

COURT JESTER

Personal Propaganda

I've finally finished writing my unauthorized autobiography, *The Winner of the Slow Bicycle Race*, to be published next year by Simon & Schuster. In the process, I fell behind in preparing this issue of *The Realist*—which makes it either a late Spring issue or an early Summer issue. I opted for the latter. Subscriptions won't be affected since they're figured by the number of issues received. Rates: \$12 for 6 issues; \$23 for 12 issues. Please mention which issue you'd like your subscription to begin with. Back issues: #99 thru #119 at \$2 each. Also available: *The (Almost) Unpublished Lenny Bruce*, an anthology of the controversial comedian's articles and columns, for \$10. Our address: Box 1230, Venice CA 90294.

This Little Monkey Went on Television

An article in this issue, "Politics as Performance Art," is excerpted with permission from Marty Jezer's book, *Abbie Hoffman: American Rebel*, to be published in July by Rutgers University Press. Abbie's genius was to use the media as an organizing tool, by pulling off stunts as a vehicle for getting out information.

On Earth Day, I spoke at the Hundredth Monkey Project to Stop Nuclear Testing, heralding a 5-day walk in the desert to the Nevada Test Site, illegally located on land which was guaranteed to the Western Shoshone Nation in an 1863 treaty. Out of 700 nuclear bombs detonated underground, more than half have resulted in leaked radiation, causing contamination of groundwater, soil and the atmosphere. Organizer Rick Springer, a non-violent idealist, was psyching himself up to interrupt Ronald Reagan the next morning at the National Association of Broadcasters convention in Las Vegas. And he certainly got their attention. The spirit of Abbie Hoffman lives on. Unfortunately, the media focussed on the "attack" on Reagan, coupling it with the streaker at the Academy Awards and the blonde bimbo who runs onto baseball diamonds and kisses players against their will.

JFK and the Bush Connection

Political satirist Mort Sahl, who once worked for New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison investigating the assassination of President Kennedy, is now amused by a scene in the movie *JFK* where Garrison, played by Kevin Costner, meets with the mysterious Mr. X, played by Donald Sutherland, and takes notes—"CIA, Pentagon"—so that he won't forget.

As a result of the controversy caused by the film, NBC News correspondent John Cochran asked George Bush at a press conference, "As a former CIA director, did you ever go back and read the CIA's findings during that period and satisfy any of your curiosity?"

Bush responded: "No, I didn't have any curiosity because I believed the Warren Commission. I saw no reason to question it. Still see no reason to question it. I don't know much about the movie. I haven't seen it, and there's all kinds of conspiratorial theories floating around on everything. Elvis Presley is rumored to be alive and well someplace, and I can't say that somebody won't go out and make a movie about that."

However, CIA documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act catch the President in a blatant lie.

In a memo dated September 15, 1976, CIA director Bush wrote: "A recent Jack Anderson story referred to a November 1963 CIA cable, the subject matter of which has some U.K. journalist observing Jack Ruby visiting Trafficante in jail (in Cuba). Is there such a cable? If so, I would like to see it."

Bush was also curious about another Anderson column claiming that "the CIA withheld data in JFK probe" and asserting that then-CIA director James McCone had briefed Lyndon Johnson about a cable from the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City suggesting that "the Cubans may have been behind the assassination." CIA memos indicate that Bush wrote "Is this true?" in the margin. A few days later, he received a 5-page CIA memo disputing Anderson's allegation.

Yet another document shows that Bush asked a high-ranking CIA official, Seymour Bolten, about a news story in the *Washington Star* of October 1, 1976, connecting Lee Harvey Oswald to the CIA. In a memo dated October 4, Bush asked, "Will this cause problems for

Helms?"—a reference to former CIA director Richard Helms, who had sworn to the Warren Commission that the CIA had never "even contemplated" any contacts with Oswald. Bolten replied that "this article will further smear Dick Helms' reputation and probably cause him some anxious moments, but I do not see how it can result in any additional legal problems for him, as it is a gross distortion of the facts."

Issue #117 of *The Realist* featured an article by Paul Kangas, "The Role of Richard Nixon and George Bush in the Assassination of President Kennedy." Now, in the *Austin Chronicle*, David Armstrong has published further revelations:

• An FBI report made public in the late 1970s, which lay buried among the 98,755 pages of documents released at the time, indicates that within hours of Kennedy's death, "On November 22, 1963, Mr. George H. W. Bush, 5525 Briar, Houston, Texas, telephonically advised . . . that one James Parrott has been talking of killing the President when he comes to Houston." Kennedy had visited Houston the previous day. Bush was the head of a Houston oil company and in the early stages of an ultimately unsuccessful bid for the U.S. Senate. The FBI launched an investigation of Parrott, who denied ever threatening Kennedy's life. When questioned about the FBI report by the *San Francisco Examiner* in 1988, the then-Vice President's press office originally said Bush hadn't made the call and challenged the document's authenticity. Several days later, an aide told the *Examiner* Bush "does not recall" making the call. Parrott has no doubt it was President Bush who placed the call. At the time of the assassination, Parrott served as a volunteer for the Harris County Republican Party, which Bush then chaired.

• On November 29, 1963, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover sent a memo to the State Department, concerning the reaction of Miami's anti-Castro Cuban community to the Kennedy assassination. Hoover reports that on November 23, "Mr. George Bush of the CIA" was informed of the Bureau's findings. During the 1988 presidential campaign, Joseph McBride of *The Nation* asked whether Bush had worked for the CIA before becoming its director in 1976. "The answer is no," Vice Presidential spokesman Stephen Hart replied. Former CIA director Richard Helms said, "I don't recall anyone by that name working for the agency . . . He certainly never worked for me." McBride, however, cites an unnamed source "with close connections to the intelligence community" who "confirms that Bush started working for the agency in 1960 or 1961, using his oil business as a cover for clandestine activities." This source, who McBride says worked with the CIA from the late 1950s through the 1960s, said of then-Vice President Bush: "I know he was involved in the Caribbean. I know he was involved in the suppression of things after the Kennedy assassination." Shortly after McBride's article appeared in *The Nation*, the CIA began circulating a story that the George Bush named in the memo was not the Vice President, but "apparently" referred to George William Bush, who had worked for the agency at the time of the assassination. McBride tracked down George William Bush, who told McBride he'd been employed by the CIA for about six months between 1963 and 1964, but never received interagency briefings because he was "just a lowly researcher and analyst" and worked only with photographs and documents. Bush flatly denied he was the person named in the memo.

• Bush's name crops up in the personal phone book of George de Mohrenschildt, one of the most mysterious figures associated with the Kennedy assassination. A Russian-born nobleman with close ties to the oil industry and intelligence community, he is best known as the CIA "babysitter" of Lee Harvey Oswald. His involvement with the CIA and its forerunner, the OSS, began during World War II when he worked for the French underground in the U.S. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, he developed close relations with some of the wealthiest and most powerful individuals in the country, including oil tycoons H. L. Hunt, Clint Murchison and John Mecom. Another Texas oilman de Mohrenschildt apparently counted among his acquaintances was President Bush. His phone book, now on file at the National Archives, contains the listing: *Bush, George H.W. (Poppy), 1412 W. Ohio, also Zapata Petroleum, Midland 4-6355.*

• In October, 1962, George de Mohrenschildt convinced Lee Harvey Oswald to move to Dallas, and for the next six months they cultivated an unusual friendship. "Whatever his [de Mohrenschildt's] suggestions were, Lee grabbed them and took them, whether it was what

Death, Where Is Thy Bong?

As this is written, Robert Alton Harris is approaching the end of his 14-year stay on San Quentin's "Death Row" (our nominee for Worst Nomenclature in Real Estate History). Unfortunately for Harris, he was scheduled to conclude this residency on April 21, by means of lethal gas. Or, as the local news media chose to put it, "to keep his date with the gas chamber"—a description of the event that seems singularly inappropriate.

His date with the gas chamber? Hey, we've all been on some memorably shitty dates in our lives—I recall one double-date with a couple who'd had burritos for dinner, and the effect was rather like a date with the gas chamber—but to compare an execution to an unpleasant social engagement seems ghoulishly frivolous.

Harris was convicted of some genuinely ghastly and sadistic acts of homicide, the kind that lend validity to Lucky Luciano's alleged observation, "Some people, they better off they die." Still, any death, even that of somebody you'd just as soon use to test AIDS vaccines, should be treated with some gravity and respect.

Well (as somebody probably said to Harris toward the end), don't hold your breath. Death-with-dignity may be a fine ideal, but whenever the government is involved, you automatically introduce the element of *bureaucracy*, a concept that God evidently created to help standup comics make the rent.

Put state employees in charge of taking a life—especially in that game preserve for the logic-impaired California—and instances of ludicrous imbecility become almost inevitable.

For example, in mid-1991, about ten days before Harris was then booked to play the Final Room, some marijuana was reportedly found in his cell. Nine days later, he received a last-minute Stay of Execution. The response of prison officials, in more-or-less these words, was, "Well, at least now we'll have time to punish him for the pot."

This is a classic illustration of the mentality that has *Civil Servant* running just behind *Racetrack Tout* in various "Most Admired" opinion surveys. Here was a man who was a virtual lock to suck the fumes before the next election, and the prison system's primary concern was with nailing him for misdemeanor possession before time ran out. How exactly did they figure to *punish* someone whom they already intended to kill at the earliest opportunity? The options seem both limited and ineffectual, under the circumstances. Extending his sentence would clearly be counterproductive. So, do you suspend his exercise privileges? Ban him from the Rec Room? Disconnect his TV? ("Damn, I can do without *The Simpsons*, but I'm gonna miss *Top Cops*.") Here's an idea: No dessert for his last meal! That should teach

him a lesson.

Let's face it, the very concept of "punishment" as we understand it simply doesn't pertain to someone who chooses to contemplate his impending death while getting *good and high*.

Of course, the San Quentin staff wasn't just concerned with Harris, but with sending a firm, no-nonsense message to his fellow condemned. From the authorities' point of view, it's quite simple: "Look, if we let *him* get away with it, then *all* the guys we plan to execute might want to get loaded first. We're just afraid that it could be *bad for morale on Death Row*." —Bob Wieder

Barbie's Lawyer

After hearing me talk for an hour, Alan Berg said, "Enough already, namedrops keep falling on my head. Maybe you know famous poets, but I had dinner with Barbie's lawyer!" I wasn't aware that Barbie was in court but that's just where she is. She went to court over a new doll called Miss America which is fashioned after Miss America. Arthur J. Levine, Barbie's lawyer, claims Miss America ripped off Barbie's head. Mattel, Barbie's manufacturer, says they copyrighted Barbie's "look of compliant joy." Miss America's head has that look on it too.

The bodies are not on trial, just the heads, even though the bodies are even more alike than the heads. Miss America claims their dolls were modelled after the real Miss America, not Barbie. Of course, the real Miss America modelled *herself* after Barbie, which is what millions of women model themselves after, so perhaps Barbie should sue her human clones.

Barbie's lawyer, whom my friend had dinner with, argues that Barbie "is a stylized doll which does not look like any known human being." Miss America's lawyer, whom nobody I know ever had dinner with, says that "the concept of fashion dolls is to look like human fashion models." Now, who's right? How many of the six hundred million girls who've been buying Barbies since 1958 have become "stylized dolls who do not look like any human beings" by now? Hard to say. It's a chicken and egg question.

All we know is that in the beginning there was Barbie. After that came Miss America, both the human and the doll. Furthermore, Barbie is made in the USA. Miss America's made in China. There is global politics here. The Chinese have been also exporting the live organs of executed political prisoners. That's bad enough, although Mr. Bush still thinks it's OK to trade with China. But now they are making our Miss Americas. That just can't be. There is no room in the New World Order for that. —Andrei Codrescu



Jack Ruby Shoots Lee Harvey Oswald

time to go to bed or where to stay," his son-in-law told the Warren Commission. Oswald and de Mohrenschildt parted in April, 1963. Oswald returned to New Orleans, where he founded (and was the only member of) the pro-Castro Fair Play for Cuba Committee. De Mohrenschildt traveled to Haiti, ostensibly on oil-related business, stopping en route, according to CIA records, in Washington D.C. for a meeting with a known CIA agent and the Assistant Director of Army Intelligence. Seven months later, he was having a drink in a Port-au-Prince bar when he heard the news of Kennedy's death. He immediately asked if the suspect's name was Lee Oswald. When Oswald was arrested, a piece of paper was found in his pocket containing the unlisted phone number of de Mohrenschildt's last residence before leaving Dallas. In 1977 de Mohrenschildt told the *Wall Street Journal* that the CIA had asked him "to keep tabs on Oswald." Shortly after making that statement, he agreed to an interview with the House Select Committee on Assassinations. Within hours after making arrangements to testify, he was found dead, shot through the mouth. A 20-gauge shotgun lay near the body. The coroner ruled the death a suicide. In the months before his death, he had written a manuscript about Oswald titled *I'm a Patsy*.

Still, there's a fatal flaw in the movie *JFK*. In a black-and-white scene at the Texas Book Depository, Lee Harvey Oswald is shown, not with a rifle on the 6th floor, but in the cafeteria waiting for a call from his CIA contact. He goes to the Coke machine, drops a coin in the slot, down comes the bottle—*clunk*—and Oswald walks away, drinking his Coke . . . but without removing the cap. Thus, Oliver Stone's entire conspiracy theory goes down the drain, and I now believe that Lee Harvey Oswald must have acted alone, with one hand tied behind his back. —Paul Krassner