

# NOSE DIVE



NO. 14

\$2

NORTHWEST RELOCATION

NOSE DIVE NUMBER FOURTEEN

FEBRUARY TWO THOUSAND AND FIVE



I studied, researched and wrote about the radical history of my home town a longtime ago. Something that it seemed like me and everyone I knew were pretty ignorant of at the time. The most fascinating research was at the city archives, a scary windowless building on the northern edge of the city. There you can find the Red Squad files, the city police's anti-communist anti-radical extra legal group that operated in the mid part of the last century. In the files there's these pictures of a funeral, taking place, it looks like, in the early 50s. On the back there's a number rubber stamped, high, maybe in the 400s.



There's only a couple of other photos in the files, all with other random numbers on them, indicating that most of the photos were probably destroyed before being archived, most likely illegal surveillance, these slipped through somehow. The photo of the funeral sticks out to me, I try to imagine the story behind it. The funeral is sparsely attended. Who took the photo? Did they hide themselves or take it out in the open to intimidate people? How many people were scared to go the funeral of their friend, their family member, their loved one or comrade?

# THE OX

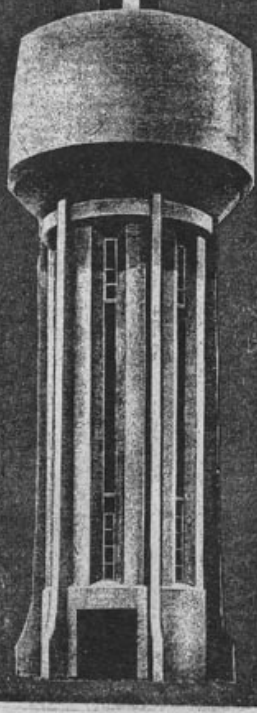
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They closed the central library in Portland in the mid 90s, to remodel it and make it earthquake proof. For about a year it had temporary residence in a 60s era office building downtown. Though at first I cringed at the new location, I came to enjoy it in a weird way. I liked the chaos of the place, the low ceilings and the fluorescent lights, the stairways that led nowhere. I walked by the old library to watch the progress, soon the construction had completely hollowed out the inside of the building. It was strange to look at this old building and perceive it as a shell.

I loved that old library. It was a strong fixture of my being a teenager downtown. I hung out on the steps out front, walked tight-rope style on the backs of the concrete benches that surrounded the place. Got kicked out for making out with my girlfriend on the third floor stairway. I loved the typing room in the basement- you descended the stairs to an insane clatter, a room full of people who paid 25¢/hr. to bang away on electric typewriters. People making resumes, old men typing up family histories, my friend Matthew practicing being a writer. The open stacks in the fiction room were nice too, lit by bare low watt bulbs, it was a good hiding place. In there I'd look up through the iron framed floors above into the closed stacks, watched the librarians push carts around, pull books and reshelve others. If I needed a book from the closed stacks I had to go to the 2nd floor reference desk, I'd fill out a slip and the librarian inserted the slip into a tube. She would walk over to the wall and drop it into a tube that went to the correct floor. A pneumatic tube system, like at a bank drive through or a submarine.

It worried me to see the entire inside gutted. How could they ever replace the magic of that place? Then a few months before the grand reopening the hammer really dropped. I saw a flyer that said the library would open with a Starbucks inside. The flyer represented the opposition to it, it announced an organizational meeting that I attended. It was a small group, I can't even remember what we did.... made some phone calls, wrote some letters, maybe even protested on the opening day? But to no avail, we were too late and too weak. The library opened with the Starbucks in the fiction room.

I checked it out the opening week. The structure inside wasn't that different, the basic plan remained the same. But no more typing room in the basement, the big rooms on the second floor had bright fluorescent bulbs with an annoying audible hum, the card



catalog was gone, the vinyl LPs were gone, the pneumatic tube system? bye bye. A lot of the new decorations were gaudy and overdone, the open fiction stacks were gone. And ofcourse, worst of all, there was a Starbucks in the fiction room, which made an awful din, orders called out, the hiss and gurgle of the milk steamer. Yuk.

I was a good citizen of the library, I checked out a lot of books, returned them (mostly) on time, payed my fines and used the place as a resource. I wrote letters when I thought something was wrong. Libraries are a fairly benign public institution, almost utopian in practice. It felt small scale enough that I hoped we could've affected some change there. When the library reopened I felt rooked. Not just because of the Starbucks, but because in the vast bureaucracy and money interests involved, I realized how marginal I was. It was also one of my first engagements with activism.

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For awhile I felt like I could get this country. As I travelled or talked to people in my day to day life, I wouldn't say I felt change was imminent, but I felt like the potential was there. I lived in New Orleans, a predominantly poor and black city, and from that distance the Bush presidency seemed like a joke we could ignore. Then those planes hit those buildings and an american flag popped up on every car. The conversations I heard started to turn my stomach. All the progress I'd made from alienated teenager who hated this country to someone who'd begun to have some hope flew out the window. The rallies for unity, the subsequent invasions, wars and murder, the bloodlust and the stupidity of my countypeople has produced in me a seething hatred for this place. This president and this administration are terrible, and they are also wildly popular. It's a scary time here, the glaciers are melting, cancer is everywhere, the sky is falling and we are the belly of the beast. Amidst all this I went to a new city to start over.

When I moved, it was not even a fully conscious decision, I dropped away from all the activism that defined so much of my life in New Orleans. I cleared the slate of projects I felt compelled to continue. I wanted to be a better person and friend. I wanted to spend more time making art. With the US revving up for perpetual war all the lifestylisms (critical mass, fnb, recycling, vegetarianism, doing a zine) seemed dumb. None of it mattered,



none of it made the smallest difference. I was lazy at the one thing I did half-well, that I enjoyed, art. Sloppy and impatient, I turned out quickly produced turds.

I looked for activism that seemed direct, meaningful and local. I went to a meeting for bus riders, to protest the new fare hike. The meeting consisted of aging hippies who had the remarkable ability to talk in circles with the sole effect of silencing everyone else. The outcome was a petition drive. I walked around and got signatures to be delivered to our state congress person. If we were lucky, he in turn would bring it to a budget meeting and try and trade favors with a rural senator (ie more highway funds for the country folk equalled more mass transit funds for the city folk). It was a little dispiriting. When I brought the cause to the activist punk group, one kid recommended dressing up as pirates and doing a die-in on the bus. Both routes seemed equally ineffective. I dropped it.

I had tons of free time in the new city. Time to be a better friend, time to work on art- almost all of it, in retrospect, I squandered. The library became my best friend, days slipped by in a stupor of reading books on random topics. The path from over-busy activist led to days of nothingness. The new city of hills and rivers, the city that held so much personal promise, started to close in on me, a physical reminder of my own limitations.

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They've started getting into my head. The other night a dream- that I was stuck in the middle of a bridge with a friend, we had to pull up the drawbridges on either side of us because there was a bomb threat. In the dream an official tells me to raise one side while he does the other. I, of course, do it wrong, too fast or something, my side of the bridge slams up and dents something important. Then we found out the bomb threat was a hoax. I woke up from this dream and tried to figure it out, where it came from, and I remember that homeland security billboard on the Burnside Bridge that says, "we can be scared or we can be ready. be ready."

I was in Chicago for the one year anniversary of the beginning of the war. The protest was big, thousands of people met downtown. I biked there knowing that my few friends in Chicago were around somewhere, but in the mass of people I saw only folks that I wanted to avoid. The march moved slowly, I was at the end of it with my bicycle. It was good, I mean maybe we're all sick of rallies and protests a little, but being caught up in a group of 5000 people has its own exciting energy. The cops were out in /



full force, I was alone and it bugged me, I felt vulnerable. The cops lined the route, hundreds of them in battle armor, clubs and helmets down. I walked on the edge of the mass, as close to the line of police that I could, some weird macho defiance that cried out in me to push the limits but not, you know, cross the line. I watched a kid from the black bloc in front of me get taken down for doing nothing. 10 of us crowded around and yelled, got pushed back, got told to take it easy by the peace police and the real police. Me, two irate old ladies, and the revolutionary black bloc were all impotent, we kept on moving, but did not take it easy.

They are getting good with the show of force: helicopters, video, surveillance trucks, photos, horse cops behind and in front, bike cops at the end of alleys a block away and the samurai cops all around. And we're getting used to it, Eduardo Galeano writes, "the machine teaches you to accept horror as you accept the cold of winter" If I didn't think about the cops, it was nice to be around that many protestors. But after awhile I could only think about the cops and it was depressing. I thought even if we could get this many people in the streets ready to battle, FSU or whatever, we'd probably still get our asses kicked. Some people say it's worse now than ever before, but I think that buys into a false history of this country. This government has never been kind to dissent. Generations before us had to put up with a lot more beatings, jailings and extralegal police activity than we've ever had to (but that might change too). I think the stakes are higher now, the empire more powerful, the need larger. Sometimes I think we're so spoiled we couldn't handle it, other times I think they're too many steps ahead, too good and greedy at the power game to lose. Despair is an easy trap, sorry, sad spoiled American. I defeat myself.

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Chicago

I. It was the 10th anniversary of the A Zone. It was great that an infoshop was still alive after a decade, but to see it was a little bit sad. The A Zone was particularly dreary in this incarnation, bad light, dirty, disorganized, and those same pamphlets I've been seeing for a decade (taking back our lives, appeal to the homeless).

I was also still in full despair mode. Anarchoactivism, especially info shops to me, were a giant failure in practice. Unfriendly clubhouses, alienating and confusing even to me, someone fair-



ly enmeshed in the scene. They lack imagination and oftentimes any sign of life, joy or struggle.

My new housemates, Joey and Anna, and I went with our own agenda, a video camera, and a dumb question: What are the micro-politics of dumpsterdiving? Mostly to give us something to do, to be fun and obnoxious. We had a slew of questions "are there legendary dumpsters?" "do you have any special names or codes?" "have you ever done any street markings to indicate a good dumpster?" "do you take it all or leave some?". One question appealed to our collective cynicism and quickly became a focus point of the project: "do you consider dumpsterdiving a revolutionary act?" Cynical because we already had our answer (no) and because we let people extrapolate. Because 9 out of 10 said yes.

We stayed for a few hours gathering material. We felt some sympathy for the DJ and danced down in the empty basement. Then we went home and edited. We never got further than the first thirty seconds. Editing is a hard group process. I lost some drive out of confusion, where was I coming from? It started to look pretty mean spirited. So the documentary died, shelved away but the conversations continued at home.

Joey and Anna, my co-documentary makers and housemates, were a fun couple and I liked living with them. They talked about the world, about art and politics with an excitement and energy that felt grounded in reality. How do we translate our beliefs into action? An important question, one they asked in their heads and in what they did.

Even though we all came out of the same generation of DIY, punk and riot grrl, I felt like a lost little kid around them. Especially at first, then in my third city in two years, newly single, after running away the previous summer with any band that I could. And they had their shit together, she taught at the art school, he had a book coming out. They had good art on the walls, a huge library, interesting projects they worked on with others and interesting projects they worked on by themselves.

We'd talk issues, and they had the same problems I'd have with punks, activists and anarchists, but they'd taken these problems and worked with them. I was still in the same holding pattern over the airport of my beliefs, saying this is bullshit. Arrgh

2. A month earlier I ran away to Chicago because it seemed easy and new, because I felt fucked up, like getting away. It was a new city to me, big, explorable and unfamiliar; and it had all





the promise for a new life that had fallen away in Pittsburgh and Detroit. I moved there and was entranced by the street life on Division, by those long blocks that all had alleys, by the city's infinite dimensions. I had late summer days with nothing to do but roam around, sit by the river or the lake. It was not a happy time. I hoped the endless visual stimulus of the city would drown out my thoughts, but there's something about sitting by the water and something about riding a bike that allows my mind to expand and worry when I should be looking at the scenery or listening to the waves. At some peak of self disgust I'd hurry home to re-join the world of people. I'd ~~come in the backdoor~~ all manie and my new housemates would ask, You OK? You don't look so good. Oh yeah, I'd say, just tired.


I probably should've talked about it, about my misery, but it was the last thing I wanted to do. We'd watch TV together and I was happy to shut my brain down for awhile.

For awhile I got the daily urge to drink, to be drunk. Most of the time I had internal pressure against it... alcohol is evil, need to be good to myself, need to stay productive. But sometimes I felt evil. Long distance friends were worried, I told the wrong stories, I wasn't drinking very much, but I didn't want to be sober. When I got drunk I felt dumb because it seemed like a lot of effort and angst to be wasted in my room playing tapes quietly. My friend Jan made a poster that said 'he wants something that does not exist', Huey Lewis sang that song 'I want a new drug', remember that? I wanted something that didn't exist, I wanted a new drug, I wanted to stop worrying about what I was doing with my life, wanted to stop feeling guilty about the shitty way I broke up with my girlfriend, wanted her to be OK. I wanted to run away and not know anyone, wanted to be surrounded by friends and community.

Then winter and work hit and my head settled down. I moved into a quiet life there. I worked a lot, made art for my neice and nephew. I had a teeny room with a dirty small window, sweet housemates and not much else.

I'd work steadily for like two, or three weeks and then have a couple weeks off. I was in a monkish mindset again, I slept for six hours a night on a thin mat on the floor, few belongings and few ~~immediate~~ worries. I liked to stay up later than everyone, have the house quiet and to myself. I also liked to get up with





my housemates and see them off to work. I'd sit at the table, sip coffee and watch them wake up. Joey shuffled around the house in slippers, in a daze. Anna began to talk while half asleep, in bed and barely made sense. Breakfast brought me company around the table. I worked on my coffee while they ate cereal, packed lunch, and slowly woke to their day. Anna left first, out the back door to catch the el, Joey usually left a half hour later.

One morning something sparked him. Joey was turning ideas over in his head and spitting them out. "Sometimes I get tired of making these political graphics over and over again, not because I'm not behind them, but I wonder if it would be better to spend my time doing something more effective" I liked his political art, he had bold lines, bold images that conveyed complexity or cleverness. But as his housemate I also got to see his doodles and stickers, a little more playful, self-critical and humorous. I gave him some trite answer while he was half out the backdoor, you should just make art, you're good, don't worry how it gets out there or what it does. His response: "while should I get to make art while we bomb two other countries?" It wasn't a snappy or overly moralistic response, but a simple question at face value. He continued talking as he went down the back staircase and then down into the alley. He yelled up, "and I have to do this slideshow of anti-war graffiti for this festival, and what does that do? just so some artists can feel more political by attending an art show?", then a funny smile and a little wave, "see ya tonight". He asked those questions not for comfort or answers, but as a check in for himself. I sat down on the back porch, watched him walk to the train, I smoked and thought about my life. This weird path that took me to Chicago, the past two years moving and experiencing, promises and dreams broken. All the self torture of the last few months started to look like self-indulgence. What a waste I had become. Bombs away.

3. My housemates engaged me with the world. They dragged me out to parties, bad movies and shows. Joey took me out wheatpasting. Anna and I went and looked at art. One morning she and I drove out to the far north side, multiple art shows to go to: a print show from Mexico and Africa, a collection of female inmate art, a video installation at Loyola U. Really, none of the art was that great, but the company was good. We ran into a woman Anna worked with at the art school, Marcy. She was an occasional visitor to the house and a welcome presence



that day. Marcy was an art academic, meaning that she and Anna made a living talking about art. I suppose this is usually bad, but these two were nice thinkers to be around, relaxed and critical. Marcy was also an older radical, of the 60s generation, someone who'd been through it and come out the other side still radical, fun, funny, sharp and curious. I feel fortunate to have been around people like this in my life, I appreciate the perspective. I wonder what it's like to live through an era of activism that thought revolution wasn't only logical but also imminent. A generation of activists who, if they didn't pick up the gun, had to debate it as a real possibility. People who've done time, been shot at by cops, who lived through a time of almost daily riots, protests and bombings and then watch it all slip away into the Reagan years.

What do I want from these people? Stories and an understanding of the time, also perspective on today. How do you go forward after what you've been through? How does twenty years of rightward shift sit with you? What is to be done? I got to pin Marcy down on these questions, as future survival skills she recommended learning Chinese and Spanish. She said to bear down, dig in, there will be a break in momentum, there has to be. Don't give up organizing, keep working in collectives; political, housing, art and otherwise. The only way to make it through the next century is interdependently. I was happy to hear all this because I agreed.

There was more to art day still, by the evening it had turned into a fifteen person dinner party at an Indian restaurant on Devon Ave. Everyone shared the food, which was good because I was broke. As I sat around the table of people talking and eating I realized I was tired ~~of~~ of being out all day, tired of being around people smarter than me. Anna and the crowd were going to continue to karaoke, dependant all day on Anna's driving, I now felt stuck and far from home. I told Anna I was gonna walk home, people started to offer me bus fare, it would be a very long walk. After having been fed on other people's dime I couldn't really deal with anymore charity, I refused the bus fare. Another friend snuck in and gave me her monthly bus pass "if you get tired of walking", so nice. I took it and slipped away.

I walked down to Western Ave, the giant car clogged north/south artery wher I quickly caught my bus. I rode the bus south and passed through whole different worlds in the Chicago night. The south Asian district where I began, blocks empty except for

cars and closed up martial arts academies, past a bunch of hispanic and black kids hanging around a video arcade, past the white suburban kids at the multiplex and finally down to the yuppies, homeless people and Puerto Ricans on Milwaukee Avenue. I got off the bus and decided not to take the train, I put my walkman on, tuned out the sounds around me and walked home under the el tracks. The night was cool and clear. I was full. Lucky me.

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I don't want to be a part of the consumer economy. I want to avoid as much plastic shit as I can. I appreciate food and books to prisoners as what they are, a simple redistribution of resources. I don't want to support the meat and fishing industry, they are cruel, gross, wasteful and destructive. I'm happy to get food for free. I recycle. I still think critical mass is dumb. I like the alternative institutions, the collectives, the bike shops, the support groups. I believe in a politics that is confrontational, protests, direct actions, strikes, street art and graffiti. I believe in people confronting state power in its most immediate forms, the police and the prisons. I believe in fighting a society that is sick with misogyny, racism, classism, homophobia, the endless list.

These things aren't enough, what can be enough right now? That's that despair I feel and I'm trying not to be stulted by it. There's hope in resistance, seeing it at the cracks and being part of it. It's nice to have been alive long enough to appreciate some things getting better. There's hope (in a doomy way) that life, as it exists in this country, can't go on. The economy is gonna tank, the oil will run out, the coastlines will shrink. In these huge changes, if we're lucky, organized and prepared, there'll be breaks in the huge momentum of this country. Breaks that could allow for increased decentralization, sustainability, community control.

I believe in what I do, art, as something that has value beyond myself. In the past year I've been lucky to be around an increased urgency and criticalness in art. People organizing creative protests, direct actions and pranks. People doing street theatre and musicals, street arts that are captivating, political and human. The critical question asks how can we do this better, how does this art break out of our self-referential circles and become something that is public. How can we strengthen our circles, be accountable to each other and be proud of who we are, so



as not to be a house of cards. Such a huge task, it's npt enough,  
it'll never be enough

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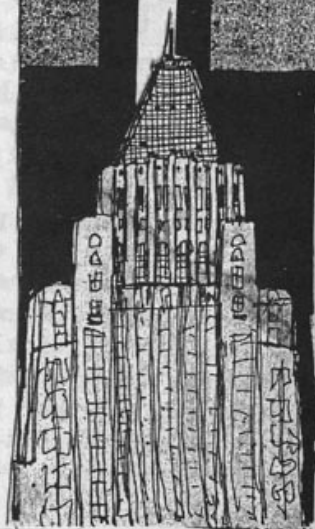
I watxhed the winter come in Chicago from the back porch of the apartment. Watched the little tree in the back yard shed its leaves and turn raw and naked. I saw lots of other things, old men digging in the trash, the cops speeding down the aktey, the kids chasing and htting eachother, the guy who liked to play with his car alarm. I did a lot of watching. Even in the cold I liked to go out to the lake and feel small between the city and the water. I liked to feel anonymous, ride the warm train over the top of the city. Alone, but not lonely, on ehristmas day, I walked the abandoned elevated rail line. I walked slow through the dead grass, trash and snow. Peeked into all the windows I could. Fascinated by the million details of people's lives, the million different ways to live through these times.

After new years I went west, back to Portland. Back to grey days, wide streets, green trees, rain, chills and the occasional glimpse of blue sky. Being in Portland was the opposite of being in Chicago, the city is a little boring but my life is hectic. I have all these friends here and it's february so everyone is startin to flip out a little. There's houses and parties and it's all quite different then the little life I'd been used to.

A lot of friends were fucking themselves up, slipping back into old bad habits.. I got sick there in the middle of it all, the drugsdramabreakupsanddrunks. Feverish, shivering and mortal I watched my friends self-destruct around me and admired what they did to their minds and bodies. Every time I got slightly better I joined in on their sprees, binges and idiotic outings in the rain. Because these are my people here, people I don't second guess too much, because it's my home town and time is limited on visits. Because all the self-abuse is at least my friends reacting intensely to their lives, which is an affirmation of living, almost.

I started this bad habit of moving all the time to get away from Portland, to get away from all the ghosts here and in the process I turned into a bit of a ghost myself. Last winter I realized I'd rather feel neurotic most of the time then feel nothing. It took going home to realize this: I want to live, and it's not that I've wanted death, but sometimes it just feels like I'm going through the motions, day to day.

Back in the day, back in the day, I used to live on Dekum St., almost at the top of northeast Portland. In those bygone times, when the Portland scene was tiny, I didn't know anyone who lived



remotely near me. I lived in the dirt-floored basement of this shitty house. I had a grocery bag of shake and would get stoned out of my head, listen to records, watch TV, read. Every night that summer, I swear, the neighbors would find some reason to shoot their guns off repeatedly. I'd be in the basement, stoned and paranoid, and would feel the overwhelming urge to leave the house. I'd bike over to Garfield street and head south. I loved Garfield, especially around Prescott or Going, you crest over a small hill and the street and city unroll out in front of you, down through my favorite part of Northeast Portland. It's wide and straight, a little dark, I don't know why I've always loved that street above any other street around it, but the love is there.

This last winter when I was ill with the flu, smoking and drinking my way through it; one day the shitty feeling broke as I was out and about. It must've only been fifty degrees, but the clouds cleared and I took off my jacket. Sun and goosebumps on my arm, I biked north up Garfield St., up to visit a friend, not dead, not yet.

#### Postscript:

I've been trying to reestablish my relationship with the Portland library. Like many other things here, the wounds I used to have don't hurt so much anymore. I can forgive the library I think. It's decent in there, it certainly seems busier than ever before. I've started having the weird library trance state where I can spend hours in there following tangents in my head, floor to floor. I'd forgiven the place naturally, it has become part of my life again without much thought. I was complaining about the Starbucks at the library to a Portland newcomer who just looked at me blankly, "there's no Starbucks there". Unable to turn a profit, it closed up shop years ago, to be replaced with shelves of new arrivals and librarian's picks. How did I not notice? There is no Starbucks there anymore. The people suffocated the place away. Thanks.



Nero, 1936

Lithograph by J. Vogel

# JOSEPH VOGEL

Joseph Vogel and Elizabeth Olds are two of the better remembered print-makers from the 30's/40's American left. Vogel was born in Poland and came to the US when he was 16 at the onset of the depression. He joined the Federal Art Project (depression era gov. employment for working artists) and he worked in the graphics division, making lithographs for schools, post offices and federal institutions and programs. He was also active in illustrating for the communist weekly The New Masses, he went to Spain & illustrated during the Spanish Civil War and back in the US he participated in political groups, sit-ins, demonstrations and riots in NYC. I like his art from this period - stridently political and angry and also a little more experimental than many of his peers. During WWII he was a combat artist in the army. On his return he moved to California, taught art and worked in the film industry. His later work is not so interesting to me, technicolor abstractions. He might still be alive.



# ELIZABETH OLDS

Many of the men from this period of art went on to have successful careers in art or teaching, despite sometimes shady political backgrounds. In contrast, the openness of 30's political culture for women did not last past the ending of WWII. Women who'd been Reds or even pink (left-wing affiliated) had to contend with the double wall of the blacklist and institutionalized sexism. Elizabeth Olds was a fabulous printer working in silk-screen, lithograph, & woodcuts. She took on many of themes prominent at the time (ie-workers, factories, political unrest & satire) and delivered them with a strong sense of humanity, insight and proto-feminist sensibility. From Minnesota, she went to New York on art scholarship in the 30's. She was also hired by the Graphic Arts Division of the FAP, had shows in edgy NYC galleries, was a member (with Vogel) of the left wing Artists' Union and a founding member of the communist supported American Artist Congress. She contributed illustrations to the New Masses and was very politically active. Following the collapse of the Old Left she illustrated for magazines and eventually children's books. she died in 1991.



Info on Elizabeth Olds from Helen Lang's book Radical Art. Joseph Vogel from an interview in the Smithsonian Archives.



# GREG SAGE of the WIPERS ON WRESTLING

INTERVIEW BY RAY FARRELL



MRR: YOU GUYS SEEM REAL SERIOUS ALL THE TIME.

GREG: We do enjoy making records. We make very little money and it goes back into the band. We work really hard. But, we are pro-wrestling fans. I mean, if you wanna know what we have fun with, I did this album with a wrestler named Beauregard. He was great. I was at a friend's house practicing, and he came over. I saw him do an interview and I was amazed. He had a 45 and wanted to do an album. He liked the way I played guitar. He gave me some passes to his matches. But after he did the record, he kinda turned into a good guy to sell more records. That was the end of his career. When we tour, we check out other wrestling leagues, but Portland seems to have the best though. We've got Rip the Crawler, Oliver, The Assassin. They're the ones to watch. They cripple 'em up, send 'em out on stretchers, and wait for the next one. Brad (WIPERS bass player) and I worked on a film crew for a wrestling special, and we got to meet a lot of them. Some people think it's false, like he can't be ramming this guys head into a steel pole. But they go out on the street and see the same thing and go "Oh god, poor fellow". It's a very dedicated profession. There's as many obstacles in the music business. I love wrestling. Here these guys go out and beat the shit out of each other 7 nights a week. How the hell do they get the guts and intestinal fortitude to get out of bed and do it again? It takes a certain breed of person. Doing what we're doing takes a certain... should I be modest to say, guts and intestinal fortitude to play night after night. Some nights, like tonight, getting bar cans thrown at us.

MRR: WHAT ABOUT THESE TEAMS OF TWO ON ONE?

GREG: Well, there's opening acts and then there's the headliners. Let's leave it at that.

## FOUR NEW BOOKS ABOUT CITIES

Facing Athens by George Sarrinikolaou

An unflinching look at a Greek-American's hometown, his return and exploration of its modern condition. It's a memoir, so its analysis is all put through the lens of the author walking around, taking the bus, observing and talking to people. He's a good writer and honestly negative about much of what he sees. Short + good.

Sarajevo Marlboro by Miljenko Jergovic

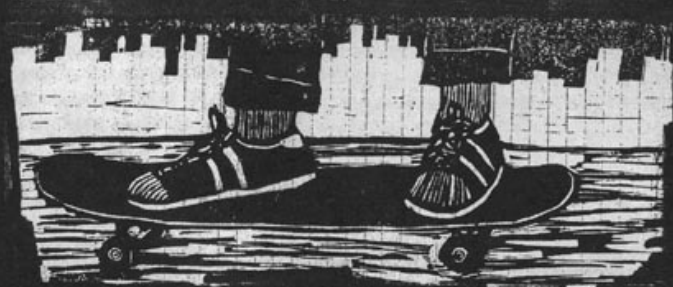
Pretty engrossing series of vignette-like short stories set during the war in Yugoslavia (and mostly in Sarajevo). The larger issues, the politics and reality of living in a war-zone are described through the tiny details of people's lives... looking for a certain cooking pot or potable water, burning your own books to keep warm, missing the sounds of the trolleys. Sad, quiet with some dark Slavic humor. Great!

Fortress of Solitude by Jonathan Lethem

Totally super-hyped fiction best seller and totally amazing! A long novel about growing up in Brooklyn in the 70's, about cities, change, race, class & culture. It is one of the most honest and striking books about race by a white person that I have ever read, which is impressive (and depressing) enough. But it's also a loving ode to NYC in the 70's, to early hip-hop & punk, soul, funk, graffiti, drugs, hippy parents, super-heroes real and drawn. Favorite book all year.

Travels in American Iraq by John Marinkus

The author, a lefty Australian journalist, freelances in Baghdad in the summer of '04. The political coverage is secondary to the narrative he writes about trying to get stories, paranoia, military bureaucracy, emotional drainage, and the heavily surreal nature of Baghdad in a time of escalating violence and conflict. I've read a bunch of books about Iraq lately & this one stands out, perhaps less informative, but also less manipulative. He doesn't have an angle and his honest confusion about the situation ends up feeling like one of the most human books about Iraq by a westerner.



I conducted this interview with my dad in 1994 when I was 21, the same age as he was when he was drafted. We were looking through the slides he took when he was in Vietnam, beautiful pictures of the countryside, cities, docks, markets, billboards and his friends and acquaintances in the base and outside of it. It originally intended it to be an audio track to a slideshow, but he threw out the 400+ slides before I got around to it. So this tape has lingered at the bottom of boxes, bags and to-do lists until I finally transcribed it this last winter in Chicago, hoping it has some relevance to the now. The two pictures here survived the purging by hiding in my grandmother's basement, one is my dad and one is from the village he visited.

I was a drop-out. I had completely failed in Chicago, I worked nights and went to school days and I did that until my body broke down. On Thanksgiving I took a bus to New York City to meet my sister, and I was pretty sick, pretty anemic, going blind. Finally an optometrist told me I was malnourished, overworked and under slept and all that. I was in pretty bad shape. I went to Saranac Lake and became a TV repairman. I was 21 and the draft hadn't started yet, at the time there was 20,000 guys in South Vietnam. They were mainly Rangers, Special Forces. It was what they called military assistance at the time, in 1964. I worked through the fall, up to the winter, and after Christmas they laid me off. When they put the draft in they were looking for young men, single and out of school. That's what they looked for and that was me. That was in 1965. It was really even before anyone thought much about getting drafted. When I got in you could see what they were looking for, everyone one of us who were drafted was to a T, young, unmarried, some drop outs and in general a fuck up.

**How long did you have in-between when you were drafted and when you went?**

Not very long. I got a letter and I think it said report in a week. I was pretty shocked, I was too stupid to think their was a way out of it, so I did it. In those days there, at least around me, the idea wasn't even there, to avoid it or go to Canada or anything.

**Did you know anything about Vietnam before then?**

Yeah I had been reading a little about what was going on, but that didn't really get me very far. Just this little country where there had been a revolution. I don't think we knew very much about it, the general feeling of the country was that communism was a threat to our way of life, and most of the country thought better there then here. I think we expected a quick and easy war. We put up the line in Korea and people felt like that worked so now it's time to put up the 17th parallel in Viet Nam. Not much dissent in those days, Hatfield and Morse, the Oregon Senators. We thought it would be a cake walk.

**What did you think about going over seas, going to war?**

Well I was scared to death of it. But first off it's an innocent thing, they just draft



you. Then they put you through a demoralization process, and before you know it, you don't know where you are or what you're doing but you know you're there. You've lost your independence, you've lost any individuality you thought you had, everywhere you look no one has any hair, they're wearing the same clothes as you, we all just looked like the same thing. Then they give you tests when you're sound asleep, or you know they'll keep you up for three days solid, 24 hours a day, and then they'll give you a test, you're so tired you can't play games with the testing. They find out who knows how to shoot a gun, who can fight, who's shot guns, who's killed animals. At that point there were 200 people in that boot camp and only like 5 were chosen for infantry. I was one of them. We were the real fuck ups. Their were gang guys from New York City and there were mountain guys like me, kids who'd been hunting since they were 10 years old. They sent us out into the field, in New Jersey, for training for three more months. We were such low lives that when we were done they took all 200 of us under armed guard to Newark Air Force Base and guarded us to make sure we got onto that plane to Viet Nam. Even under guard we trashed the barracks, we threw cots through windows, broke everything, but we were going to Viet Nam and that's all that mattered to them. Most of us would've rather been court martialed then go.

Anyway, we were escorted on to this bus and this big sergeant came on and was giving us this pep talk about going to Viet Nam and serving our country, and some guy in the front stood up and said "You open your big fuckin mouth one more time and I'm gonna shove my foot down to your asshole" the drill sergeant puffed up, started yelling something, and the guy in the front said "What are you gonna do? send me to Viet Nam?". We had him, we laughed at him. Everyone on the bus knew, no one can fuck with us because this was it, we were going. So next thing you know, we were in route, we were in San Francisco, and then Japan

**What was it like entering a foreign country for the first time in that kind of situation?**

We went over there from Japan in a cargo plane and we were in parachute strappings. The kind of thing where they passed you a bucket to pee, then they passed you a sandwich to eat, then they passed you another bucket to pee.

**If you needed to shit?**

You were out of luck. 12 hours sitting on this dark plane, then when we landed they dropped the back gate of the plane and all this heat and humidity came in, which after being at 30000 feet was a shock. As soon as we landed they started bombing the airport. So the next thing we knew the mortars were coming in, walking in the direction of the plane, they shoved us out of the plane, ordered us onto the runway, and the damn plane turned around and took off. The plane was worth more than 150 of us guys.

In the midst of all this confusion, with mortars coming in, artillery shooting back out, helicopters shooting away at whatever, we were still out in the middle of the airfield. There were 3 or 4 of us who had our wits about us, that were not completely military, so the group of us ran like hell to the parked two and a half ton trucks, deuce and a halves. There's no keys in a military vehicle so I hopped in, cranked it up and drove back out there, a bunch of guys jumped on it. By then a base MP was smart enough to know that he had to get us out of there so he just signaled me and escorted us out of the base. He could've kept us there I guess, but he decided to take us north on Route 1. He got on the radio and pretty soon we'd stopped and he'd signal those people go there, those people go there. I was supposed to be First Calvary. Some guys got dropped off at First Cav., some at the Big Red One, I was the truck driver, not for any particular reason, not because I was supposed to, but just because I grabbed that truck. Which I think is why I survived that war. Anyway, we were dropping all these guys off all over and eventually it was just me and two other guys in the truck. There was a signal company that desperately needed infantry protection because they were being attacked frequently. The MP pointed the way and we drove up a dirt road and in to the base. We had machine gun on the top of the truck and they thought we

were gift from heaven. They'd just kicked the draft in and there was not a very organized infrastructure there for dealing with us, so in some way I just slipped through the cracks. It was very random and I was very lucky. So how did I feel when I got there? Very confused, no idea of anything about anything. Very quickly they had us take a hill, no Viet Cong around so they let us keep the hill, we spent about three or four days on top of the hill, every once in a while one of us would walk down to get beer or cigarettes. I was acclimating which meant I had a rash all over my body, I sweated like hell, smelled like hell. Animals and normal people, Vietnamese people could smell you from a mile away. Pimples all over every part of my body. I didn't like it, I was dirty and filthy and I stunk.

#### **When did you start taking pictures?**

I couldn't have been there very long when I got the Pentax. There was lot of things of beauty there, I saw a lot of pretty things, a lot of things were interesting. **This is a picture of a restaurant that you liked that they told you was off limits**

There was a lot of places like that, I didn't believe them, you couldn't believe them, so I went where I felt safe, because they didn't know what the hell was going on. After I was in country for awhile I trusted myself more, even the enemy, even the Viet Cong during the day was friendly to you. I didn't feel like they demonized us, at least not that early in the war. This picture is Cho Lanh, a very pretty picture of people walking down the ramp on to the barges with big baskets of rice. Neat part of the world, very pretty there.

So at that point I guess I did start acclimating, I got a lot of books that explained what Ho Chi Minh was trying to do, not military books, but books about Indochina and that area's history. I started studying the language, I wasn't very good. I guess I was curious. It wasn't more than a week or two that the military started there peace corps type of program within the military.

#### **Was that the Hearts and Minds program?**

That was it, I don't know if they called it that at that point. In Europe they did the same thing. We were managed by WWII veterans and they thought it was the thing to do, that it would work or make a difference. I had this big truck still, so this sergeant and I went into a town. He was the contact, and tried to set up a laundry for this village. Among all the other things I had to do, they gave me time off once or twice a week to go into this little town and meet this guy who was the mayor. They had like four or five mayors, so I guess he was more like a county father or something. He took me under his wing and eventually the Viet Cong bombed the village because we were there, because they were collaborating, so they sent me to another village.

#### **Is that this guy here in this picture?**

Yeah, that's him and his family. Ngyuen Ky Key. Cute kids, and his son on the right used to protect me with a Thompson submachine gun. No idea what happened to them. After the village was bombed, he took me to another village. One time when I was coming down the road his son jumped out of the woods and flagged me down. He jumped into the truck and said "you must leave, fast" and a two and a half ton truck had 10 wheels on it, all were drive. I probably ran a few trees over turning that thing around, his son was laughing at me, we were having a good time, but anyway the Viet Cong had moved into the village and were mad at them for washing our clothes. He said they killed some people and I don't know what else cause I never dared to go back there. Then we moved down the road toward Bien Hoa where his village was and then we started and we'd do the thing in front of his house, and he was fairly popular there so it was safer but I did get shot at there a few times too. I was one night the pied piper, all the little kids came to see me, it was at the very beginning, they'd never seen anyone over 6 feet tall, they'd never seen a white person. I was an oddity, and I liked kids, so I'm sure I brought a bunch of candy and garbage. And after that the little kids showed me their village and then someone shot at me, a slug went by "shooo", out on the edge of the village with thirty kids around. That changed how I looked at things. But when I got back this one son of his is up in the second floor of his

house and he's got this WWI looking old machine gun. Quite a picture, he always wore a white t shirt. real tough looking kid, must've been 14 years old with this huge gun. I don't know what happened to him, his father was from North Vietnam and he was a capitalist, a wanna be entrepreneur so he sided with the Americans. After the French left the North he moved South because he couldn't run his business up there.

Anyway I started taking pictures because I guess I knew it was important, that if I made it out alive that there'd be some history to it all. I didn't take pictures of military stuff, I didn't carry a camera with me when I was on duty in other words. Mainly it was pictures of Saigon, pictures of things around the camp that I thought were pretty, the smoke coming up from the shithouses, every evening someone had to burn all the shit. So the sun would be going down, the sky all red and you'd see these plumes of black smoke going up. I was probably too young to know what to take pictures of.

#### **How was for you interacting with Vietnamese people?**

They were very nice. The culture was more polite than ours. There culture was so different than anything I knew, that I couldn't even communicate very well. Men would walk down the streets holding hands, it was a nice gesture, but it was terribly alien to us. Because they smiled at us a lot we felt it was easy to mistrust them. It was a village in the day, all types of people, colorful clothes or whatever, and when the sun would set, you'd see movement of black pajamas. It was pretty intimidating. Nothing we were ever prepared for. Our military knew it. When I came back I was transferred to Ft. Lewis and that was my job, I was supposed to try and teach about what it would be like.

So how did I feel about the Vietnamese? Well I liked this one family a lot, I used to eat with them a lot, hang out with them. But y'know, we were kinda crude to them, we smelled, we were not attractive people, we were soldiers, we weren't the brightest bunch and we were all men. And it was a war.

#### **Did you tell me once that you thought you'd driven US troops into Cambodia?**

Being just a peon, spec 4, it was the rumor that the river we crossed was the river between Cambodia and Viet Nam, but I don't really know. It was a reinforcement activity. It was a rumor that I always believed. All sorts of rumors there, some I believed some I didn't. One group of guys got hit with some gas out there and they took their antidote, what was it called Anthropene, which should have saved some of them but they all died. Rumor was that the Russians had given the Vietnamese some experimental gas to try out. I believed that. What a better place to try it out. I don't know about that river, I think that we, without anyone knowing, were making little plugs now and then. In those days they were trying to feel out the enemy, trying to figure out how they fought, what are their weaknesses. And we were just guinea pigs, send em out see what happens, they did a lot of that. Absolute experimentation with people's lives. We were supposed to draw fire, that was our job. And I figured that out after that first trip across that river with my truck. So from then on when they wanted that one particular convoy to be made, I always said "does anyone want my truck?" and I have a vague memory of Gary Weekly cutting my break line, so we didn't have to go. The rest of the time some other guy would take it and quite often it came back all shot up. Younger guys, who had enlisted, thought that was cool, they came to go to war. So whatever. As far as that war was concerned as I was kind of old. I was so old that they sent me to a shrink because I was getting in trouble so much, I wasn't adapting. I had a lot of problems. I was old for infantry. I had lived on my own, traveled around a little, had some independence and pride. And you can't have that and be a soldier.

#### **What was it like socially at the camp?**

At our camp we were almost all draftees, lots of black and white, half and half. Some Hispanic guys, infantry. The base itself was a signal battalion and that was mostly enlistees. But even still, very few that were gung-ho. There were a couple. But I didn't socialize with them. I didn't like them, had nothing in common with

them. I had one goal and that was the case with a lot of draftees, survival. I didn't want to be a hero, didn't want a medal. I didn't have a problem ducking. It was dangerous. Sometimes we were shot at by our own artillery, sometimes we were sniped at by the enemy. Sometimes we were attacked.

One time the enemy got in, we were on the outer perimeter of this huge ammunition dump, for the 93rd evac. We were part of their perimeter, and they bordered us at this ammunition dump. The Viet Cong snuck in one night and we always, every evening, we'd watch some TV show on 8mm film, Batman, Combat or some dumb TV show. Drink beer and watch the screen. Right behind the screen and down the hill was the ammo dump, the screen was getting hit by shots, and some of the guys were getting pissed so they'd stand up and shoot a little and then we'd watch some more. By that point we were numb to it all, then they sent the flares up so we cut the movie and started watching the whole thing, because you could see down the hill and some people that we knew were sitting on top of the ammunition dumps, guarding it, and you could see the flare would light em up once in awhile, the flares were on parachutes so they swung all around it made these really eerie shadows, and then they were shooting in all types of directions, and all of a sudden BANG. These VC had got in and set a charge and they blew up one pile which blew them all up, there was this huge explosion, like a nuclear bomb, a giant flash and a huge column going up with a mushroom top. All bright now, you could feel the heat, and then metal the size of Volkswagens started falling down.

#### **You where still in the movie tent?**

The movie area was not a tent, just outside viewing. By then we were all in a ditch. Very scary. When I was out in the country I was with one other guy, we didn't have the machine gun on the truck anymore, they would send us down these lonely jungle roads and if we made it they felt that it was safe. So we were just bait. Then they'd send the rest through and the rest always would get hit. The officers were stupid, why reveal your position for two guys in a truck. After we realized that, you had mixed feelings on these things, you felt like you were being watched, but you were also surviving. So at some point they realized they weren't shooting at lone trucks very much so they started just using us to get through to bring things around, very scary, all they gave us were pump shotguns. Which we did shoot a lot. Mainly guerilla stuff though, there were not many direct attacks on us. I didn't shit my pants, but I was very scared. Just the roar of it. You could not fathom that the United States was anything more than fiction, the fact that I had a family, or that the US was out there was unbelievable. Your whole entire life was right there, that was it. No past no future. When we left I couldn't believe it until I landed in New Jersey and then I tried to forget every thing. After awhile it's such an a freaky existence to live, I can't find an adjective. You don't, you can't believe anything existed. I was a peon, somebody else was playing with my life.

#### **Did a lot of people die in your company?**

No, not a lot, not in the signal company. See I wasn't in the infantry anymore, I was in that signal company. But of the 150 of us that went over, some of the guys got dropped off in what they called S4 and they were able to keep tabs on where everybody was. They were in a HQ thing. When I left the country these were the guys who took all my records of Article 15s [disciplinary action short of court martial] and whatnot and voided them all. You have to turn all your weapons and uniform. I didn't have to turn anything in, I could've brought it all back. Those guys kept track on everybody, and 365 days later when our tour was up we all met back at this one in/out area and there were 5 of us. Some had been killed, some had been wounded and went back early. 5 out of 150. Pretty lucky, problem with being lucky is you feel terribly guilty.

#### **What were things that you did to make it tolerable?**

I had an ice chest, fortunately since I had this big deuce and a half truck and everyday I had to drive it somewhere I swung by the 93rd evac... I traded, I did a lot of bartering. There was a surplus place where I could get jungle fatigues and jungle boots. Nobody else could get them, I knew the guy that was running the

surplus place, so I used to go in there and fill up the truck with uniforms and boots and then we'd go and give em out to people that we knew, cause there wasn't enough clothes yet in those days, and we traded stuff for the rest. I traded enough stuff that I could always swing by the 93rd Evac, a MASH outfit, and they always had stuff we didn't have, they always had ice. I also traded when I'd get back, so I could trade ice to other people, but I always had enough for my ice cooler, and I always had goodies in there of some sort. Beer and food. I had a short-wave radio, I listened to Hanoi Hannah, which we all liked, I had a Knight kit transmitter, and I had a wire going down to various Quonset huts, hooches or whatever, they were just canvas. Everyone then had a responsibility to feed music into my transmitter. So that we kept music on the air at all times, we had a little AM radio station.

#### **What did you guys play?**

Oh whatever people had, everyone had those big Hikai reel to reel tape recorders, so we'd roll the wire out to someone's tent and someone had to be the DJ that night. Everyone had one or two tapes. So we had all kinds of stuff playing. That lasted until a guy from headquarters showed up and said it was treasonous and I could be shot for having this transmitter, because he said the VC would use it as a beacon. Can you imagine, we put up 2,000 ft. streams of smoke every morning when we burned the shit trenches and he thinks they could figure out how to home in on my transmitter. Most of the NCOs were for me, they protected me, didn't let him arrest me. And they finally negotiated the thing where they were either gonna take me back and court martial me or I had to destroy it in front of them. I took my transmitter out, put it on the ground took my .38 out and shot it. That was that.

What else did I do to get by? I had a pet monkey for awhile, a pet ocelot, which is like a giant 25 lb. cat, I don't know how I got it, bought it I guess. Big beautiful cat, nice to have around, friendly. I wrote a lot, couldn't write very well, but I wrote a letter almost every day. It was a little like a diary, but reading those letters now, they were rather guarded. I remember my cousin Leah wrote me a letter, she was working as a stewardess at the time, and the captain pointed out to her that they could see bombs exploding as they flew close to Vietnam. There must've been a B-52 bombing or something. And she was shocked and I hated her for that letter. I burned it and vowed never to speak to her again.

#### **You thought she was critical of you?**

No it wasn't that, it was... I was so mad that people thought I was just in the army and I was drafted and being a soldier. It was the idea that no one back home had any fucking idea what it was like, what war was like. All that kind of stuff. Here we were 6 months into a war over there and half this country didn't know, didn't care. Some of the colleges cared, some of the politicians cared. Imagine if we'd won the war in two years, we'd be invading Europe now, or pushing through China. Maybe it's good in some way that we lost, so that Americans could see it wasn't black and white and to see us losing and our government lying. We went into that with the domino theory, and people believed it.

#### **How did you feel about the anti war movement when you got back?**

Well, I joined the Vietnam Vets Against the War. It made sense to me. I followed what was happening over there intently, every detail, every night I'd get sick watching television.

When I was there it was pretty obvious to me that it was an agricultural community, everyone had a little house and some water and it was pretty self sufficient. And the one thing they knew, from when the French invaded and before that the Chinese invaded and the Japanese before that, endless invasion of that country and it was in their head that they had to pay someone foreign taxes for the privilege of living. They felt that they got nothing for those taxes. And starting really with the French that the invaders were corrupting their country, prostitution was very big, drugs. It was an age old thing, they saw us come and they said ho hum here's another one. Very much part of their language was beaucoup "too much" in French. They just kept going on, only difference was we

had higher tech, our country was more sadistic and it hurt more. So I came to the reality, for me, that we had nothing to offer them, that our aims had nothing to do with them. They just wanted to be left alone and live. I realized that nothing we did mattered, there was no way to win the hearts and minds of these people, because most of the people in the countryside didn't want us, didn't want our way of life and just saw us as another invader, which we were. It was pretty easy to demonstrate against it for me, because I didn't think we had any reason to be there, and I didn't think it was possible to win in any way. The people ruling the country were puppets for us. Everyone in any position of power had their own angle, their own axe to grind, everyone in power was making money and getting power from the war.

**What do you think about media representation of Vietnam?**

As far as the media goes, well they did OK, they had a big impact on ending that war. It was the people in the media who dug into the jungle with the guys who brought back the horror of war, it brought people to the reality of what was going on. Because as far as the US population went, there weren't that many guys going over there. If you were poor or black, yes, but it didn't grab a big cross section of our population, not like WWII. If people were to vote you would've found the majority of the population was unaffected by that war. They were making money on it, a lot of people were.

**What's this picture about?**

This is a picture of me and Gary with a sign saying how many days we had left, what's it say?

"One day"

Oh my. Yeah this was me and Gary's last day.

**You came in together?**


Yeah he jumped in the front of the truck with me that day we arrived, so we stayed together the whole time, flew back together. I didn't know him until then. He was supposed to go into airborne. When we got back we hit New York City together, and it was 3 days before we made it home. We said goodbye and that was it. Never seen him again, it was hard to maintain any kind of friendship after that experience. It was very difficult because so many people that I knew and was friends with were wounded or had died and so I had this huge guilt on my back. Just about then a lot of this country was beginning to think they didn't like it anymore, the colleges were just starting to see us as baby killers and that sort of stuff. And I don't quite understand, other veterans from other wars were not as fucked up as we were. Y'know there's that statistic, 52,000 Americans died in the war and in the next ten years after the war 50,000 more veterans had killed themselves. We are an odd bunch, unemployed, homeless. No one cared really, the government didn't care, they used us, out of sight out of mind. War is over, we didn't win it and we don't even want to think about it. Hell of a lot of human beings are in the wake. So coming back was very unusual, you couldn't wait to take your uniform off, you didn't want anyone to know you were in the war, and I'm only talking about 1966. The war was only really one year old for most of the country and it was bad then.

The thing that gets me most is that it's such a dupe job, you convince young people that... I mean John Wayne is the enemy, he's the one that showed us this rugged macho crap that you try to convince kids that that's what it's like to be a man, that there's some excitement and glory to war, and you'll be hero and you'll come back and get a medal and it'll make you feel good for the rest of your life. You take the youth of a country, any country and you give them all this excitement about war and jumping out of planes and guns and then you give them to the military and they have a very clever way of demoralizing you. They try to bring you down to a vegetable and then they bring you up and tell you are a man, they try to make you feel like you are ready to die for your country. They put a lot of effort to brainwash you to charge that machine gun nest. And then you do it and when it's all over with you're nothing more than a used car. It's like the GI

Bill, big fucking deal I made \$250 a month for combat pay. I never felt the slightest bit guilty for using the GI bill for years. They owe me a hell of a lot more than that. That's all any of us ever got. I don't need anything, I can make a living. But a lot of other vets can't, the veteran's hospital? I don't think VN vets get that unless it's for a military wound, it's for WWII guys and wounded in action guys. I don't know who is supposed to use it when they all die but it's not for most Vietnam veterans. Amazing that you can dupe people into expending their lives for this bullshit, and even more amazing that you can have officers who will play this game, that send guys to die. If I ever had to send people into combat I'd have to go with them, and some of them did, a lot of the good ones couldn't stand it and they died too. I don't think that there's any words to describe the slavery and misery of soldiering, it's disgusting.

So anyway I think the experience, coming back, the only way to survive was to forget it and civilize as fast as you could. When I came back I was all fucked up, then I got shipped out to Washington, to Ft. Lewis, and I got really focused. I took electronics courses and photography courses and I was able to do that speech thing. I was serious about studying, and doing something with myself. And I don't think I've ever looked back and not felt lucky. Which is why I think I don't think very much is important to me in life, not concerned about materialistic things. It was a traumatic experience, in other words everything in my life is referenced to my experience in Vietnam.





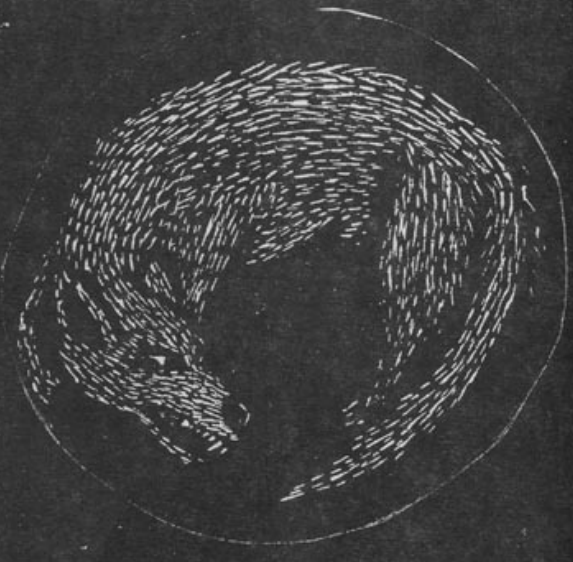
#### 4 OLDER BOOKS ABOUT PLACE

Times Square Red Times Square Blue by Samuel Delaney. One of the grande voices of science-fiction takes his pen and intellect to writing a long remembrance of Times Square, NYC. Specifically focussed on the disappearance of gay movie houses to gentrification; its larger focus is on the benefits of anonymous consensual sex in public places, urban planning & community theory, race, class & sex. Also a beautiful and loving history of queer culture in this neighborhood.

Partisan Wedding by Renato Vigano  
A collection of short stories about anti-fascist fighters in Italy in WWII, written by a veteran of the movement. Quick, sharp, realistic stories. I wish more of this woman's writing was translated.

Blockade Diary by Lidiya Ginzburg  
Another book set during WWII... this is a hallucinatory, engrossing & intellectual account of the 900 day siege of Leningrad by the Germans. Thoughts and ruminations on survival, bombing, shelling, rations, & mostly starvation and cold in a city during war time. Amazing writing full of life & struggle.

City Women edited by Liz Heron  
This is a collection of writing about cities by women in the twentieth century. Mostly short stories, but also some essays and journalistic accounts, this book kicked ass and turned me on to a lot of writers I'd never heard of before. Liz Heron translates lots of great stuff in general, keep your eyes open.



Usually I don't let people I work with know anything about my life. I'll talk politics or news, I'll talk about the radio, but I avoid the personal. I listen a lot, get told all the work gossip and generally keep my mouth shut.

I worked, prep-cooked, at this Arabic restaurant in Detroit. One morning I had to run out to the UPS place down the block. I told the other cooks to cover for me if the boss came back. They asked what the big, flat awkward package I had in my hands was. I almost lied but after working with them for a year I figured I should tell them the truth. "Some paintings for an art show." They were like ooh aahh you're an artist? Yeah I hemmed and hawed, sure. They wanted to see the paintings, but fortunately they were wrapped up tight and I got to avoid their scrutiny.

The next day my friend Abdel, the head cook, came up to me in the prep room with two big chunks of slate. He said, "Look, I want you to do me a favor, I want you to paint these for my daughter, for her birthday." I said, "Oh no, I don't know, they might not be what you want." But he was sure, "No no, you're an artist, you're my friend, I trust you, paint whatever you like, a dragon or castle..." Hmmm, I thought it was a bad idea, destined for failure, but I also thought that I believe in cheap art, art for people, art for my friends. Abdel was my friend, so therefore, logically, I should try to make something for him. It would be a challenge. "OK" I said. "Good, maybe make a mountain or a stream, she likes mountains."

So I brought the slate home and worked on it, worked hard. I'd never painted a nature landscape in my life. I took out books from the library on painting nature, I looked at books of British railway posters from the 20s, I looked at nazi propaganda glorifying man in nature. I sat on my front balcony and tried to paint the vacant lot across the street as a meadow in the foreground. I had a picture my dad sent of Mt. Hood for the background. I worked on it a little bit at a time. The clouds, the forest, the meadow, the mountain. I had no ability to judge it, I asked friends' advice. Panty Raid played a show in town, they stayed at our apartment and were supportive of the project. "It looks great, it's so sweet you're doing that." I was emboldened but still unsure. At work I strung Abdel along, "I'm almost done, just a little bit more." "Good man, I'm excited to see it, take your time."

It took two months before I felt OK about it. I brought it to work and told Abdel it was done. I took him out to the alley in the back, some of the other cooks tagged along. I pulled the slate out of my bag and presented it. Silence, then Abdel said "Oh, it's very nice." He patted me on the back. The other cooks patted me on the back too. "Good work buddy" they said. Abdel said thanks, took the slate and walked back inside. Ugh, it obviously sucked, what a let down. I felt like a loser, I should've given it to panty raid, I should never have said yes in the first place, I shoulda I shoulda...

After a short period of humiliation I stopped regretting the whole thing, I was happy to have opened up to them, even as a loser artist. It was, like many restaurants I've worked in, a fucked up and abusive environment much of the time. High stress, misogynistic. The primary medium of communication was yelling. Places like this have their own rhythm and comfort I guess, the environment is made by its participants and thus has its own releases and safety valves. Scream, throw shit, walk out. It was a good place for daily stories to tell my friends employed in the gentler industries. They were mean stories which made my friends question why I kept working there. What could I tell them: the crappy pay? the asshole boss, my inflexible schedule, the macho kitchen. The easiest answer was that I hated looking for work. The answer I didn't express is that I'm a sucker for feeling like I belong somewhere, and especially after I brought the painting in, I was warmly accepted. Also I was just starting to dub the tapes of Arabic music, just starting to be able to swear in arabic, I was beginning to hear people's stories. The Palestinian who grew up in Jordan, who'd never seen Palestine, never seen the Mediterranean, who was trained as an engineer and was the grill cook. The Lebanese head cook who left when he was a teenager, worked on greek tramp freighters around the world, who jumped ship in NYC in 1973. The Syrian house painter, the Moroccan student, the Iraqi who defected during the first Gulf War, who ended up in a refugee camp in Saudi Arabia for 6 years before coming to the US. All those huge forces in the world-war, religion, economics, history-forces that drive human existence on its mostly rocky path. All of a sudden these forces stopped seeming like abstracts and started taking shape in the people around me. I listened to their mix tapes, watched them sing along to Cynid Lauper on the radio, talked with them, drank with them, worked with them. It sucked to work there, but it was great too. I was hired when the first bombs were falling on Afghanistan and I quit around the time Georgey flew onto the aircraft carrier and declared, "mission accomplished".



Letter From Chicago

I wanted to write you from Chicago, of the ~~wide~~ narrow streets, of the many cars, all the drivers driving along, all the people all out on the streets and the Puerto Rican Flags draped in steel across Division Street, one side to the other, near where I stayed. The Puerto Rican gentleman across the street who sat at his open window in his first floor apartment and talked to his friend out on the sidewalk, and the chihuahua stood on the air conditioner and barked at me as I went by. The next day the air conditioner was gone, where will the chihuahua stand? I wondered.

The more days I stayed in Chicago the smaller I got. I tried to go out on the town and keep up but I am allergic to cigarette smoke --at least it gives me headaches, terrible terrible headaches. I had one that whammied me into bed on my day off, all day I slept and 9 aspirins propped me up enough to attend Icky's birthday dinner but not enough to go hang out in the innards of the Ashland Avenue bridge, so back to bed I went. I carried that headache with me till I left, like a torch, like a match burning my fingers, reminding me of why I left. This town, how I left it--crushed, broken, hobbling and leaking pieces of me up to Alaska in '96.

I love Chicago, I truly do, but it's like that first serious lover you have that you stay with too long because you're too green to read the warning signs and you don't understand the flickering light that wavers between love and destruction, a scab to pick that always bleeds, even if it's only a little bit, even if it's four days of headaches and a handful of bad dreams.

Because really I will always love Chicago, for taking me in, when I was a raw small town girl who looked the part. And I will always love Chicago for being there and letting me stay and never apologizing or pretending to be anything else, for taking me through my young adulthood until I learned finally how to love that town, with a fierce flaming loyalty, like I like cold icy wind on my wide cheeks, like I like a Navy pea coat just a little too big so I can fit all the layers I need for a five mile bike ride in February, like I liked to go to the East coast and the West and be from Chicago, it was my town and it was proud to have me claim it.

And still I love Chicago, my friends who stand me up or don't call back, my friends who give me easy work at high pay and share with me their lives and families. I love going to events and Icky knows everybody and they're all straight, girls/boys, and no one talks to me or if they do they trail off into apology"...I'm just not very articulate right now.." until some boy I've heard is an asshole in 3 different states comes up and her tongue blooms giggles and charm and who cares anyway, who even wants to talk to some dumb girl and

then the even torganizer seesme and says, "Hey! Are you back?" as he rushes through, and that's how I love Chicago. And I go to meet a freind at a play and I run into 2 dear old pals from my life as a cafe worker, smokin pot quittin drinkin and we're all so delighted with each other I hardly notice that I've been stood up and it's just as well, I been hangin with too many boys already. It's nice to hang out with old querbaits of yore, especially the 7-mile bike ride home and astop at a flower garden to pick a bouquet to thank the lady I'm housesitting for, and another stop along the railroad

tracks on Ravenswood Avenue to pick wild flowers and look up and down the narrow, factory-lined street for glimpses of my phantom self on an old bike route, rideng in the night every season but summer.

I love especially the carload of Mexican men dressed Friday-night hopeful, 4 or 5 of the m spilling out of a blue car, each waiting until he exits the car before setting his white cowboy hat on his head, a hat identical to the ones worn by his companions. And each of them wearing a cowboy shirt, solid color, bright red or blue, clean and shiny and ready for dancing. Settin the hat on the head, not lookin back.

by Moe Bowstern





Another work story. There was one other white guy who worked in the kitchen, Dan. An ex-navy meathead, he was perpetually sniffing from his perpetual coke habit. Dan talked loud, complained loud, yelled at the wait staff, never did his job well, always wanted to listen to classic rock and Rush Limbaugh. In any other kitchen he would've been the head cook, here he was a dishwasher training to be a line cook. Ha sucked to work with, created an even more hostile environment there, he was lazy and told the most ridiculously transparent lies about his life. Oddly, there was something almost likable about Dan, some human warmth there I think, though maybe it was just his total lack of power in the kitchen.

Anyway, while he trained to be cook one day he left a bunch of salad unfinished in Abdel's (the head cook) work space. Abdel told Dan "move your shit", then a few minutes later "Dan, your shit's in my way" then with more urgency "hey Dan move your shit" then "Hey lazy motherfucker, move your fucking shit" "Dan if you don't move your fucking shit I'm gonna dump it on you" "Huhuhuhu", Dan replied, "fuck you Abdel." So Abdel did it, he threw the large bowl of salad across the room at Dan. It wound up mostly on the floor. Dan countered by throwing Abdel's shit on the floor. They both started yelling at the top of their lungs, moved to within inches of each other, knives in their hands, violence seemed close. It was weird to see Abdel like this, our head cook was usually the peacemaker, but here he was fierce and scary. Dan on the other hand went from being the ex-navy tough guy to sounding like a little kid who got beat up too much, his voice high and out of control. Suleyman, the owner, roundly hated by the cooks as an enemy of the kitchen, came to the back as conversation in the restaurant died to the sounds of two cooks screaming at each other. Suleyman laid into Dan, "You stupid idiot what the fuck are you doing? Huh? You work for Abdel, you do what he says, you're lucky people back here put up with you Dan, if they tell me to fire you I would, but they protect you, you're lucky, you should be kissing their asses. So shut up, clean up back here or get out." And then the boss walked back into the restaurant with a fake smile.

In the manly world of the kitchen Dan was obviously humiliated. But I think it was a little shaming for Abdel too, to have the boss back him up and end the fight. There were a few seconds of silence and then Dan shuffled off, red faced, he got the broom and started to clean the place up. Abdel turned around and went back to work. Said, the grill cook, shuffled some pots around made a joke with a waitress and kept filling orders. Everyone was dead quiet in the kitchen, trying to pretend that everything was normal. In the silence Said started to sing, almost inaudible at first, he slowly got stronger and louder. He had a high pitched voice and he was singing a song in Arabic, I don't know what kind of song it was or what the lyrics were, but it was a beautiful tune, it raised the hair on my neck. He sang uninterrupted for minutes. The entire crescendo of emotions had been gone through in the last half hour: drama, conflict, action, climax, mourning and with this song some strange sense of unity of resolution. Dan, meathead whiteboy who always complained about listening to Arabic music ('dude, it sounds like a chicken getting raped'), still red faced but back to work looked up at Said and says "that's the most beautiful song I've ever heard" and man at that moment it was true.



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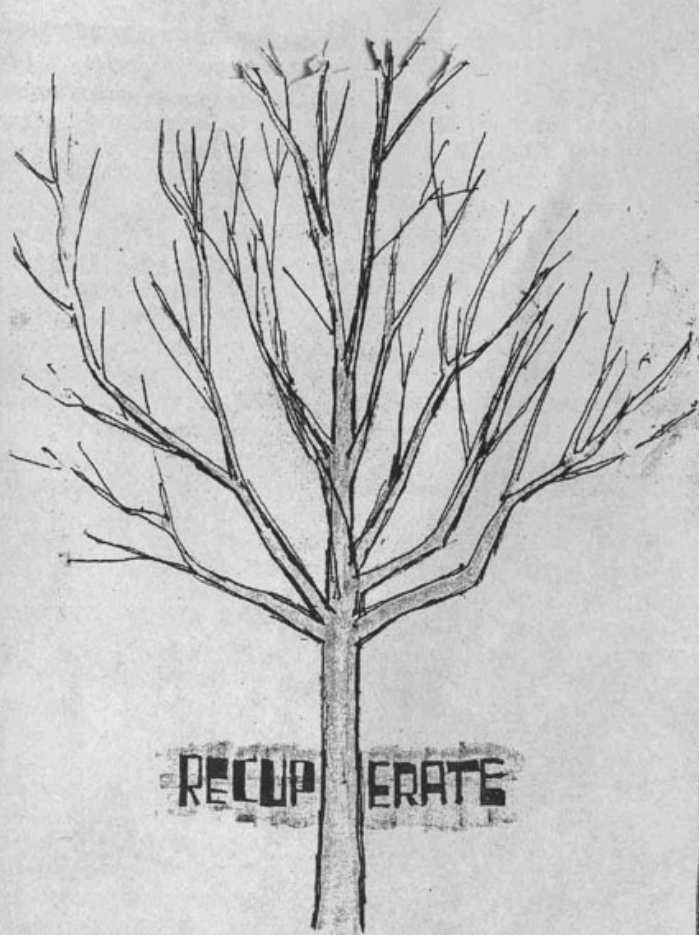
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Albina, Vancouver Ave., 19th St., 11th  
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Sound

Extra special thanks to Moe & Katie for feed-  
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The Gray Sage interview is excerpted from a  
Wipers interview in an old MRR.

JOYERS & SMOGGERS --- WHAT MAKES A MAN  
START FIRES --- HUM OF LIFE --- SWEET BEAT ---  
GROUNATION --- JAN NOWAK --- DUB HOVS (N6)





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