

THE REFRIGERATOR

SPECIAL
NEW
WORLD
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ISSUE!

#5

"THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG" ROCHESTER, NEW YORK



I was turning right onto University from Winton. There are three lanes there and I watched someone pull in front of me to get in the righthand lane as the light changed to red. I assumed he was turning right but he

just sat there preventing me from turning right on red. This pissed me off and I beeped at the guy. As I sat there though, I realized how Bush feels about Saddam leaving Kuwait.



War Is Dumb

When this war started we heard a story about Saddam warning his troops that he believed the United States had

somehow sampled his voice and created a "fake" tape of Saddam telling his troops to surrender, to lay down their arms and give up Kuwait. Now we were thinking that this could be an interesting war. Maybe holograms would even come into play like in Total Recall. We'd have holograms of Saddam appearing all over the Middle East championing democracy and urging his fellow countrymen to shave their moustaches and vote Republican. Hollywood could make a monster movie set in the Middle East that was so scary. . . or that had all sorts of deep subliminal messages. . . or couldn't we just have dropped really confusing leaflets or comic books instead of our "conventional" warheads.

It would even be interesting, as a friend suggested, to have Bush meet Saddam in the ring. Ten rounds live on CNN. George would probably wear the white shorts. Senator D'Amato wants Bush to "kill" Saddam. No imagination. War is dumb.



The Material World

I know that I am being surrounded by objects. In my house I'd have to set time aside to make even a casual

inventory of the rooms and what is in the rooms and stashed away in closets.

I also know that over the course of the years I have hardly bought anything, or rather most things I have bought were perishable, except maybe books, but even books I think half of them were given to me or I found them. All the pictures on the wall were obtained not only for free but symbolically—they are all significant. The furniture, except for the blue flowered couch in the living room, all the chairs and tables, all the lamps, rugs, the whole set up, I realize, has been taken over the years . . . from other people, from the street, or basements and attics of relatives. Each item was rescued from somewhere, I guess one by one in episodes out of recall now, and nothing purchased.

And I am being surrounded by more objects all the time, for I never throw anything out, and I take things other people throw out like they are offerings. I consider everything I see, if I am walking down the street I consider bringing home every lamp, broken cardtable, even machinery, record turntables, all are considered. The only thing I buy is paint, and lightbulbs, and

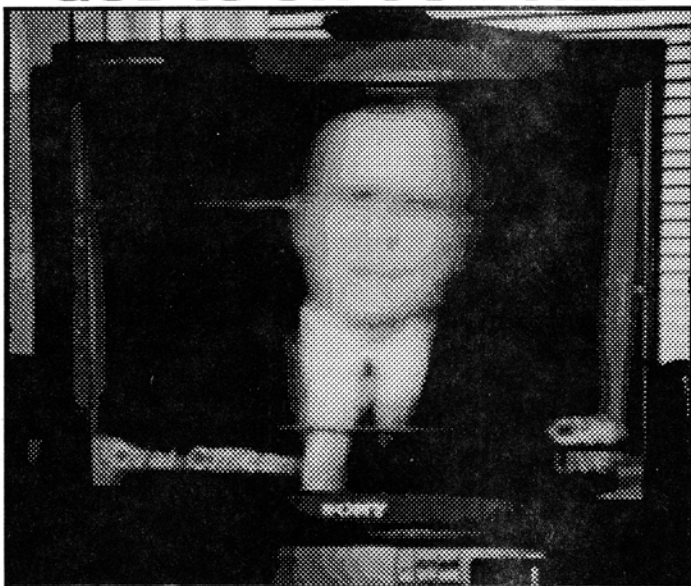
masking tape, things you have to get new. But small parts for lamps, and screws and nails, hammers and screwdrivers, these things are in abundance; ashtrays there are plenty of, lamps, virtually too many of them along with bookends, planks for building shelves, and chairs of course, I can't even imagine someone buying a new chair, even the fabric for redoing chairs is somewhere



A friend of mine recently made an appointment with a highly recommended therapist. He was having problems following through with almost anything he intended to do and felt this

guy could straighten him out.. The therapist was very busy so the appointment was scheduled for almost a month away. Of course when the day came my friend forgot about the appointment .

THE WAR ON TV "GOD IS ON OUR SIDE"



As the official war correspondent for the fridge, I was assigned the task of covering the "conflict" on an extremely limited budget. Other than the occasional cup of coffee and bag of chips, my expense account voucher will of necessity remain blank. The strangeness of the past few days' events has been sustained by continual media coverage. Channel 10 reached a low point when they led off their Thursday morning coverage with a story about newspaper headlines. If the sight of a local anchor holding up a newspaper wasn't enough, they intentionally left out the Democrat and Chronicle in a ridiculous attempt to avoid giving any free publicity to their rival media. The headlines all featured the word WAR in giant type, with many pages of info inside. For those who have kept the tube burning into the wee hours lately, the paper may serve as a kind of program for the TV coverage. Illustrations of the numerous aircraft and so-called "smart" weapons might help the viewer keep track of what is going on. Along with refreshments, it is hard to avoid the Superbowl mentality, particularly when some media people start keeping score. Unfortunately, and this encourages the abstraction, the score is kept in casualties.

There is a community feeling in this country that only exists when we are knit together by an overwhelming media event. All during the first nights of the war I was on the phone with people comparing notes and feelings regarding the coverage. The coverage itself has been comprehensive to the point that it lays to rest the fears that the military would exercise extensive censorship. In fact, we heard that the President and the military were glued to Cable News Network during the initial attack and were relying on the reports of journalists inside Iraq for their first information. This aspect of the TV war really hit home for me when I saw the ABC/INT video of the air attack on Baghdad. The tracers and small arms fire, magnified by night vision equipment, had a science fiction movie look; an almost dreamlike quality that belied the horrible reality. The network repeated the short clip over and over, hoping perhaps to insinuate it into our library of media war images.

Eventually, seeking respite from the constant speculation that filled most of the newscasts, I flipped through the channels and found solace in the Simpsons; the once controversial cartoon now appearing oddly comforting and homey.

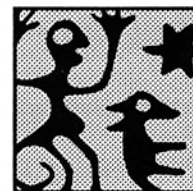
around the house—or at my sister's house if I mention it to her.

I don't feel frugal, but in fact the opposite. I'm glutted with material objects, most of which by now I am attached to, my house being a kind of personal museum where I can wander endlessly around in a state of obscure fascination. I hardly buy clothes either, by now all my shirts fit me more or less, and people give me ties, I have never bought a belt, never new shoelaces and there are reams of paper in my desk I got somewhere—I'm on the lookout for file folders, and anything to help organize my office. Could there be anything more incredible than this material world?

We don't know what the world should look like,
Nor how much of the scenery is finally rooted,
Or carried away on a flatbed truck in dreams.

There were Christmas trees rolling down the street,
And people deserted, for hours in grocery lines.

A friend of mine has a hat that looks right on him. I didn't even notice it. But when someone else put it on they looked, we thought, like a VietNam vet flyfishing. My friend said his father gave him the hat and his wife doesn't like it. He says when he wears his other hat, a black fedora, everyone says "nice hat" and he's sick of that. When he wears this tweed thing no one says anything. And that's the way it should be.



Can I return a video to Blockbuster that I have had for three days and get my money back?

One of the movies I picked out, we had already seen. I remembered wanting to see it, but when I got it home my wife told me we had already had seen it. Yes. "I'll give you credit," the clerk said, "but next time, bring the video back the next day if you've already seen it".

Can I get my money back for a quart of After The Fall raspberry/apple juice that fell through the bottom of the plastic bag the store put it in and broke. I remember leaving the receipt on the counter, but a good argument at the customer service desk could win this one.

I know we could have gotten our money back for a can of Wegman's beets that had peas in it instead, even without the receipt, but my wife eventually used the peas in a tuna casserole

Food.

The following recipe is a necessity for survival in the deep dark Upstate winter. Red Beans and Rice (not cajun)



Two tomatoes
one medium onion
several cloves of garlic
1/2 green pepper
large can red kidney beans (yes, canned. We haven't got all day here, you know)

oregano, dried red pepper, basil, bay leaf, salt optional meat
Chop onion, garlic and pepper, and saute in olive oil for ten minutes until limp. Add chopped tomatoes and cook for 5 more minutes. Add large pinches of oregano, basil and red pepper (be careful) and one bay leaf. Drain beans (juice from can causes gas) and add. Put brown rice on to cook. If you want meat, add leftover ham from mom or two turkey italian sausages to beans. Cook until rice is done at simmer (about 45 minutes). Serve over rice with Frank's Louisiana Red Hot Sauce. Eat and eat and eat until you explode. 1-4 servings depending on how much self control you have.

Overheard in diner: "I think clubowners and general contractors are all insane."



Taking An Idea To The Hilt

Once in a while I consider insulating the attic with empty beer cans, lining it from floor to ceiling, like in sections maybe with the labels turned out—alternating, say, Genesee Light (with its vivid red-white-and-blue label) with Old Vienna, whatever. If I did this I suppose eventually I'd grow weary of the appearance, I mean of the whole attic completely lined with beer cans, so I'd end up covering it over with wallboard, leaving the cans in there as insulation.

In the future another earnest renovator, reconsidering this attic space for his own purposes, just as I am at present, would no doubt discover these beer cans, exclaiming aloud: "holy cow!, I can't believe it—someone has lined the walls of this place with beer cans—I can't believe someone actually did that!" He'd race downstairs to tell his family, and then they'd all be up in the attic staring at the spectacle.

I would have done a complete job of it, lined up the cans perfectly and running up the sloping ceiling walls to the peak. From my point of view the idea has no merit unless the whole attic is done this way; doing one wall, or some limited design, would just look like somebody at a party got a little insane, or like a piece of Pop Art.

Every time I imagine insulating the attic like this, this same scene follows, so it, like an inevitable future, is attached to the speculative project. Beer cans still pile up generally—there is no stopping that. I imagine it would take me not more than six months to line the attic, at a cost of about . . . what?—in terms of what I would not get, you see, from the five-cent return for each can—maybe \$100.00, I don't know, I haven't figured out the square footage for the total project. Beer cans are money, but psychologically extra money—which I usually use to buy more beer, because I take back such huge carloads of cans and bottles I get maybe fifteen or twenty dollars at once and am easily induced to pick up a case of beer with that, on sale (especially cans are on sale).

So, anticipating the completed project, all the way to the discovery in the future by a future occupant of the house . . . so, the question now is: why don't I proceed with this idea, since it has occurred to me several times? I am not at all shy about proposing the idea. The real question seems to be: why talk about it, if you aren't going to do it? I mention it to other people, and they think it is a joke, but the truth is I am considering doing it; it's in that light, the possibility of actually going ahead with it, that I am willing and eager to talk about it. Otherwise, as a joke, it isn't even that funny.

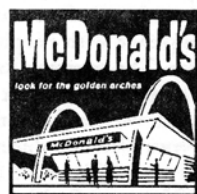
Of course I have wondered about the practical value, insulation-wise of using beer cans as a material, cans which are made of light scrap

metal (they seem to get lighter and lighter over the years). I figured the cans would create a kind of airpocket, a whole system of beer can shaped airpockets, fit snugly from floor to ceiling, with the rows staggered, probably, to prevent any gaps. If it did work it would be one notable case, the most grandiose conception yet, anyway, of this particular homeowner and small projects man.

Not knowing the answers myself to the technical aspect of my dream, I asked for information in the local hardware store about the possible Rh insulation factor of . . . beer cans. "I'm thinking of lining the walls of my attic with empty beer cans," I said, "and I wondered your opinion: do you think this would have any insulation value?" He said, "did I hear that right?" "Yes, what do you think?" I said. Well then he stared at me for a long moment, and finally said: "are you using anything else?"

"No," I said, "I was hoping that might do the job." I realized he thought I wasn't, perhaps, totally serious, but was offering some mere crank question—like just to amuse the hell out of everybody. Then he said, "You're actually going to do this?" Well now, I thought, this hardware store clerk is beginning to imagine the thing for himself. It's quite a prospect once you begin to consider it. He said, "I'd suggest some other way, if it is insulation you're concerned about". Here's a guy who admits he has enough beer cans to line his attic, and he has alot of time on his hands. Must do nothing but drink beer! Those might have been the clerk's inevitable thoughts. I just ignored that. "What would be the best kind of glue to use, do you think?" Aha, he sprung into action with that. "Well, let's see," he said, and then he waved over another clerk, who was the boss, and brought him in on the debate. "Hey boss," he said, "what would be the best glue to use to stick, um, beer cans, to, um, wood—is it a wood surface you're dealing with, sir?" "Yes," I said, "a wood surface." I figured the boss would probably think this was some kind of art project. He hadn't been told I was intending to insulate my attic. "Here, use this," said the boss, pulling a tube of glue out of nowhere and handing it to me; "this will get you started." I felt the two of them winking at each other.

When I got back to my house I was exhausted, and my mind was racing. I put the tube of glue down on the kitchen table. I didn't feel like doing any work, on the attic, or anything. I just went to the refrigerator, and got a beer, and sat in the dining room, thinking it over, waiting for all eventualities, as people say. It was like as long as I had a beer can in my hand, I was sort of still considering my project.



This month's diner report special for the Reverend and Her. It occurred to me recently that I was leaving out a diner that deserves attention from any aficionado of the bottomless coffee cup. Spiro's on Monroe near Gitis has occasional flashes of brilliance and regular entertainment provided by the comic waiter on Saturday mornings. If you like your eggs served with terrible puns (and who doesn't?) and have a fondness for souvlaki, Buffalo style, Spiro's is a necessity. I recommend the chicklaki plate, served in direct competition with Aladdin's, and the chicken soup, which along with ginger ale, forms my favorite hangover cure. You have my permission to lean over the table and make comments on various current issues being discussed. Put your cig out first.

It's while backing the car out, into the already Playing movie of the street traffic, it's decided Then . . . who other people are. Other people Are random, and unreliable witnesses. Why, Inconsistent remarks flood from their lips!



Those who are comparing the burgeoning peace movement to that of the Vietnam era would do well to consider one item that I found particularly moving while perusing the news. A group of Brockport High

School students held an anti-war protest on the morning of January 16. In 1969, at the age of fourteen, I participated in a similar event at my high school. The reaction then was to call the police, lock the doors to the school, suspend the 'leaders' and then give us 'guidance' as to how wrong we were. In Brockport, the reaction could not have been more different. The students were invited to discuss their feelings about the impending war with the principal. He, in turn, called the local Representative, John Lafalce, who happened to be in town. Lafalce came out and led a discussion with the protesting students and others who supported the war. A spokesperson for the school district characterized the entire experience as beneficial and educational for all involved. I was struck by how much we may have learned from the Vietnam experience. That a small town school district could react so well to a potentially negative situation bodes well for all of us. Perhaps we are transforming our attitudes in spite of the war.

(Filler poems)

She was silent, shopping in a Christmas rush,
Behind the windshield wipers, crying, in the
Rain's onslaught during a dull December . . .

He was compromised in silences he helped shape,
The adolescent cowboy sinner. For he watched
A million films of himself, was riding on the
Boxcars, drinking stale beer at dark tables
With several unknown friends. He wanted
Perfect life, and talk that wasn't prejudicial . . .



The Refrigerator Talks Back!

Refrigerator,
We thought we had lost you;
how nice it was to find you
in Kinkos after sliding
through the ice and snow.

Here are some things to bide a minute or two.

Gobi/Her, Rochester

Dear Gobi/Her,

I long to converse with you.

Signed, the only single editor.

(The other editors suggest sending \$1 to Colander Boy Publishing, PO Box 18754 Rochester, New York 14618 for mind altering material such as Hotel Dire and Tales From The Diner Pts. 1&2. Highly Recommended.)

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