n have no hair an' looked like he might've had the mange 'cause he wuz so dry an' scaly. He had a big rusty chain wrapped 'bout four times 'round his extra-long nose.

Somebody rung the bell an' the rottweiler come a-tearin' outta his corner like he wuz on fahr. The rottweiler run at his opponent a-snarlín' an' a-drippin' at the mouth an' a murmur went up from the crowd an'

somebody said, "Here it comes now! Ten more dollars on the rottweiler!"

The rottweiler kep on with all his snarlín' an' drippin' but the'other one did'n make no noise a-tall he jist calmly waddled outta 'is corner. His owner had took off his chain muzzle but he still did'n growl er carry on like the rottweiler wuz a-doin'. To tell the truth he looked sorta sleepy.

They met in the center of the ring an' the rottweiler opened his mouth an' it wuz plumb fulla teeth. Th'other one opened his mouth an' it wuz fulla even more teeth an' bigger ones to boot an' those that wad'n yaller er brown, wuz a real nasty color of green. He opened up his jaws to full position and quick as a wink, he bit the rottweiler's head off ... clean as a whistle.

Well, you coulda heard a pin drop. Nobody said nothin'. They jist looked at one'nother with their jaws

a-hangin' open. Somebody let out a low whistle an' somebody else said, "Well Ah declare, wouldja look at that."

Little Johnny reached in 'is pocketbook an' peeled off five twenty dollar bills an' handed 'em to th'other feller. He shook 'is head an' said, "Well Stranger, looks like ya won the entry fee an' Ah'm sorry to say Ah only got part of my animal left."

He kep on a-shakin' his head an' said, "Ah'll tell ya Ah ain't never seen no animal could stand up to mah rotweiller before. You got yerself a real fine animal there—ugly though he is. By the way, what is it ya call 'im?"

Th'other feller snapped the lead chain 'round 'is animal's neck an' put the chain muzzle back on an' said, "Well 'fore Ah cut his tail off an' painted him yaller, Ah called him a alligator."

At the next club meetin', somebody made a motion that iny animal bein' showed after that, at least had to be able to bark an' have some hair on.



Billy Al Silverhorse writes in the vernacular of Eastern Oklahoma where 78.9% of Bakersfield, California comes from ... or goes to. Your choice.

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The Smallish One

by Candy Wilhite
Illustration by S. Nikolsky

The smallish one sought to study her, trying to read her thinking in all of its thick mire. The smallish dog sidled up and gently lay its muzzle on her wrist, presumably checking for a pulse. All season and tonight especially the four paws had paddled behind her mother's every footstep; most diligently when her mother was near the apothecary cabinet. It was approaching the anniversary of his suicide and the smallish dog knew her mother wasn't strong enough to survive it. Her mother was spent, washed out to a sea full of jagged memories and hollow sucking wishes. Her pain was like an angry, rusty anchor with a score to settle on the ocean's floor. The smallish dog aimed to save her, it was a debt she felt she

owed. Smallish animals feel that need—the need to repay, the need to continue needing in return.

They climbed into bed amid a pathos of blankets, newspapers, pulling toys, and crumpled dreams. Her mother did not mind the clutter. She came only to this bed to beg exhaustion to deplete her, to rival her tenacious insomnia. Her mother also begged the walls to tumble atop her. They were both fruitless wishes uttered in vain nightly.

The smallish dog knew that the will to live had saved many; she feared that the will to die had the same success.

She would appoint herself sentry tonight. She would fight off her mother's pain.

Others couldn't understand

what her mother hid and they certainly didn't understand when a smallish dog pleaded.

Again they settled on a stack of pillows. Unwitting allies trying to slay a dragon. Allies with only one actively putting up a fight.

Smallish dogs have so much to do.

The countdown to the unraveling began. Vapid and vanquished, her mother began to paddle out into the choppy water in her heart. The clouds grew dark. The smallish dog wondered how to swim.



Candy Wilhite provides shelter and love to 4 doggie kids, and often, they provide it right back. This piece illustrates one of those occasions.

Born in 1964 in Moscow, Russia, S. Nikolsky emigrated to the United States in 1978 as part of the Carter administration's wheat-for-refusniks deal. Although the question of how many tons of wheat a pound of S. Nikolky is worth has always interested her, no answer has so far been found.



The Reality Specialist

by Ruth Eckles, from an idea by Joe Rizzolo
illustrations by Ernie Dollar

—“Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow. And everywhere that Mary went, the lamb was sure to go.”

Alan was tired of being nuts. He had been living at Sunnydale mental institute for the past six months now. He had been on every drug imaginable. Blue, pink, orange and white pills. He took them all with a big gush of cherry-flavored Kool-Aid. But for Alan, nothing had ever worked better for him than the Reality Specialist. The Reality Specialist had helped him to see past his delusions, to be in the present

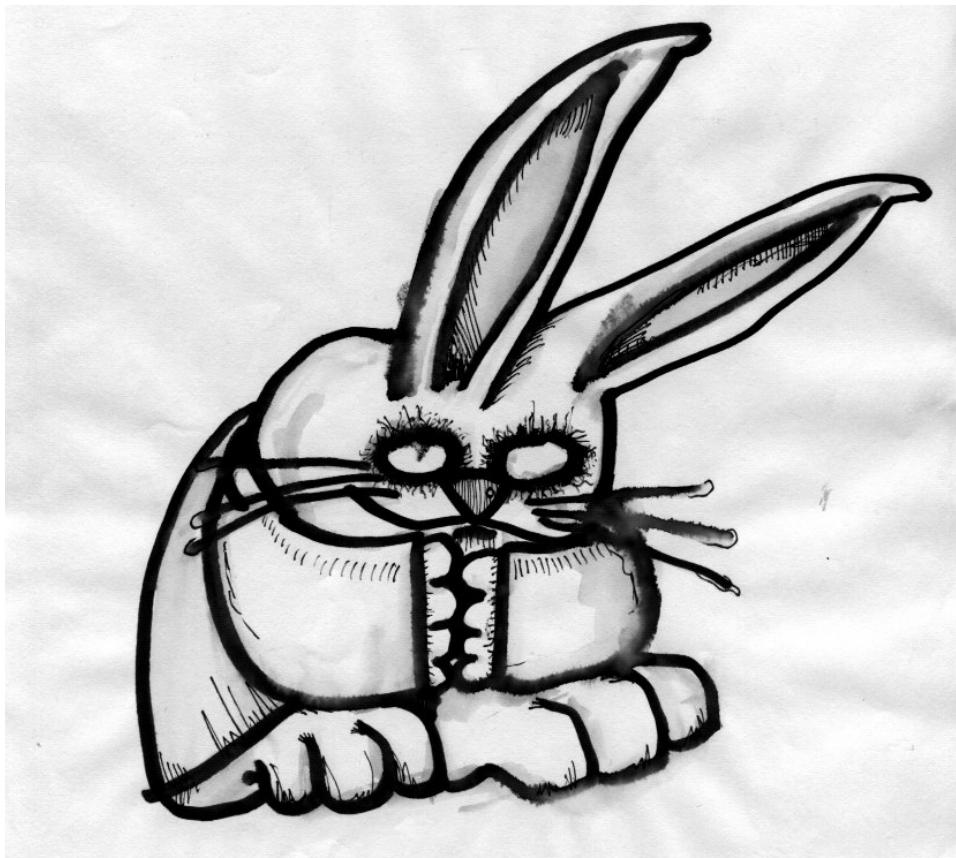
moment, to not believe the voices that spoke in his head.

“Your mind is not your friend, Alan,” the Reality Specialist would tell him. “Your mind is full of bullies and you’re letting those bullies drive the bus. It’s your bus. You should be the one driving it. But when you listen to those bullies and they tell you ‘turn left,’ ‘turn right,’ ‘if you don’t do what we say you’re gonna crash,’ they are in control. Take back control of the bus, Alan. It’s your bus.”

Alan had very fond memories of the Reality Specialist. He kept a framed picture of him on his wall at Sunnydale. He even kept a picture of him in his wallet. Whenever he would get sad, confused, or over-

whelmed by the voices, he would stop, breathe, and pull out the picture from his back pocket. “My mind is not my friend,” Alan would mutter, and shuffle with the rest of the Thorazine-infused patients back to the cafeteria.

Before Sunnydale, Alan had been a used car salesman. In those days, no one could sell a car like Alan. No one else in the company had the ability to convince people that they needed what they didn’t really want the way Alan could. Before people knew what hit them, they had signed the dotted line for a car that was well beyond their means. Customers loved him, men and women alike. He wasn’t pushy, he wasn’t sleazy. He didn’t flirt. He didn’t condescend. He was warm, friendly, practical, and grounded. Or



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at least he had an uncanny ability to seem practical and grounded. His coworkers were jealous of him because he sold three times the number of cars that they, the older, more seasoned employees sold. They couldn't figure it out. What did Alan have that they didn't have? At twenty, he was beginning to bald. He had a beer gut and a uni-brow. He wasn't a snazzy dresser. His favorite outfit was a pair of khaki pants and a cream-colored golf shirt. He wore Buster Brown shoes. But really, what Alan had that they didn't have was the ability to see into a customer's soul. To see their longing, their yearning, their emptiness. He could see they had a deep void they needed to fill and that they didn't know how to fill it. He was somehow able to convince them, in a very subtle way, that a car was going to make their lives easier, shinier, more exciting. "There's no other car quite like this new Ultra 2000," he would say. "It's got everything going for it. Good gas mileage, it's great for the environment, and they usually last up to 300,000 miles. The leather is imported from Italy ... feel it. It's great, isn't it? My aunt has one just like it and she loves it. Has driven it all over the country. Go ahead, take it for a test drive."

But it wasn't long into Alan's budding career that the signs of his brain slowly rotting away were starting to show. The voices started slowly. They were subtle at first. Then the paranoia set in. He began to think that customers were aliens from another planet, coming for his soul. He thought he saw red dots blinking on and off on their foreheads. He began to see tiny little rabbits, about the size of a quarter, hiding in the back seats

of the shiny new cars in the showroom. He thought their purpose was to drive him mad. And eventually they did.

It was August of 1990 when Alan had his first episode—a very public episode—that would land him in the hospital. A couple came in, looking for a new car. As it so happened, they were both dressed in red. He saw the little red dots pulsating on their foreheads and he knew he was in trouble. He began to feel uneasy inside. Alan wasn't stupid. He knew he was going nuts. He knew the things he saw and heard weren't the types of things he should be hearing or seeing. But he still couldn't help but believe they were real. As the couple talked with him about what they were looking for, beads of sweat began to form on his forehead and upper lip. His golf shirt was soaked under the armpits. "We're looking for something large and comfortable," said the woman, her gold earrings glittering in the setting sun. Alan looked over at the car that was displayed in the showcase area. A brand new 1990 Specialized Tunco, top of the line, loaded. A small white rabbit winked at him through the driver's-side window.

"What do you mean?" said Alan. His voice had a slight tremble.

The woman paused for a moment, confused. "Well just what I said, basically. We're looking for a car that is large and comfortable," the red dot on her forehead glowing now, like the lights on an air traffic control tower.

"Why?" said Alan.

"Excuse me?" said the woman in red, rubbing between her eyes.

"Well for what purpose? Why do you want such a large car?." His eyes

darted around furtively in the distance. It was hard to concentrate with the bunny giving him the peace sign.

"It's just what I want," she said. "My family has always driven large, comfortable cars. Lincolns, Cadillacs, Buicks....."

Alan's eyes glassed over as he looked at the bunny, who had now moved to the drivers side and was honking the horn.

"Yes ..." he said, "I understand now ... big comfortable cars ... they are so cushiony, they float along the highway like a dream, like a cloud, like a big, mushy marshmallow ... they must feel an awful lot like A SPACESHIP, right? Have you ever been in a SPACESHIP, Miss Lady-in-the-red-suit? Do you think I don't know what you're up to? Why you're here?"

The woman's mouth dropped open and her husband took her elbow protectively. "Now listen here, mister" he said. "You need to get yourself under control." There was fear in his voice. He was a small, thin nervous man. Alan was twice his size.

"Control? Control?! You want to control ME! How's this for control?" Alan lunged over his desk in one full sweep and bounded over to the Tunco. With his clipboard, he smashed the windshield with surprising force.

"Get out of there you fucking bunny!" he screamed over and over again until his throat ached and he could no longer get the words out and he collapsed in tears on the hood of the Tunco, surrounded by shards of glass.

Mr. Bolensky, the floor supervisor, dialed 911.

Chapter 2



The Reality Specialist and Alan had a Don't Ask/Don't Tell policy. When Alan asked what exactly that meant, the specialist just smiled at him mysteriously and said "Don't ask ... don't tell." And from that moment on, he hadn't. Not that he wasn't curious. The Reality Specialist wasn't exactly a therapist. Nor was he a guru. He was simply someone Alan paid a good deal of money to check in with, to see if he was living in fantasy or reality. This wasn't a skill that Alan had. He depended on the specialist for that information. Of course, Alan wondered about the specialist. He was curious, as all clients tend to be. Was the Reality Specialist married? Did he have a dog? What was

his real name? What did he do when he was at home? Why did he always wear cardigan sweaters? Alan would never know. In those days, they met once a week, more if need be, in a light-filled office on Daresay Avenue. He would look around his office, searching for personal effects. There were none. There was a black leather couch, a desk, a phone, a ficus plant and not much else. No plaques or degrees on the wall. The Reality Specialist didn't have any official credentials as far as he knew. But Alan had never been much of a believer in education or degrees or being "with the program" in any shape or form. Actions speak louder than words, his father used to always say, your experience is your education, and Alan felt the same way. And the Reality Specialist had always been there for him, could always be counted on.

A yellow and white graphic poster for the Durham Music Festival. The title 'DURHAM MUSIC FESTIVAL' is at the top in large blue letters with white stars. Below it is the date 'AUGUST 20TH & 21ST'. The festival passes are available online at www.DURHAMMUSICFESTIVAL.ORG. It lists sponsors like INDEPENDENT, NICE PRICE BOOKS, CD ALLEY, and AVID VIDEO. The poster features a list of artists including Bats & Mice, Bellafea, The Butchies, Calabi Yau, Chris Stamey, Circulatory System, Dame Fate, Des Ark, Early Day Miners, El Guapo, Enon, Jett Rink, Late Virginia Summers, New Dawn Fades, Richard Buckner, Rosebuds, The Mountain Goats, Wigg Report, and Windsor for the Derby, along with '& many more'. There are also small star icons.

Until the day Alan got locked up at Sunnydale.

Their sessions would begin something like this: Alan would come in, shyly say hello, and sit on the couch. The Reality Specialist would insist that he take off his shoes. It was something Alan never quite got accustomed to. He had to be asked every time. Alan would slip off his Buster Browns and place his tan trouser socks carefully on the floor. Then they would talk.

"So. How've you been?" the Reality Specialist would say. It never sounded like a question.

"Okay, I guess."

"Any delusions?"

"I'm not sure," Alan would say. Honesty is the best policy. Another one of his father's phrases.

"Of course," the Reality Specialist would say, with a note of understanding. "Tell me about your week."

"Well, I had several fantasies about being a famous rock star," offered Alan.

"That's normal."

"I fantasized about guttural, primal sex with nearly everyone I met."

"Normal."

"I wanted to beat my brother-in-law's head in with a sledgehammer, but I didn't"

"Normal"

"I was trailed by tiny, red-eyed bunnies everywhere I went this past week. One of them managed to jump into my heart. He's been scampering around in there ever since. It tickles a great deal."

"Not normal."

And they would work from there.

respect for fancy words or an education. When academics, intellectuals, or politicians were arguing their points on television, Alan's father would grunt with disgust and turn off the TV. "Words," his father used to scoff, "Don't mean a thing." A heavy smoker, Alan's father died when Alan was seven. He was working on the carburetor of their old pea-green Rambler in the back yard and suddenly dropped dead of a heart attack. He died in a way he would have respected: quickly, efficiently, and without a lot of fuss. Alan's father would roll over in his grave if he knew Alan was seeing the Reality Specialist. Not to mention using the majority of his inheritance to pay him.

Alan felt a pain in his heart when he thought of his father. He missed him.

Chapter 3

Alan's father had always been a man of action. He had very little

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WITH SPECIAL GUEST

STORM FRONT

Chapter 4

The first thing the Specialist did when Alan came into his office today was hand him a book. The title was *How to Make Your Consciousness a More Friendly Place*. He was going through his usual ritual of changing from his work shoes into his tennis shoes. Alan never understood why the specialist got to wear shoes and he didn't. Did he go jogging after their sessions? Alan was standing by the window looking down at the passing cars. The sun was bright today, and clanged, almost audibly, through the windows. It was almost too bright to see. Alan looked four stories down at a green 1980 Ford Mustang, parked by the curb. He had sold that exact model to a newlywed couple. On this car's bumper was a sticker that read "I'm Retired, Not Retarded." Cars rushed by in noonday traffic. The cars sounded angry somehow, and mean. Alan was scared of cars. Although he made his living selling them, he didn't own one. He rode a bike. It puzzled his colleagues to no end. When he won the award for Best Salesman of 1987 at the car lot, his boss offered to give him a brand new Ultra 990. He would have none of that. He turned back towards the specialist and sat down on the couch.

"I'm all for that," said Alan. He was tired of his mind. Tired of the racing thoughts that kept him up all night. Tired of the aliens and their threats. Tired of seeing meanness in the eyes of everyone he met. Tired of wearing the aluminum-foil hats to keep out the radio signals. The only thing he wasn't tired of were the little, tiny pink eyed bunnies that were never far from his heels. They seemed friendly somehow. Almost as if they were looking out for him, watching his back.

As if reading his mind, the specialist

said "Don't get the wrong idea here, Alan. We're not trying to get *rid* of anything. You're not going to get rid of the aliens, or the radio signals, or the bunnies. You're going to befriend them. You're going to get to know them. You don't have to run anymore. There's nothing to fear. You'll see."

"What about the medications?" asked Alan.

"Dump them," said the specialist.

Chapter 5

Allen hadn't meant to hit the nurse at Sunnydale. And he was truly sorry for what he had done. But he had seen the red dot pulsing on her forehead. And he knew she was one of them. He picked up the fire extinguisher before he even had time to think. He usually tried to catch himself at times like this, and remember the things that the Reality Specialist had taught him. But it had been so long since they talked. His words were fading. He was looking at his picture less and less. Lord knows, he had enough drugs in his system to make him docile as a lamb. Yet the drugs didn't seem to be mellowing his thoughts. They persisted. He hated his thoughts. Hated what they told him to do. Hated what they were turning him into. The Reality Specialist had always told him that his thoughts weren't him, that his mind was not his friend. But Alan didn't even know what the word friend meant anymore.

Chapter 6

"You are my friend ... you are special to me." Alan used to watch the Mister Rogers show religiously when he was a young boy. He especially liked going to the Land of Make-Believe. The puppets and the castle and the train and that scary little traffic light were the highlight of his lonely days. Mr. Rogers

said it was okay to be sad, that everyone was sad sometimes. Mr. Rogers had kids in wheelchairs on his show and said they were perfect, just the way they were. When he went to the Land of Make-Believe, he forgot that his mother was an alcoholic, that his father was dead, and that the kids at school made fun of him for having a stutter and being in the special classes. At least he didn't have to ride the special bus. He was grateful for that. And even though he was lonely and sad much of the time, he was grateful for a lot. He was grateful for his dog, Gregson, a tan-and-white collie. He was grateful that his mother read to him every night, even if she was drunk and sometimes told him that she hated him. He was grateful for his Darth Vader outfit and his Jedi sword. He was grateful for the tire swing in the backyard. He was grateful for Pegs, the little stuffed white rabbit that he slept with every night. And he was grateful for Mr. Rogers.

Chapter 7

"Are you in reality or fantasy right now?"

"I don't care about the real world ... the real world isn't really the real world.... It's full of stuff that isn't really all that important."

Then the Reality Specialist said something that surprised him. He said "I don't care about the real world either."

"What do you care about?" asked Alan. He wasn't used to asking the specialist personal questions.

"I care about you," he said.

A sudden feeling of overwhelming anger came over Alan. He didn't feel like talking today. He just wanted to go home, put on the aluminum-foil hat, and crawl under the covers. The Reality Specialist could go to hell. He was tired of all his talk about consciousness being a friendly place, his mind not being his friend, of hope and change and accept-

ance and love, of the stinky smell of socks rising up to his nose. Fuck it. Fuck it all. A little white bunny came and gently touched its quivering pink nose to Alan's foot. Alan kicked it across the room with an instant stab of regret. "I'm a terrible, terrible person," he thought to himself.

Chapter 8

Alan didn't know why he suddenly hated the little white rabbit so much. It was just a pink-nosed, innocent, furry thing. Maybe that was why. Its innocent presence triggered something in him. He looked at the rabbit, now quivering in the corner, perched on a green pillow on the rust colored shag carpet. Alan's heart filled with an aching tenderness that was hard to bear. The poor rabbit had got nothing from Alan but scorn and violence. Where had the rabbit even

come from? When exactly had he appeared? None of it mattered anymore. Suddenly, Alan was sure of something. That white little rabbit over there in the corner was real. And all this time he, and everyone else, had thought he was crazy for seeing it. But he was real. As if sensing his thoughts, the bunny tentatively crept towards Alan to sniff his hand. This time Alan did not lash out. He pulled the rabbit up into his lap and fell asleep. It was the most restful sleep he had ever had.

Ruth Eckles is a fairly active writer, and I think she lives north of Durham. She was in the December '03 issue.

Ernie Dollar is a total nutjob who claims to be the King of Spain or the director of the Hillsborough historical museum, depending on his mood.

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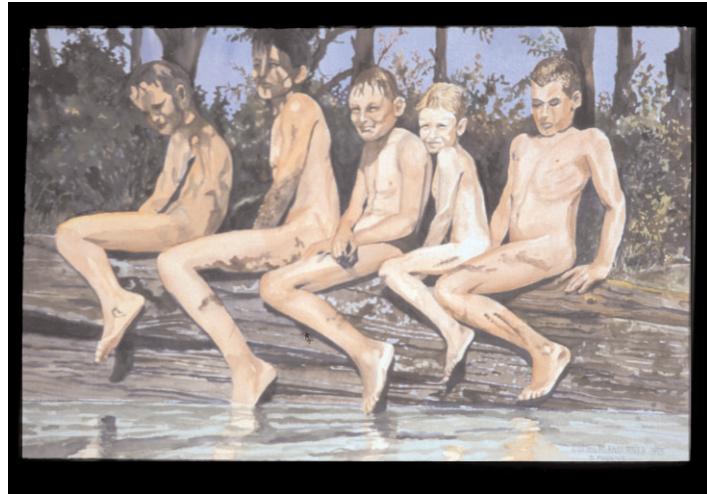
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DIANE Manning is an exhibiting member of the Orange County Artists' Guild, and has been represented by Somerhill Gallery in Chapel Hill, NC. She has painted professionally for nearly twenty years and has illustrated four books with pen and ink drawings, but she specializes in watercolors. She makes realistic paintings with a Southern accent and a sense of humor.



Opposite: *White Rubber Bathing Caps*, 1942; *Love in Bronxville*, 1947; *Sally on the Studebaker*.

This Page: *Janet Discovers the Pacific Ocean*, 1949; *Skinny Dippers*, 1915; *Sylvia Joins the WAVES*, 1942.

Poem
by Phil Lane

Blue cars crawling crippled through city streets.
I wake in the blue
and take my medication.
The sea is littered with empty Ritalin containers,
the windows never shut.
Outside, the most beautiful and terrible sight of all:
cars passing/
people walking/
the world turning.

The tiger kitten
in Wendy's parking lot-
dragging a burger

by Rick Doble

She thinks I'm a Poet
by Craig Kirchner

The cup is half empty.
She most likely thinks
I'm a slob and an ass
with my filthy toilet and tub.
At the corner the light will be red,
maybe yellow.
When someone broadsides me
I am probably not covered.

The cup is half full.
She calls me a poet
and drinks champagne
in the bubble bath I made her.
Up the street the light was green -
if it hadn't been for our fender bender
we surely would never have met -
the insurance more than covered.

SURVEY SAYS:

Poems With "Poem/Poet/Poetry" in name: 2

Untitled Poems/Haikus: 3

Poems About Clones: 1

Rick Doble lives in Smyrna, NC and has a Web site of photographic images, short stories, essays, and illustrated autobiography: www.rickdoble.net

Natalie Ross also has an eponymous website (www.natalie.net) and seems to be kicking around in Durham after a sudden move from SanFran.

You know Garry Somers from past issues of *The Blotter*. He's a writer and a stay-at-home daddy.

Phil Lane is a carpetbagging Yankee who moved down to NC because the cops don't know him here. That's nice. He's now in disguise as a Raleigh bookseller, and he was in our Octember issue last year.

Craig Kirchner is also becoming a fairly regular feature in our pages, and in about a million other little indy rags. He's the traveling consultant/hobo of the universe guy. He says, "I write about what I know best and yet least—myself—in an effort to remove those labels."



dinosaurs and oh! what more could be so true if so few knew
 our ages past and a great many blast
 from other lands our milky way
 just a gate for us to stay inside,
 weapons of war
 shore upon shore of hungry ships to take us home,
 from this land to many unknown
 piece by piece our memories sewn together more than a
 topographic map. treasures abound for those who know
 simply how to go go go.

i am the bee
 what me?
 piling along two clouds
 meat sounds
 ALIVE
 scientific phenomena
 what more or less
 could we digress from some
 fifteen miles of sound
 a million greens around for
 two three
 intersubjectivity!

Confronting the Clone by Garry Somers

Every single molecule
 of me is perfect you.
 I know already how you'll
 do; as precisely as I will do.
 Your crooked smile.
 How you walk a crooked mile.
 There are no questions
 between us. You know
 before the lightbulb's glow
 my ideas. Any questions?
 I write while you proof,
 or you wake at dawn
 and shave for work, while I sleep on.
 Are you a clever me-spoof?
 Later, we chase the wolves together,
 and paint our picture on the cave wall
 in inks the color of blood, the call
 of our blood is of a feather.
 Yet, each passing moment, each shifting breeze,
 birdsong, and wingflap of a butterfly
 lead you and me irreparably awry.
 There is no way for us to freeze
 the moment, and though I love her fiercely,
 my woman looks at you and then at me
 As if to say are you better than he?
 Can you handle my life differently?
 I don't know what to do.
 The mirror cracks and we reflect on that, too.

by Natalie Ross

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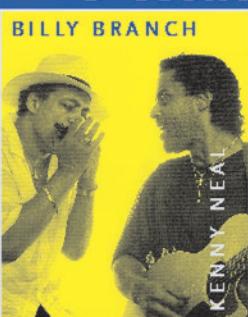
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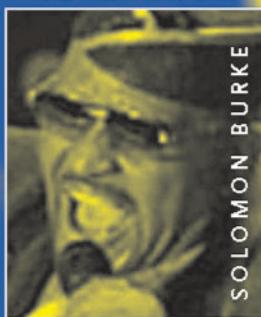
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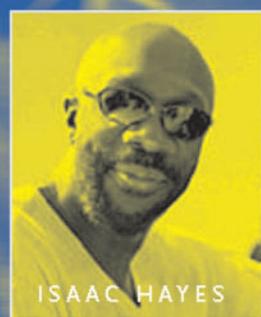
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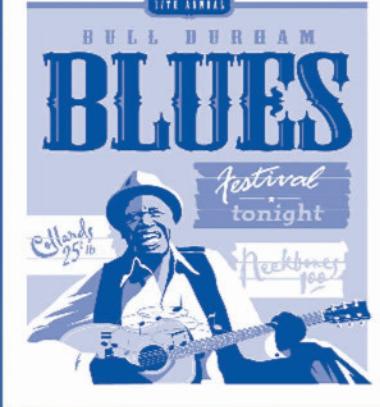
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