

Noxious Minutiae

Vol. 1, Issue 5. December 2004.

“Ce n’est pas une zine.”

WWW.NOXIOUSMINUTIAE.ORG | VOMITING IN OUR THROATS SINCE 2004

SUBSIDY

Stanley Lieber

Click, click, click. Twelve cubes of light, each rotating past the other and assuming the face of its predecessor, slipping into the vacant slot left by the preceding cube. Its purpose is to massage the cortex into a smooth program of alpha waveform production. A therapy-minded individual might take the advice of his doctor and work through the entire routine, pausing rhythmically at the completion of each sequence to allow the electronics to catch up with his progress. But what is to happen to the patient once he's seen through the medical parlor illusion and sussed out the mechanism that's supposed to be affecting him; what if his conscious mind tracks the incoming data with greater precision than the machinery? Click, click, click. A brief musing that perhaps this particular arrangement of cubes is novel. The depression of an appropriate button ensures the arrangement is stored in cold memory. To be studied later.

He's been pleased that his work has proven efficacious to the vast majority of patients he's treated (or attempted to treat). But nothing so far in his experience has seemed to alter the substance of his own compulsive addictions. He produces a pocket lighter and commences to sear the flesh on the back of his right hand, stifling a the primal vocalization which almost escapes from his lips. He buries his shame in his handkerchief (and not only shame, but evidence – self-immolation being an offense not only to the state, but to Saito's ancestors for historical reasons particular to his family) and recalibrates the equipment for the next patient. He readjusts himself and leans into his white coat, feeling his sweat cool against the skin of his wrists. If anyone had seen him, it would cost him his career.

Of what use was life though, at this point? They'd made his impossible. The work he was carrying out would radicalize the treatment of conditions such as his, given the proper push into mass production, with that process's attendant economies of scale and the resulting shift in standard prescriptions.



artwork by tranq tryptizol

For a moment Saito lost the flow of the situation and was aloft, floating on the consideration of what he had come really very close to achieving. But it was unlikely any of his early projections were going to prove accurate. He'd already made a number of compromises that limited the ultimate effectiveness of his original design. He doubted now that the cubes could do much more than narcotize; make the patient docile and open to personal questions. Saito ruminates on this for a moment before taking the lighter back out of his pocket and burning several marks into the top of his hand.

He tries to light his skin up completely and succeeds in singing the sleeve of his coat. With the smoke, he imagines his kami (spirit) making its way up to the ceiling and spreading out across its surface, crawling in several directions at once towards the ductwork and vents.

As punctuation, a knock comes, and the door opens, independent of being unlocked by Saito. This pulls him back down to the floor. Of course, they *had* seen. It was all over now. His work would be finished. The patients would suffer, but then patients are always suffering. With his expulsion from the premises his involvement with the project would be worked over and all record of his instigation of the major designs would be lost to the revisions that would follow in the wake of the incident. This was cause for small celebration. At least now they would erase him. At least now this thing he had put in motion would reach its conclusion without being attached to his grandfather's name. This represented some form of reconciliation, but it still felt like his kami had dissipated. There was nothing left for them to kill now.

It only took one shot to finish what Saito had started.

THIS IS PAGE ONE, UNLESS YOU'RE
READING OUR HEBREW EDITION.
SHALOM!

Letter from the Editor-DICTATOR

We here at *Noxious Minutiae* owe you an apology. For several reasons. First, as our wide-ranging readership (hi, Mom!) surely noticed, a fresh-off-the-press, piping hot copy of *NM* was suspiciously absent from your mailboxes last month. This was due to a combination of alcoholism, election-related mourning, power outages, and good ol' fashioned American laziness. (We're union, you see.) Apology #2 concerns our esteemed editor, Tim Minutiae. Tim has taken a month-long sabbatical, during which he has attempted to write a complete novel, more specifically, a zombie love epic. In his stead is the never-capable Rob Minutiae (hi, Mom!), who can best be described as a misanthrope, pervert, awkward lover, former alcoholic, current drug abuser, and charter member of NAMBLA. He has endeavored to do his very best with this issue, and any inconsistencies, falsehoods, bad spelling, or generally poor quality should be blamed on the sun, which has been rising in Jupiter all month and causing Capricorns a lot of grief.

In closing, we would sincerely like to thank all of the contributors to this issue. The quality of their work, as you, dear reader, can well see, is phenomenal. Rob hopes you will hang this one on your fridge (hi, Mom!).

Rob Minutiae

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Russell Lancaster

So I walk into the house last night, and our Asian exchange student is making his dinner. He's opening a can of something. Looks like a tuna can.

"Tuna?" I ask.

"Uh, bugs," he says.

"Bugs?"

"Yeah. what do you call them? Cocoons. They're from China."

I look at the contents of the can. It's full of inch-long brown things that look like, well ... yeah, bugs. But they're apparently just the shells, the aftermath of some sort of insect hatching.

"What kind of insect is this from?" I ask.

"I don't know. I can't read Chinese."

So he chows down. We chow down. They were OK. Kind of musky tasting. This morning, I rummaged through the trash to find the can. It was, indeed, all in Chinese, except for four words:

CANNED CHRYSALIS (FISH BAIT).

REMEMBRANCE

Boris Fishman

Today is six months since the day of my grandmother's death. My mother said, "Will you light a candle by her picture?" I asked, "This is whose way?" – my family subsists on a tangle of half-hearted associations with our native Russian culture, its adopted American counterpart, and a secular Jewishness, so I wanted to know which my mother was channeling at the moment – and she replied, "It's the spiritual way." The words were simple and poignant; I began to feel guilty that I wasn't going to the cemetery with her and my grandfather.

To light the candle at six months, however, or visit the cemetery: are these "authoritative" forms of mourning? My mother's gesture is a bastardization of the Jewish custom to light a candle for the deceased for a week after his or her death. The law says nothing about six months, or photographs, for that matter, so today's lighting, like the visit to the cemetery, is a concession to a less spiritual authority: the convention of neat numbers. Does this cheapen the intention? Does a lapsed Jew's inaccurate application of Jewish custom "downgrade" the value of her mourning? Conversely, what legitimizes mourning, what are the criteria that certify it as a sufficient or appropriate tribute or remembrance?

The smooth operation of society depends on ritual and script, and I understand why religious practice, primarily a source of solace and identity, thrives on it as well. But is it possible to grieve on demand? Think of the great orgy of mourning that begins to build on the eve of the 9/11 anniversary. When you wake up on the 11th, it's Ready, Set, Mourn! But isn't human emotion, that welter of chaos and impulse, utterly incompatible with such automaticity?

I don't feel an especial longing for my grandmother today. I cried for 36 hours straight during the weekend that she died, so that male guests at the funeral asked me to gather myself so I wouldn't upset my mother. I've felt little since that weekend, as if I had purged the sadness from my system. I think of her rarely and mostly with equanimity. These moments are unscheduled. Is that enough?

My grandmother was uncommon. She lost her family to the Holocaust, escaping to the Belarussian forests to forage and fight with the underground anti-Nazi resistance. She never spoke about it because she thought the stories would waste my time or upset me. She fell ill with cirrhosis six years before her death, and weathered the ravages of the disease with a staggering grace and humor. She never complained, and never lost hope. Self-regard was foreign to her, and if I'd asked her whether she wanted me at the cemetery on the six-month anniversary of her death, she would have told me to stay home and do my own things.

Until recently, death was an intellectual abstraction for me, which is to say it didn't frighten me. I'm not sure what precipitated the sensations of mortality that I abruptly started to experience recently. Surely my grandmother's death has something to do with it, but I'd ascribe equal responsibility to the fact that, after three years of post-college disorientation, I'm beginning to find safe harbors: an inchoate career, a woman I love. Death was unthreatening before because all I had to lose was a crushing sense of adolescent confusion.

What does all of this add up to? If I disdain convention and feel a consuming passion for the written word, isn't an essay about her a more "valuable" remembrance than a visit to the cemetery? Perhaps for me; if she was the kind of woman who relied on custom and tradition, wouldn't the cemetery on this day have been more fitting? My mother's tribute at six months is not flawed by its nod to a social habit that is nothing more than the lowest common denominator of cumulative human experience. She doesn't grieve on demand, because she grieves all the time. For her, six months is the same as six days, as six weeks, as six minutes. Ironically, to propose that her intention could be cheapened by a degraded manifestation is less a truth-seeker's complaint against philistinism than a gendarme's obsession with protocol, even when his domain is sincerity; the people who complain about appearances are the people who are insecure about substance. People like me.

I went to the cemetery after all, making it thirty minutes before close. Something about writing this compelled me to go; I was relieved it was a direct engagement with my grandmother's memory that did rather than a feeling of guilt before my mother. At the plot, the freshly turned earth planted with asters and mums, I rushed it a bit, conjuring heartbreaking images of my grandmother shuffling around the house in her slippers, bringing a wavering hand to her mouth during dinner, pursing her tiny lips to kiss me goodbye, and going to her rest in a simple blue shirt my mother gave her for one of her birthdays. It may not have been necessary. She is with me more than I know.



The Shnook!

REPRESENTING THE DARKER SIDE OF HUMAN NATURE!

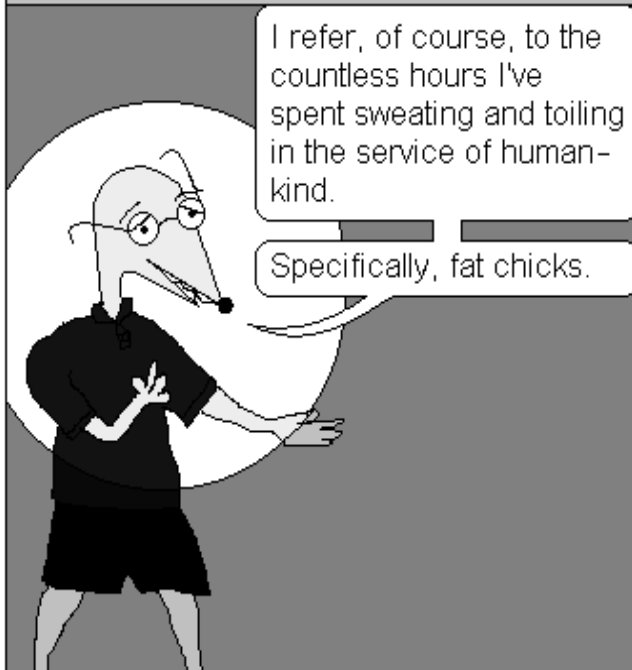
IN...

DINING HALL HERO!!!



Hey Shnook!
How do you
manage to get laid
so damned much?

Gentlemen, my bounteous success
with women and the resultant reputation
I've acquired as a glorious cocksman
stem, in solemn truth, from a deep
sympathy for God's lesser creatures
that has always beat strong within
my own heart.



I refer, of course, to the
countless hours I've
spent sweating and toiling
in the service of human-
kind.

Specifically, fat chicks.



HOORAY!

THAT'S OUR GUY!

WHAT A MENSCH!



As fire refines gold,
so suffering refines virtue.

SHIFF

The
End!

THE SEVEN-DAY ITCH

Kate Morales

Memphis, Tennessee got under my skin ... really. It did.

Labor day weekend, 2000, and I suffered an insurmountable case of wanderlust. Graduated from college, took a low-paying menial job. Bought my first car, er, truck. I am from Texas after all. Trucks are sort of de rigeur.

My best friend and I looked at a map – a huge map courtesy of National Geographic splattered on my living room wall.

"How far can we get away from this godforsaken state in under a day's drive?"

We looked at all the surrounding states and decided that heading east would probably be our best bet.

"Tennessee?" I asked.

"Sure! What the hell." she said.

I left the hotel reservations to her. So a week later, she and I piled into my tiny truck and Thelma-and-Louised it right out of Dallas.

She said she booked a Motel 6, only blocks away from the famed, fabulous and totally trashy Graceland in Memphis.

It was about 4 in the afternoon when we finally escaped the brutal Labor Day traffic and snaked through northeast Texas. Past all of the man-made lakes, past the tiny one-traffic-light towns and into the tall pine trees of Texarkana.

With her as my navigator and personal DJ, we could not fail. Screeching along to favorites by Sonic Youth, Tricky and De La Soul, we finally crossed the border of Texas into Arkansas. We were greeted by a sign that read, "Welcome to Hope, Ark. Birthplace of President Bill Clinton!"

It had bullet holes shot through it.

"How charming," I said.

"It is Arkansas, what did you expect?" she astutely pointed out.

Past the spooky towns and spookier countryside, emerged the brightlights of Little Rock, party capital of Arkansas, or something. We decided to stop at a Love's Trux Stop for a sandwich and to call our families and let them know that we were not dead or in jail.

It wasn't until 11 p.m. that we finally rolled into Tennessee, crossing a huge bridge across the murky Mississippi River and into Memphis. Finding the Motel 6 wasn't as scary as I thought it would be. We paid our money and opened the door to the little room. Two double beds, gross carpeting, something stained on the wall nearest my bed and bugs swarming around every light fixture. That really should've been our first clue. But we were tired and worn out and ready to go to sleep. The next morning, planes roaring overhead woke us up before the alarm did.

We got dressed and hit the town. We ate fried eggs, hotcakes, bacon and ham for breakfast – a true southern breakfast. The waiter chided me for turning down the biscuits and gravy. What can I say? I'm from the south and biscuits paired with white gravy just do not turn me on at all.

We did the touristy thing. We stopped at Graceland and marveled at the plastic furniture, shag carpeting and the overwrought gravesite of the former Elvis Presley. That night we hit Beale Street with the zeal of a thousand Japanese school girls. Because we were broke, we ordered nothing but Bud Light. And let me tell you, Bud Light is mighty tasty after you've had about four of them.

We watched a great rockabilly band, flirted with random men and took a zillion photos. We still had life left in us by Sunday morning and decided to peek into the Peabody Hotel. We took more photos, hit an Indian Buffet that was buried in the burbs and talked to a man in a gas station who told us about the silent racism still pulsing Memphis.

Sunday night = more Bud Light.

Monday, slightly hung over, but roadworthy, we decided to head back to Texas.

But the real kicker of this tale happened the next weekend.

I had to go out of town yet again for a friend's wedding. My then-boyfriend and I drove to Houston and stayed at a much nicer motor inn than the Motel 6 the previous weekend in Memphis. But when I woke up the next morning, I had what appeared to be bites all over my arms, hands and legs. By the end of the weekend, the bites itched so bad, I could hardly concentrate.

I went to the doctor who promptly diagnosed me as having scabies.

Oh.my.fucking.god.

Horrified, I forked out \$100 for a dermatologist to get a second opinion. He said the same thing. Frantic I called my friend – the one who picked out the Motel 6 in the first place – she had it too. A weeks worth of medicine later, and I was scabies free, but mentally scarred for life. So the moral of this story is: if a hotel room looks kind of gross, it probably is, and you should probably go back to the front desk, get your money back, sleep in your car and find a better place in the morning.

Memphis really got under my skin.

All works contained within both the print and electronic editions of *Noxious Minutiae* are copyright their respective authors. If we catch you republishing their stuff, for profit or otherwise, we're going to call up the cavalry and get real nasty on your ass. OK, maybe not, but we'll be really, really mad.

This is a page without number.

BUTT, IT'S ART!

A man decides to take the opportunity while his wife is away to paint the toilet seat. After he finishes, he heads to the kitchen to raid the refrigerator. The wife comes home sooner than expected, and heads to the bathroom, sits down and gets the toilet seat stuck to her rear. She becomes upset and in a panic shouts to her husband to drive her to the doctor.

She puts on a large overcoat to cover the stuck seat, and off they go. When they get to the doctor's office, the man lifts his wife's coat to show their predicament.

The man asks, "Doctor, have you ever seen anything like this before?" "Well, yes," the doctor murmurs. "But never framed."

C.C.

© 2004 T. Liron

My love,

Happy Valentine's Day! I am writing to you from a wonderland of snow and ice, far from the campfire, under a cold starry sky, from whence biting winds blow. The boys are asleep, the whiskey is gone, and the fire long out. I couldn't sleep; I kept imagining your fingers running up and down my back, mine in your hair. So here I am, pen in shaking hand, my mind, as always, with you.

We are so much alike, you and I, that it scares me. Or maybe it's the differences? We talked about this so much, again and again, and you say you understand. But sometimes I'm not sure even I do. I'm eighteen years older than you, eighteen years of waiting; and I'm not so young anymore. I want to fuck you again, hear us both scream, like a single being never divided.

The boys freaked out when I showed them your picture, but they quickly turned jealous. We look so good together, as good as you will look like with our next clone. How is the fresh little scamp? Give him a kiss from me, but not on the lips! I'm already jealous.

With love,

Your original,
Valentine's Day 2081

SUBMIT!

Noxious Minutiae is made possible entirely through the generosity of our freelance writers and artists. You, too, can join our band of merry fools, and all ya gotta do is send some fiction, non-fiction, poetry, photography, art, or whatnot to

noxiousminutiae@yahoo.com.

RAISINS AND GRAPES AT THE MUESLI PARTY

Shira Raider

(talking assholes with botox-fortified buttocks, like fartars under stiffly starched tight-stretched sheets, should fear for structural integrity.)

stem cells imprison flowers.
if youre not of the hothouse, youre pulling the plow.

where he drops the seed,
pre-infantile in uteri of latex

sez grandma, a prefabricated rubbermaid,
her decades yesterday's dinner.

(you prefer a drunken fry-up to
the toxic proof of the
whiskey with the drinking problem!)

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

Occasionally we here at *Noxious Minutiae* get letters from people smart enough to type. Occasionally we get them from people we wish had never learned. The following is an email exchange between a woman named Bonita L. and two NM editors:

May God have mercy upon your hell-bound soul and open your eyes to The LORD Jesus and His Truth. I ran into your site by accident. I did NOT read your blasphemies towards the precious LORD God Almighty. You truly do not know what you are doing just as The LORD Jesus said on the cross of Calvary so long ago. How sad.....how truly sad.

Bonita -

By way of introduction, I am an associate editor of Noxious Minutiae and its attendant website. I would like to make a few comments, and then I will turn it over to the editor and publisher, who has some more substantive remarks. First of all, I am confused as to where exactly these blasphemies are that you speak of. However, assuming that one of the pieces on the site is blasphemous, I question as to how you can know the content of that piece, since by your own admission you have not read it. That being said, I would also like to add that it seems very un-christian to me to go around damning people. "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned." Luke 6:37. If you truly believe that God is the final arbiter of sins and good works, then it is rather bold of you to assume the role of God and pass judgment on your fellow man. While I am not a religious person in the formal sense of the word, I was raised as a Catholic with a strong sense of faith. Christian (small "c") values have been ingrained in my personality, and if there is one principle to which I adhere, it is that I endeavor to be good to my fellow man and to see his views with an open mind. As you well know, one of the greatest commandments is to love thy neighbor as thyself. Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 22:39. Bearing ill will or grudges against me or anyone with whom you disagree seems to go against the spirit of that commandment.

- Rob Minutiae

Bonita,

As the publisher of Noxious Minutiae, I am very interested in learning what my publication is doing right or wrong. You've obviously found something on our site that is quite offensive to your faith, and I'd like very much to know what it is.

John 3:17-21 reads as the following:

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

I believe very much in confessing my sins, either to God or to my fellow man. I take no shame in my triumphs, my sins, and certainly not the things I publish. I hide it from no one, human or divine. If you take issue with something, I'd like very much to hear your specific thoughts (I scorn no opinion: tolerance is the only path to human progress) so I may either present my disagreements, or offer my apologies.

Consider Matthew 9:10-13:

"While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and 'sinners' came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?' On hearing this, Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

And also John 3:14-15:

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

I hope you won't ignore this letter because it comes from a self-acknowledged sinner. If you're right, perhaps it'll open my eyes. I also hope that you'll feel safe reading the article(s) in question. If you believe in Christ, you'll not be damned for reading them. I'm sure he'd appreciate your efforts to save my soul.

Thank you for your time, and your concern.

*Tim Minutiae
Publisher Emeritus*

P.S. - Yes, I'm aware of Matthew 4:6, but I'm not trying to dissuade you of your own beliefs. On the contrary, I'm interested in learning more about them.

P.P.S. - For further reading: Romans 14 and 15, James 4:9-12, and Matthew 7.

Satan is so adept at covering himself with words and more words and more words. You know exactly what my letter was about to you whether you address it or not. Truth changes not under cloaks of thought or words. As for kindness to you, the kindest thing I would ever be able to do to you would be to point out exactly what I pointed out to you in my letter and then pray for you. Jesus' words sound foreign coming from the pen of someone who blasphemes Him.....but that is Satan's tactic —

I do not desire further mail from you nor your colleague. This home and computer are dedicated to The LORD Jesus and I want no mail from blasphemers on the computer nor in my home. Such as does not honor Him is not welcome here.

May God grant you grace and mercy and open your eyes to Him and to His Son Jesus Christ before you enter eternity. That is my desire for you....to know Him....to know The Precious Son of God.....to know His Majesty.

Sincerely in The LORD and Savior Jesus Christ,
Bonita

We sure do love our readers!

COMA

Rob Degnan

Steven stood at the counter slowly chopping the bushel of carrots he had cleaned earlier. A small spike of pain pierced the stem of his brain. Dropping the knife, Steven rubbed his neck, squeezing his eyes shut. As of late these headaches had been more frequent and less painful, but this one had the makings of a real killer. His hands let out a few involuntary spasms as he tried to regain some composure. Gripping the edge of the counter, Steven leaned forward, hoping that the pain would somehow transfer from his head into the linoleum. As the searing ache subsided, he began to breathe slightly easier. Realizing at that point that he had been holding his breath for the better part of the past thirty seconds, he wiped the sweat from his forehead with an uneasy wrist, and went back to cutting his carrots.

The doctor said the carrots would help him with these headaches. He never truly bought it and quite frankly, Steven hated the taste of them. The door bell rang and Steven paused. It was too late for mail, but early enough for a delivery. The bell rang again. "A minute," Steven barked. Whipping his hands free of carrot shavings, dirt, and water, Steven walked across the kitchen, into the living room, and opened the door. He was greeted by the fading rays of the June sun, a warm breeze, and complete and utter silence; nobody was there. "Damn kids," he muttered. Children tend to find amusement in making people do something for no reason except to get a reaction. Steven's was always the same; "Damn kids."

The house seemed to glow in the sun's setting rays. Steven loved to watch the sunset, but rarely took the time to enjoy this free and simple pleasure. Today however, Steven decided to leave the heavy, four paneled door open, allowing the breeze and melting colors of the distant horizon to pass easily through the screen. Turning to go back towards the kitchen, Steven took a deep breath, and was overcome by the sensation that today was a good day to be alive. Although his only companion lately was the time stopping headache that visited time and again, Steven felt that if the pendulum of emotions was indeed in motion, today it was on the upswing.

Stepping through the kitchen door, Steven found his finely chopped carrots scattered on the floor. "How the hell..." he thought aloud. As he picked up the broken, orange, fragments and placed them in the wastebasket, footsteps came up behind him. Small and slow, they were the footsteps one might hear if it were the middle of the night. But it was not yet sunset. His heart pounding, Steven dared not look or move. He breathed shallow gasps as he froze in his place, listening to the soft, slow patter of two small feet approaching him from the other room. His tongue was stiff and dry, his throat closed in panic; Steven was not ready for this.

Peering out of the corner of his eye, Steven could see the top of a child's head slightly rising over the stove. His heart pounded faster. When he looked away the footsteps began again at a quickened pace. Whirling around, Steven yelled a sound that resembled fear in brave clothing. Falling backwards against the counter, Steven looked around to find he was alone. The house was unnaturally silent. A bead of sweat traced the edge of his forehead. Pulling himself up, Steven looked into the other room from where he stood. It was barely noticeable at first glance, but then his eyes caught hold of an image and would not let go. A child-sized handprint glimmered in the dusk light that kissed the windowpane. Steven floated over to the window on watery knees and uncertain feet. His callused fingers traced the outline of the print, but dared not touch it. That's when everything went black.

Nighttime was upon the house when he finally came to. His head throbbed, but he couldn't say why. Inside, the house was still and dark. Fear and caution kept Steven from making any sudden movements. Still clenched by an unknown fear, Steven stayed where he was on the floor. The house was now frigid from the door being left open. The moon was high in the evening sky and the streets were silent save for the wind shifting outside, clamoring through the leaves. A dog barked in the distance and after some time, Steven made his way over to a lamp. The knob clicked with the turn of his thumb, but there was still darkness. Grabbing a flashlight after deciding the electricity was totally out, Steven made his way to the basement.

He began to descend into the lightless cavern. The further he walked the more uncertain he was that he was actually awake. There was a smell that seemed to cling to the inside of his nose; it was everywhere. A musty, damp aroma that was ripe with age. It wasn't long before Steven realized he was walking on a flat surface, soft with dirt. His head swam with worry as he tried to make sense out of what was happening. Falling to his knees, Steven rubbed his eyes and began to cry. Uncontrollably shaking with despair, Steven began to sing a song he would sing as a child; a song that his mother taught him on a cold autumn day. "Whenever you feel sad and lost, just sing a song and all your worries will disappear. So he did. "Raindrops keep falling on my head..." And they did.

The sky had opened, soaking the ground and Steven. His knees sank deeper into the mud as he sang out louder and louder. "BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN MY EYES WILL SOON BE TURNING RED, CRYING'S NOT FOR ME!" But it was and he did. Steven fell to one side and let the rain fill in pools around him. Turning to his back, Steven peered at the blinding rain through squinted eyes. As he sank deeper into the murk of his own despair, a song by Burt Bacharach incessantly played in his mind, while far off on the other side of reality, his family signed the necessary papers. The plug had been pulled. Steven would never have a headache again.

Your eyes they call me
Oh beautiful strange woman
Do you see my heart?

Why is life so cruel?
Oh incredible goddess
Time is but a joke

I lie here waiting
Oh blessed fruitful woman
Can you heal my soul?

Your hand is so warm
Oh beautiful loving woman
Do you see the light?

I am leaving now
Please don't ever forget me
I won't forget you

HAROLD'S ORCHARD

Nolan Longstrider

This is a story that takes us to a time ago (a short time or a long time ago), to the land of Georgia. . .

Where there lived a certain very wealthy gentleman who owned acres and acres of peach orchards that grew the very finest and most delicious peaches in the land. But he owned so many acres that he could not care for them all. So he went into the village and hired a young man named Harold to care for one of his orchards. And he promised him that if he was faithful in his farming, he would receive a handsome reward at harvest time.

Harold eagerly accepted his commission. He moved to the tall watchtower that had been built at the edge of the orchard. And each morning, each afternoon, and each evening, he would walk through the rows, carefully examining the branches and the leaves and then the blossoms and then the fruit. He lovingly pruned them and irrigated and fertilized and sprayed them. When the evenings seemed too cool he would diligently light the smudge pots that kept the frost at bay. And by mid-summer, he could see that the harvest was destined to be exceptionally abundant.

But then one morning as he walked through the orchard, Harold noticed some footprints under some of the trees that were not his own. And he became alarmed at the thought that vandals or thieves might be invading the orchard. So at his own expense, he hired some friends to help him build a wall around the orchard. And when it was complete, he slept. . . and dreamed a pleasant dream about how proud the landowner would be of his faithful stewardship of the orchard.

But the next morning, as he walked through the rows Harold found even more unfamiliar footprints. And he panicked. Because the fruit was quickly ripening and he could not afford to have hooligans leaping over his wall and stealing peaches. So he left the orchard, locking the gate behind him and went to the Wal-Mart, where he picked out a shotgun for himself. And he returned to the orchard.

And now, instead of spending his days walking through the trees, Harold, walked around and around the top of the orchard wall, with the shotgun on his shoulder and a pair of binoculars around his neck. Day and night Harold walked the wall, gazing out into the hostile world around him, ever vigilant and wary of strangers who came too close.

And then one day, just at the time of harvesting, Harold was standing in his room in the top of the tall watchtower.

And he looked out with his binoculars over the top of the wall and down into the valley on the east side of the orchard. And there in the distance he could see 3 rickety, dilapidated old farm trucks chugging up the road from the valley to the orchard. And though he did not recognize the drivers of the trucks, he knew by the condition of their vehicles their ragged appearance and the color of their skin that they were no friends to him or his master. Clearly they were thieves on their way to storm the wall of the orchard and steal all the peaches. And though he was all alone, Harold was not going to surrender his produce without a fight.

He ran to the tool shed in the basement of the tower and found his cordless saber saw. And with saw in hand he ran to the place in the road from the valley where an old wooden bridge arched across a deep and treacherous ravine. And then Harold made a neat almost invisible cut through each board in the floor of the bridge, and then ran home to his tower to watch.

In time, the 3 farm trucks approached the ravine. The first went slowly out on the bridge as the floor gave a creak. Then the second truck followed and again the wounded boards complained. But when the third truck left the safety of solid ground, the weight of all three was too much for the bridge to bear. With a crash it shattered into pieces, plunging into the gorge with three trucks and three drivers not far behind.

When Harold, now safely at home in his tower, saw the demise of the invaders, he gave a great cheer! He popped open a bottle of the landlord's best peach brandy, and drank a toast to himself. For single-handedly he, little old Harold, had saved the orchard.

But it was just then that Harold noticed that there was a message on his telephone answering machine. So he pressed the button. And as he sipped his peach brandy, he heard the familiar voice of the landlord. "Hello Harold. I hope all is going well. I just wanted to let you know that I am sending over my stepson, Juan, with some trucks to pick up our peaches and deliver them to the market. Prices are excellent this year and the need for fresh fruit is great, so I have decided to split the profits with you in gratitude for your faithful service. . ."

And when the message had ended, Harold turned slowly toward the window on the other side of his tower and began the long, painful process of watching thousands of over-ripe peaches fall to the ground and perish.

PROCRASTURBATION

Sam Smyth

As I've mentioned in this column, the past few years of my life have been kinda destructive, if not altogether pleasurable. To put it in a way that means I'll have to hide this issue from my mother: I've had quite a bit of sex, but don't remember all of it due to, uh, chemical considerations. But, now, I'm trying to be sorta more on the straight and narrow now, which obviously has its hardships. However, I've found one very big and unexpected hardship.

I've had a couple purely sexual relationships. I'm trying to fix that and find a nice girl, so that I can bone her with no moral quandaries involved (although if I resort to the personals, I'll probably leave out the word "bone") and maybe have some meaning to it. I thought that a man of my relatively good looks and intelligence would have no problem. Fuck, man, was I wrong.

While covering my tattoos with a sweater and hitting on girls all clear-eyed may seem like the best way to go, consider: drunk Sam is fearless in the face of boobs and rejection. I'm like an alcoholic Superman, impervious to harm with the exception of the Kryptonite that is sobriety. Then again, maybe the comic book references may be indicative of why I haven't had sex in two months.

So, there is a girl that I sit next to in my religions class (I'm in clown college, don't worry, I haven't sold out that much yet), who I think is the bee's knees. Or something. Forget I said "bee's knees." Anyhow, unlike the Sam of old, the fearless booze/love machine (although take it from me, the more of a booze machine you are, the less visually appealing love machine you make), I am at a loss. She's very talkative, but I don't know if she's into me or just thinks we have common interests. And we *do* have common interests, so long as one of her interests is "railing the person sitting next to me in religions."

Ultimately, this unfortunate phase of respectability and decency has placed me home on Saturday nights, watching Mortal Kombat movies and having a lot of time to get reacquainted with internet pornography. Where I once was a guy who could land a threesome, I'm now a guy who doesn't even have cable so he can watch a threesome on TV. Basically, doing the right thing may sound great on paper, the fine print dictates a whole lot of boredom and masturbation. Thanks a lot, conscience.

This is the page immediately following the last one.

the monkeynauts

BY SARAH BECAN

as typed by bombo the monkey, #6764/co

Sam and Miss Sam were rhesus monkeys, both named after the Air Force School of Aviation Medicine.

Sam was launched on December 4, 1959, on the first Little Joe animal flight. He traveled 55 miles into space, and tested a couch and restraint harness that would later be used to protect human astronauts.



Sam was recovered after his re-entry and taken back to Langley Air Force Base, where he reportedly embraced Miss Sam "joyfully."

Miss Sam was launched on the second Little Joe animal flight on January 21, 1960. She flew to an altitude of only 9 miles during a 58-minute flight, and tested an escape system that would be used on later manned Mercury flights.



"THE REUNION WAS ALMOST HUMAN"



Miss Sam was recovered in good condition in the Atlantic Ocean.

Ham, a 4-year old chimpanzee named after the Holloman Aerospace Medical Center in New Mexico, was launched into suborbital space on January 31, 1961.

His rocket overshot and flew faster and higher than planned, and ended up 122 miles off course, but Ham was able to perform his trained tasks almost perfectly.



eeer



His capsule landed well outside its target zone, 60 miles from the nearest recovery ship. The landing bag was torn, and the craft capsized and was beginning to submerge when a navy rescue helicopter found it.

THAT AIN'T BUTTER

Mahatma Kane Jeeves

"I want to write a story tonight," said James, thoughtfully chewing on a plastic cup.

"What about?"

"My misconstrued intentions." he replied.

"What are your intentions, James?" Nicole asked, in a vaguely sarcastic tone of voice.

"To beat the world into rubble with my penis."

The world was not prepared for James' penis, nor was it able to halt the attack that rained semen and syphilitic discharges on the earth's major metropolitan areas. New York was first, by virtue of its geographic convenience, then Chicago followed. Soon after, Paris fell, choking beneath a canopy of viscous muck that knocked the berets off the greasy heads of law-abiding Frenchmen. The women were shocked and disgusted, and their male counterparts were made to be nervous by the destruction of their homes and businesses, their livelihoods.

Within hours, several other cities were washed away. Among these were Brasilia, Beijing, Kiev, and San Salvador. James took pains not to discriminate, racially or otherwise, when choosing targets for his terrible wrath. To their credit, representatives from the NAACP, the Anti-Defamation League, and the State of Israel acknowledged this resentfully.

James completed his awful vengeance with little opposition. A thermonuclear warhead was detonated near his buttocks, and he sustained a bizarre rash, but there was no other real threat. Once, after knocking over a skyscraper in Miami, a dazed woman clung tenaciously to his scrotum and refused to be coaxed. James flicked her from her perch, sending her to the concrete beneath, and stamped her into a grisly batter of gore and bone.

The moral implications of James' rampage didn't occur to him until he had decided to go for a swim in the Pacific Ocean, 300 miles west of Honolulu. The fact that he had transmogrified himself into a giant merely by thinking about it didn't even give him pause. He accepted it as an amazing and useful fact, then scrambled south to Tegucigalpa to soak some Latinos.

In fact, he had forgotten all about Nicole, who was skulking somewhere in New Jersey, staring in wonderment at her television screen while Bernard Shaw explained that a man-like giant was destroying the earth. Any recorded footage of the curious phenomenon was quickly destroyed as rains of man-juice drenched observers. She died later that afternoon, when half of Trenton was stamped into dust.

Meanwhile, in the depths of a briny bath, James had submerged himself up to his neck. Submarines fired torpedoes at his destructive genitals, and James playfully batted them away with mountain-sized fists. Not one came even close to hitting its mark, but it wouldn't have mattered anyway. James was a demi-god, absent-mindedly taking scores of lives with a flick of his dripping machine.

A helicopter whizzed by, humming in his ear like a curious bumblebee. James snatched it from the air between his thumb and forefinger, and grazed his stubby chin. Rope-sized bits of beard flew into the water, creating minor disturbances on the ocean's surface. He then tossed the abrasive warship into the water and headed in the direction of Bangladesh.

When James opened his eyes again, nothing had changed. Southern frats still ruled the Greek scene, the Kappas still refused to say "hi" when they passed him on campus, and James still spent his days in his room, gloomily masturbating and listening to Pink Floyd.

O, CANADIA!

Gin Gray

At times like these, with civil rights being capped, women's rights being limited, civil liberties being exterminated, and the rest of the world thinking we are nothing more than slithering dolts, I've been entertaining a simple question: Why not move to Canada?

Canada is like the cool older brother (or sister) we wish we could become, but fall far short. Canada has a plethora of political parties. No more "lesser of two evils" in politics. At least they can choose the lesser of 20 evils, that just makes a little more sense to me. Canada has decriminalized marijuana. People no longer have to spend their nights in dark basements or shady apartments to enjoy their herbal refreshment; at least there's a choice to do it that way in Canada.

O Canada! You let your people drink closer to the same age they can join your military, at least that way they can be drunk as they wave goodbye to their families. But wait, Canada doesn't lead offensive wars, so the likelihood of active duty is greatly minimized. Canada has an infinitesimally low gun violence rate. But wait, how would any of our citizens get exercise if we didn't have to run from the person with the gun? And now with the assault weapons ban lifted, we are urged to run even faster, fear even more, all while pretending that 'God' intended us to have AK-47's in the kitchen. Maybe this time America wins. We stay healthy by running from fear... but wait; don't we also have an obesity epidemic?

But America is my home. Who wants to live somewhere that people are respected as human beings first, sexual identities second? Who wants to live in a place where instead of fighting for civil rights they are handed to you at birth? Can I honestly respect a country that respects its citizens without first performing a battery of personality profiles to deem their worthiness (do you believe in God? Are homosexuals evil? Is war justified as long as your leader says so?)?

I mean, with all this good will, and a higher base level of equality, and human rights abundantly spread, wouldn't it start to feel a little less like home and a little more like a permanent episode of the Brady Bunch where every issue a human being can face will be solved within an allotted time slot, only using nurturing talk, mutual understanding and respect? If life were that easy it might become a nightmare in a way, too many carebear stares and not enough GI Joe offensive attacks.

Honestly, if I lived in Canada I would be extremely bored. Without GW to fight against, the Patriot Act to protect myself from, the crazy religious zealots to justify my lifestyle with, what would I do with my time? Would I learn how to fish? Maybe that weird sport curling would find new appeal? Maybe I would become a lesbian pot smoker who walks around topless (yeah, that's legal over there, too).

Who knows, all I know is that moving to Canada would make me readjust my entire life. I couldn't really be a liberal reformist anymore, seeing as Canada already figured out what we lack long ago.

BAND ON THE RUN: THE DEADLY LEGACY OF THE SIX-AND-SEVENS

Leonard Pierce

American popular music, since its very inception, has been a dangerous genre. From the sneering raw sexuality of Elvis Presley to the drug-soaked rebellion of the hippies to gangsta rap's dark mirror of American society gone sour, there has always been a sinister edge to rock, blues, and hip-hop that has never entirely been sublimated by the mainstream. But at no time in the history of pop has a band been as profoundly dangerous as the Six-and-Sevens. Legendary überproducer Steve Albini once described their live shows as "Altamont for people who aren't total pussies", and *Spin* famously dubbed them 'The Only Band That's A Matter Of Life And Death'. For nine years, they took the most sociopathic elements of rock music to extremes that no one else had equaled before, and that no one else may ever approach.

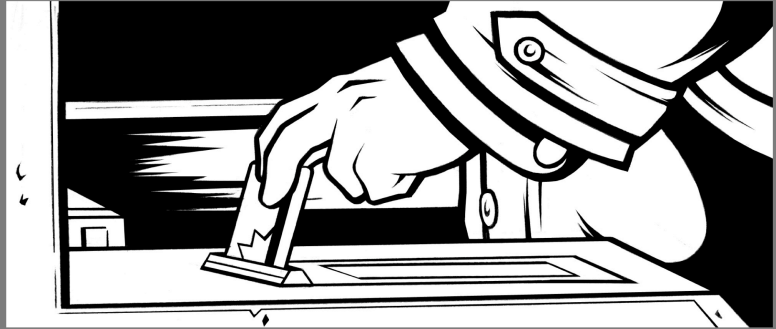
(continued on the back page)

This, too, is a page.

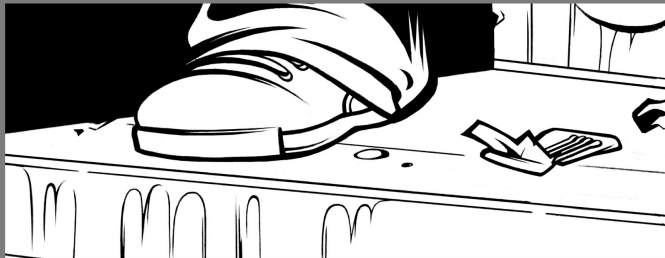
Abraham Todd.



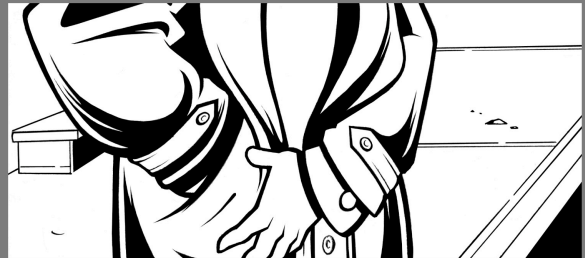
Abraham Todd never gives his spare change to bums.



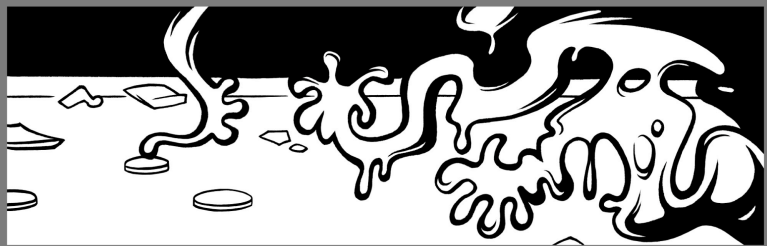
He keeps his change, and he tosses it onto the tracks of the subway each time he rides the train.



He pays at the turnstile to use the train.
He pays at the tracks to use the tunnels.



He does this because the thing that dug the tunnels likes metal. Any metal. It doesn't have to be coins, but they're convenient. It's either that or his keys.



This is the only thing pennies are really any good for.

(and it's all true)

Douglas Downer

The girlfriend said we had been invited to her uncle's for Christmas dinner. It was an invitation I couldn't pass up. I was young, broke and usually hungry . . . and besides, it was Christmas. I'd never been to her uncle's place. Hadn't met any of her relatives, in fact. What better time to charm the family than at Christmas dinner?

We reached our destination around noon. But instead of holiday lights and Christmas decorations, what to my wondering eyes should appear but rusting farm machinery, huge piles of old tires, burned-out cars and beat-to-hell washers and dryers, sitting in mud and puddles.

My girlfriend's uncle lived in a junkyard. A wisp of white smoke rose from his chimney, providing the slightest homey touch. Of course, the chimney was attached to a ramshackle trailer. We squeezed in - it wasn't even a double-wide, if memory serves - and I got to meet the family. There were maybe 15 of them. I'm pretty sure I had more teeth than any three of her relatives combined. And at one point, I realized I was the only male wearing a shirt. Maybe they hadn't opened their gifts yet.

There wasn't a lot of small talk. The women were wedged into the kitchen, preparing dinner, and the men were alternately smoking, snoozing or watching football on a snowy TV. This festive holiday scene was interrupted when a young cousin - I can't recall his name, but Little Elmer is probably close enough - decided to show off one of his gifts: a remote-controlled helicopter. All the uncles and cousins - Big Elmer, Bubba, Jingles, Rufus, Pinky, Bobo - lit up another Camel and went outside to watch.

Standing amid the old Sears batteries, heaps of scrap iron and doorless refrigerators, Little Elmer cranked up the copter. It hovered a few feet off the ground. The easily impressed crowd was suitably dazzled. Then Little Elmer got adventurous. He moved the throttle, and the copter took off like a shot, at treetop level, headed for the woods across the road. At that point, Little Elmer realized he didn't know how to make it turn around. What came next was a scene of combined horror and hilarity - Little Elmer getting frantic and the men folk all shouting advice and grabbing at the control box, and me stifling laughter as Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" ran through my head. As the copter faded from view, the boys mounted a search party. The crowd ran from the junkyard and into the woods. I returned to the trailer.

Over the next hour, one by one, the boys returned, crestfallen. Little Elmer's copter was nowhere to be found. Dinner came and went, the crowd subdued. Not even the Tuna Surprise casserole improved the mood.

The girlfriend and I went our separate ways shortly thereafter. I've always wondered what her family's 4th of July was like.

BAND ON THE RUN, continued

Founded in the Chicago neighborhood of the Ukrainian Village in 1989, the Six-and-Sevens consisted of hyperkinetic frontman Ellis Revere (a west side auto mechanic and DeVry dropout), slash-and-burn guitarist Tony Thoc (a Vietnamese immigrant and part-time fence), snarling bass player Tiffani Riccardo (a low-level mob princess and former prison cigarette snitch) and spasmodic drummer Mick Billiken (a reformed Rastafarian and longtime mainliner of steer's blood). Playing a frenetic blend of math-rock and cock-rock, the quartet recorded a single EP of passable post-post-post-punk entitled *Off Your Backs/On Our Nerves* in 1990 before embarking on a series of gigs across the Midwest that would make them famous - or infamous. The first show that made them a band worth noting (or, better yet, completely avoiding) was a VFW gig in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Revere, having what at first was thought to be an abreaction to some tainted Old Style that was circulating in the area, opened the set with a high-energy maneuver typical of the intense mathcore acts of the period, by spinning his mic stand around his head like a helicopter motor. He had performed this trick before, but always from an elevated stage; before the second number was over, the 5'6" singer had hospitalized three concertgoers, necessitated expensive dental work for six more, and entirely cleared the club. But, like the oft-told story about how only a few hundred people ever heard the Velvet Underground when they were together but every one of them formed a band, only a few dozen saw that first gig by the Six-and-Sevens, but every one of them filed a police report. At their second gig in St. Paul, Minnesota, Tiffani Riccardo responded to an ill-flicked cigarette by deliberately starting an electrical fire that burned one of the city's oldest rock clubs to the ground; and at their third, in tiny Fargo, North Dakota, Thoc and Billiken threw concertgoers who refused to buy a copy of their new CD down a flight of stairs. When they returned to Chicago, there were over a half-dozen warrants out for their arrest, and a legend was born. As with so many bands where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, each member of the Six-and-Sevens played their own unique part in enhancing the reputation of the group as the most vital-sign-reducing and life-threatening in existence. Ellis Revere was the band's mouthpiece to the press; in his interviews, he would drip acid on his detractors (literally), gutpunch anyone who he felt was not taking proper notes, and drop bombshells like "GG Allin was a failure. He said he'd kill himself on stage, and he couldn't even manage that. We intend to kill everyone who's not on stage - and we mean it." Expanding on tried-and-true techniques of the past, he would run over paparazzi who tried to get snapshots of

him; he'd then lie in wait for photographers to come and shoot the scene of the accident, then rush out and clobber them. Tony Thoc became best-known for hunting down writers who had criticized the band, or even given them less than stellar reviews, and carving a huge "6" and "7" on their cheeks with a straight razor. Tiffani Riccardo is best remembered for accusing every man in a given audience of trying to rape her, punishing them by spraying mace in their eyes and nostrils, and then doing the same to all the women because none of them stepped in to help her. And Mick Billiken's conspicuous consumption led him to smash his entire drum kit after each show (generally over someone's head), then break into a music store, steal a new drum kit, and destroy it as well the very next day. Their gigs were legendary not just for their musical proficiency, intensity, and feloniousness, but for the tremendous amount of time and effort it took to locate them. Only two years into their existence, they had a cumulative bodycount of nearly 30 people, or close to one fatality every seven shows. With so many people at risk and so many law enforcement agencies on their trail, it became a mark of sheerest hipster cred just to *find* a show by the Six-and-Sevens, let alone actually survive it. Just as millions more people claim to have been at Woodstock than were actually there, everybody who was anybody in the indie rock scene of the mid- to late-'90s shows off a scar, severed digit or gunshot wound they claim was inflicted at a Six-and-Sevens show. It's estimated that by 1998, at least 95% of people responding to internet message board postings about the location and date of a Six-and-Sevens gig were undercover law enforcement agents. With six albums (including the seminal *Mail Us Your Address And Prepare To Die*), close to a thousand live shows, and as many as two hundred fatalities to their credit, the Six-and-Sevens made such an impact during their near-decade of existence that it's hard to believe how quickly they've been forgotten. All Music dismisses them perfunctorily; *Rolling Stone* seems more interested in long-standing rumors about a Tiffani Riccardo snuff porn video than considering their historical and artistic legacy; and Robert Christgau is far too busy whining about having lost the use of the right side of his body at the one Six-and-Sevens show he attended than fairly assessing their place in rock music. In the end, we must leave it up to Mick Billiken, the sole surviving member of the group after the great Double Door shotgun massacre, to summarize what his band meant to the world: "Everybody talks about the east-coast/west-coast beef in rap like it was some kind of big deal. That thing dragged on for five years and there was only, what, two people killed? On our best night, the Six-and-Sevens could do that many before the second encore. Those that saw us know the truth about how great we were - assuming they lived and were left without brain damage, that is. And if they did, we really didn't do our jobs."