



Volume 7 • Issue 7

Ice Cream

"Cream rises to the top...so do dead fish. Which are you, boy?!"

I wouldn't go so far as to say I'm orally fixated; I simply find myself chewing on objects when I'm not paying attention. Pens, the frilly edges of notebook paper, paper clips, phones. For those of you out there who have never put a paper clip into your mouth--don't. There is something about the shape that allows it to pinch the smallest sections of your tongue. Tiny matter, sure, but it hurts like the devil.

When I was younger, so much younger than today, I would vent my pent-up aggression using my mouth. Seething with fury at the sheer injustices of the world, I would wrap my tiny maw around the edge of doorknobs and bite until it hurt. It sounds foolish, I know, but now I get a perverse kind of pleasure out of the knowledge that there are people living in my childhood home and wondering how teeth marks got on all the doorknobs.

There was also the time I almost broke my jaw on the fat end of a carrot. I could barely get the whole thing in my mouth, it was so thick, and I had to use my hands to assist in the chewing action. Yeah, fat carrot ends are hard, but then again, so is life. If my life had been easy, I might have been overly surprised that I was being battered with the fat ends of a pair of two-foot-long carrots by some hired heavies. But I wasn't. In fact, it seemed like just another day at the gun factory. Under that onslaught of fruit (They are defined as fruit. They don't taste good with cheese), it didn't take long for me to start gibbering and eventually lose all sense of where I am. A sort of orange hardness wrapped me into a pair of pants and protected me as I faded into unconsciousness.

What would you do? You wake up, you're in a checkered room lying on a pile of frozen peas and pearl onions with a bunch of ice cream vendors around you. They're all packing very dangerous looking carrots, and then one says:

"You've been our deep, deep cover operative--"

Well, regardless what you do or say, it's all rhetorical. I know what I'd say...

"Carrots?" I asked. "What kind of freakos are you?"

"You know, the whole biodegradable thing...." he said while shrugging. The men behind him shifted uncomfortably, as though I had just pointed out that their heads were on backward, or maybe that the President had just farted. "Besides we feed them to the squirrels afterwards. They get tired of Snickers bars."

"Uh.....the rabbits?"

"Different department," he said. "That's off the topic though. You signed a contract many years ago to go out into the world and collect data for us, and the time has come for you to come back to the office and turn that data into information we can use for the Plan."

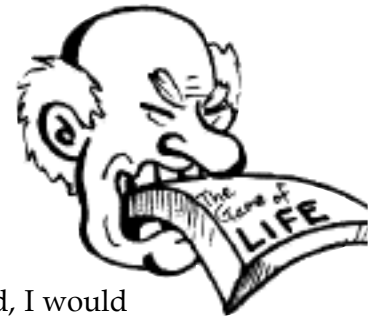
"Tell us what you know," they said, fingering their carrots.

A difficult task, especially when what you know mainly consists of what you learned on the back of children's sugar cereal boxes. Nevertheless, I would rather have told them about the fat content of Cocoa Pebbles than undergo another session with those carrot billy clubs.

Funny, it was really dark in there, but I could see amazingly well.

I explained to them carefully that they must have had the wrong house, or at least the wrong tenant, because I certainly didn't remember signing any contracts and had no real interest in coming to work for them.

"I'm sure you'll enjoy being aware of working for us. We have our own health plan with dental coverage...."



Continued on page 2 of GDT...



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Editors? We don't need
no steenking editors!

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(i'll never going to join a bunch of guys in white suits who pack fruit!)
"...free classy uniforms with carrot holsters...."
"Please save me the self-flagellation," I retorted.
"...paid vacations..."
(oh no..he's starting to play hard ball. no matter, i can handle it)
"...a company car..."
(must not give in. you can break my body but you can not break my mind...grrr)
"...and all the ice cream your stomach can hold...."
"You guys got a pen? I think I left mine in my other pair of pants?"
Hey, everybody has their Achilles Heel, I like ice cream ...fuck you. I sang like a dreidel.

Seems I was sent to infiltrate average life, report back and explain it to those who Just Don't Understand. The only problem is, where to start? Parliamentary procedure, survival of the fittest, sock drawers, religion, kosher food,[†] Robert's Rules of Order, astrology, drier lint, Bucket lint, lint in general. How am I supposed to explain lint? It just is. People believe in lint. They accept it. Status quo, quid pro quo, nice to see you again Clarice.

The revelation of my apparent previous career choice did explain a cacophony of idiosyncrasies I'd identified in myself, however. Ice cream being one of them. If I really had been a deep cover operative for those carrot wielding ice-cream thugs, they didn't blank my memory well enough. I could still remember being pulled out of the deepest cathode ray reverie by the sound of those ice cream trucks. Synaptic-motor response administered through the deep hypnotic broadcast of the truck's PA system and special ingredients in the Product ("Looks like we're gonna pump you full of hypnotics. Let me check.... Yep, you're in luck, we're only going to ruin your mind, not your body"). Homogenized,ultrapasteurized, artificially flavored, artificially coloured, fat free, fat added, now with NutraSweet, extra nipp-

"-Hey what's this?" queried Corrie.

An abrupt memory had muscled its way to the surface, probably induced by their horrid fruit drugs.

"A refrigerator. Modern man uses it to cool his food, thus inhibiting the growth of bacteria on said food, thus avoiding spoilage longer, thus allowing modern man to throw said food out because he is wasteful, not because said food is inedible," I responded.

"O....K.... Anyway, I can put my sandwich and Coke in it," he said over his shoulder as he walked toward the object of discussion.

"No." When I have a bad day I get very clipped with people.

"Why can't I put my stuff in your fridge?"he counter offered.

"Because there's no room, that's why." He was just as much of a fucking moron as my cat.

"What the hell you got in there then?"

"My ice cream. Don't touch it."

"Tell us what you know," he demanded. So I did.

I waxed poetic on the topics of cyanocobalmin and how BHT was added to packaging material to help preserve freshness; about virgin births and that cats can be both alive and dead if they're in a box. I tried. Really.

[†] Religion is hard to explain, but kosher food is even harder.

Bite the Wax Tadpole



Bite the what?

When Coca-Cola first started marketing their product in China they tried translating the name into Chinese characters phonetically, so the characters used would most closely resemble the name "Coca-Cola" when spoken. They neglected to sufficiently research what the Chinese version of Coca-Cola, actually "Ke-kou-ke-la," translated to. The phrase actually means, "bite the wax tadpole," or even, "female horse stuffed with wax," depending on what region of the country you live in. The company realized its mistake only after several thousand posters had been printed, at which point they decided to spend a considerable amount of time trying to find a more suitable Chinese name. After rummaging through forty thousand more Chinese characters Coke finally settled on a name that translates as, "happiness in the mouth," or "Ko-kou-ko-le."

Go ahead Mao, bite the wax tadpole! What could happen? You're already dead. Besides nothing worse could happen to either of you for the rest of the day.

Helpful Hints™ From Uncle Sam

"The bright, white light [of a nuclear blast] can injure the eyes. The injury may vary from temporary blindness or loss of night vision to total blindness. It is very important to *never* look at a nuclear explosion or fireball - particularly at night."

"Nuclear Weapons Effects," Correspondence Course of the US Army Ordnance Center and School, November 1976



Reality Check:

-by Kelly Gunter

While I was sleeping...was everyone sleeping?

I woke up to find, on the cover of Audubon, the words, "The Bison Massacre." Funny, until now I hadn't heard anything about the killing of the bison. I watch and read the news sometimes, but I am by no means avid about it. After reading the article I pressed my friends and family for information: "Had they heard anything about this? Tell me what you know." The answer, which was not totally surprising was that; yes, they had heard about it, but no, they hadn't heard as much as I began to inform them of. There seemed to have been a few short blippits in amongst the much more interesting scandals of today's politicians.

So I thought I might use my position to help inform a public, who probably doesn't realize (or care), that there is something of importance to be informed about due to mismanaged media. On March 20, 1997, park officials confirmed that the Yellowstone herd, whose size was last estimated at around 3400 has had it's numbers thinned by the removal of over two thousand bison. Nearly two-thirds of the Yellowstone herd, the only free-roaming herd of wild bison in the world, are dead as a result of a harsh winter and an even harsher politically sanctioned slaughter.

This year Yellowstone faced the severest winter it has encountered since 1943. A combination of freezing rains and heavy snowfall had made foraging for grass nearly impossible for the sizable populations of Yellowstone Bison. Often they would have to burrow through four feet of snow to uncover an impenetrable layer of ice. The only feasible feeding grounds to be found were near the streams, rivers, and hot springs. One bull even took to eating the welcome mats from the visitor cabins to keep himself fed.

In the winter the park is closed down to normal vehicular travel, but the roads are kept well groomed for people who wish to go snowmobiling. Because of the high snow fall, these roads became ideal trails for the retreating herds of bison in search of foraging grounds. The bison took to the roads in record numbers, only to be stopped at both the northern and western borders.

The cause of the ensuing execution is to be found in a disease called "brucellosis," which is known to cause premature abortions, low milk yields, and open sores on cattle. Brucellosis is carried by many different types of domestic and wild animals, including both the wild bison and elk of Yellowstone. Montana, the state bordering Yellowstone to the north and part of the west, currently enjoys a brucellosis-free status. Montana's Department of Livestock was given reason for concern when in 1985 the U.S. Department of Agriculture's

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) made threats against its status if any livestock were found in the state carrying the disease. From this point on, Montana's Department of Livestock demanded that Yellowstone be responsible for its herd of Bison, and assist in actions to relieve the possible threat they caused to Montana's livestock...even though the bison pose no identifiable threat since there have been no cases of cattle contracting brucellosis from bison in the wild.

On both fronts the bison were to be kept in trapping facilities and tested. Those who tested positive for the disease were to be shipped off to slaughterhouses, while those who tested negative were to be held or transported to quarantining facilities elsewhere. Unfortunately the heavy snows early in the winter season made the holding facilities at Gardener inoperable, and agents of the Department of Livestock, feeling they had no other recourse, began to shoot all the bison they could not catch crossing the borders. On the northern front, park workers were charged to hold all bison and ship them off to slaughterhouses, regardless of their disease status. In late February all bison who remained in the park were showing signs of severe starvation. By the end of this entire ordeal, over 1,070 bison were shot or killed in slaughterhouses, an estimated 900 starved to death, and about 700 others were unaccounted for, but their chances are grim.

Many attempts were made on almost all sides to find solutions to the problems, but it seems it was to no avail. Several Native American tribes requested that the bison testing negative for brucellosis be shipped to their reservations, to establish free-roaming tribal herds, but their requests went unanswered and the bison testing negative continued to be shipped to the slaughterhouses. A coalition of Wyoming ranchers and conservationists urged the Clinton Administration to drop the threat of eliminating Wyoming's brucellosis-free status on the premise that the transmission of brucellosis to cattle by wildlife poses an insignificant threat and the killing continued. Officials of APHIS even wrote to the governor of Montana stating that if the bison were kept on public lands outside the Yellowstone border, this would not threaten Montana's brucellosis-free status, and the governor replied that the only way to stop the shooting would be by direct order of the President. Yet the Secretary of the Interior responded that the federal government hasn't the power to compel the state of Montana to stop the shooting of bison. Each group involved seemed to assume that they could have done nothing to stop the situation, and none will take responsibility for the slaughter.

There are a few additional problems brewing up in Congress. In the U.S. Senate, Max Baucus, a democratic senator from Montana has said, "Perhaps the bison in

the park should be managed a little more. [Yellowstone] is not a wilderness area." He is fully in support of Senate Bill S.745 that is calling for the round-up and testing of all bison within Yellowstone for the brucellosis disease. Any bison that tests positive for this disease would be destroyed. What the senator seems blissfully unaware of is that these bison are wild animals, the methods and technology used to control and transport cattle are totally ineffectual for bison. A sizeable proportion of the bison that were transported to slaughterhouses arrived dead or seriously injured. The very idea of testing all the Yellowstone bison and destroying those who carried the disease is even more inane when you consider the even larger population of brucellosis positive elk in Yellowstone, who might just as easily pass the disease back to the bison. At the same time Senator Conrad Burns had accused the Superintendent of Yellowstone, Mike Finley, of being a "dictator" rather than a superintendent, after Mr. Finley attempted to cease tending the snowmobile roads in the park to slow the bison from leaving the park so readily.

In the aftermath of this tragic incident a few minor notes should be made: The only bison that could have posed a threat to Montana's livestock were pregnant females who tested positive for brucellosis, and yet all bison were shot without distinction; bulls, calves, unpregnant females, and especially those bison who had tested negative for the disease. Auctions held to sell the bison parts grossed well over \$102,566, and all of the proceeds went directly into the Montana Department of Livestock. An owner of one of the slaughterhouses reviewed lab results from two hundred of the bison slaughtered on his premises to find that only two of them had been actual carriers of brucellosis. This result was contested by the Montana State Veterinarian, but it can not be refuted that the wild elk population in the region have a higher percentage of carriers among them, and no action was taken against their species in order to protect the state's livestock. Finally a little additional information that shocked me when I read it, **livestock can be vaccinated against brucellosis!**

By this time we are left with the memories of over two thousand dead bison, all the involved organizations pointing the blame at someone else, and a catastrophe that could have been prevented and never should have happened. It seems apparent to me that several of our representatives in Congress are completely out of touch with reality and may only make the situation worse. The American Bison had replenished its herds from a mere twenty-three surviving bison at the turn of the century and it is hard to tell whether they might be able to survive this continual narrowing of their gene pool. If this article upsets you in any way, please let your voice be heard, say something to others or contact the people listed in the column beside this.

A Brief Time line

- August 9, 1996: The National Park Service and the State of Montana release their Yellowstone Interim Bison Management Plan, which calls for the Park Service to assist in the rounding up and slaughter of bison leaving the park.
- November 14: Montana Department of Livestock begins rounding up and shooting bison near West Yellowstone.
- January 4, 1997: Park rangers send the first load of bison away for slaughter.
- January 10: The total reaches 254, with another 220 in corrals. Yellowstone Superintendent Michael Finley asks Montana Governor Marc Racicot to meet to review the plan.
- January 19: The total killed breaks 1988-89 record of 569, the maximum projected in the plan.
- January 22: Park Service begins brucellosis testing for captured bison.
- January 23: Park Service stops capturing bison for testing and slaughter, increases efforts to haze them back into the park.
- February 1: The kill total tops 750.
- February 11: Park Service says hazing isn't working, returns to capturing bison.
- February 20: The kill total stands at 944.
- February 20: NPCA calls on Superintendent Finley to begin feeding program for the interior bison herd, already showing signs of widespread starvation.
- March 6: The kill total rises to 1034.

People to contact:

(write, call, e-mail, or fax, just say something)

- Yellowstone National Park: Superintendent Mike Finley (307) 344-2002, P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone N.P. WY 82190, E-mail: mike_finley@nps.gov
- State of Montana: Gov. Marc Racicot (406) 444-3111, Fax: 406-444-4151, Capitol Building, Helena MT 59620
- Dept. of the Interior: Secretary Bruce Babbitt (202) 208-7531
- USDA: Secretary Dan Glickman (202) 720-2166, 14th & Independence Ave SW, Washington, DC 20250
- President Bill Clinton: (202) 456-1111, Fax: (202) 456-2883, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington DC 20500, E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov
- White House Council on Environmental Quality: Ray Clark (202) 395-5750
- APHIS: Administrator Terry Medley (202) 720-2511
- Inter-Tribal Bison Cooperative: Executive Director Mark Heckert (605) 394-9730
- Washington office -- Jerome Uher (202) 223-6722, ext. 122
- Rocky Mountain Region office -- Mark Peterson (970) 493-2545
- U.S. Forest Service: Tom Darden (202) 205-1275
- The Fund For Animals: D.J. Schubert (202) 588-5206
- Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund: Jim Angell (406) 586-9699
- National Wildlife Federation: Steve Torbitt (303) 786-8001

(Behind the Rusty Curtain)

By some strange confluence of fate, Christopher Lane, a RIT photo student who decided to study abroad for a year, arrived on Byzantium's last shore, Bulgaria. He now studies at the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG), teaches English, broadcasts an Alternative music radio show, takes the occasional weekend adventure, and hangs out with the wrong crowd as much as possible. Feel free to email him at CPL960@JMC.AUBG.BG

Having felt a bit creatively exhausted lately, my latest report for Gracies Dinnertime Theatre is poetry. Don't be disappointed. Think of it as if you were an East European: you're glad that you've got anything to chew on at all. If you're really lucky, you had to stand in line to get this issue of GDT.

FOR A BALKAN MISTRESS

Cabbage, beans and beer for lunch. Bulgaria-- I have the taste of you in my blood, the stink of your urine soaked trains in my clothes, and the fear of your industrial nightmares creeping through my mind.

Bulgaria-- Won't you come to my bed? Run your field scarred hands down my thin stretched skin, Press your violent lips against my rain-cold face. Hold your earth-brown eyes in my blood shot vision, and let me hear the throaty grunts of your passions.

Bulgaria-- Take me drunken on your darkened wine, down against your cold rivers, across your dusty mountains, through your forgotten blue monasteries, and arrive in my memories. My heart.

--March 9th, 1997

PHOTO HISTORY

So I was there When Mr. Washington Cleaner grabbed his first Leica.

Yeah, it was in a little sweetshop just off Vitosha, a stumbling from the big domes of Alexander Nevsky.

The machine merchant was all sweaty, he licking his lips and zooming the pile of Lira counted. I was cool, eating chocolate watching the deal go down. We knew it was a good one, cause everybody left the scene jumpy quick.

Then he was diggin' Sofia with me and in a smoky bus station dropped his sodi glass, and sez "Wancha take the first pitcha of me with my new camera."

--February 28th, 1997

GOTSE DELCHEV BUSES

Rhodopi morning, in dawn grey streets my breath a stiff cloud against black mountains and 6 AM blue sky dark. Crossing Gotse' park, our feet stamping frozen turf the city bus empty just a shower of tailpipe sparks in passing: now Gasoline smells like all the tired streets of Bulgaria.

Sultan moon is hiding dawn's edge- a scimitar sliver of silver riding the purpling edge of sky. Soldiers in great coats leaning by canvas bags filled with onions, old women rubbing fingers as ancient as Macedonian stones. My eyes among them on the station's edge I'm hollowed by cold light, and equalled by this old winter's venom.

And in the little bus stop cafe a woman pounds out a dark black soup; the tan froth on it's edges reminds of cream from childhood's morning cow milk. And through the thick Balkan tobacco smoke I can see the sun rising.

Now my coffee's gone, and the big blue bus kicks it's coughing engine: time to go travellers lovers soldiers old mothers.

--March 7th, 1997

Gracies Dinnertime Theatre Wants to Hear From You!

Hey, if you don't let us know what you like, we can't keep bringing it to you. Drop us a line and let us know what it is that you think.

Send submissions, hate/fan mail, or suggestions to diablo@csh.rit.edu or Gracies Dinnertime Theatre c/o 472 French Rd, Rochester, New York, 14618