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December '07

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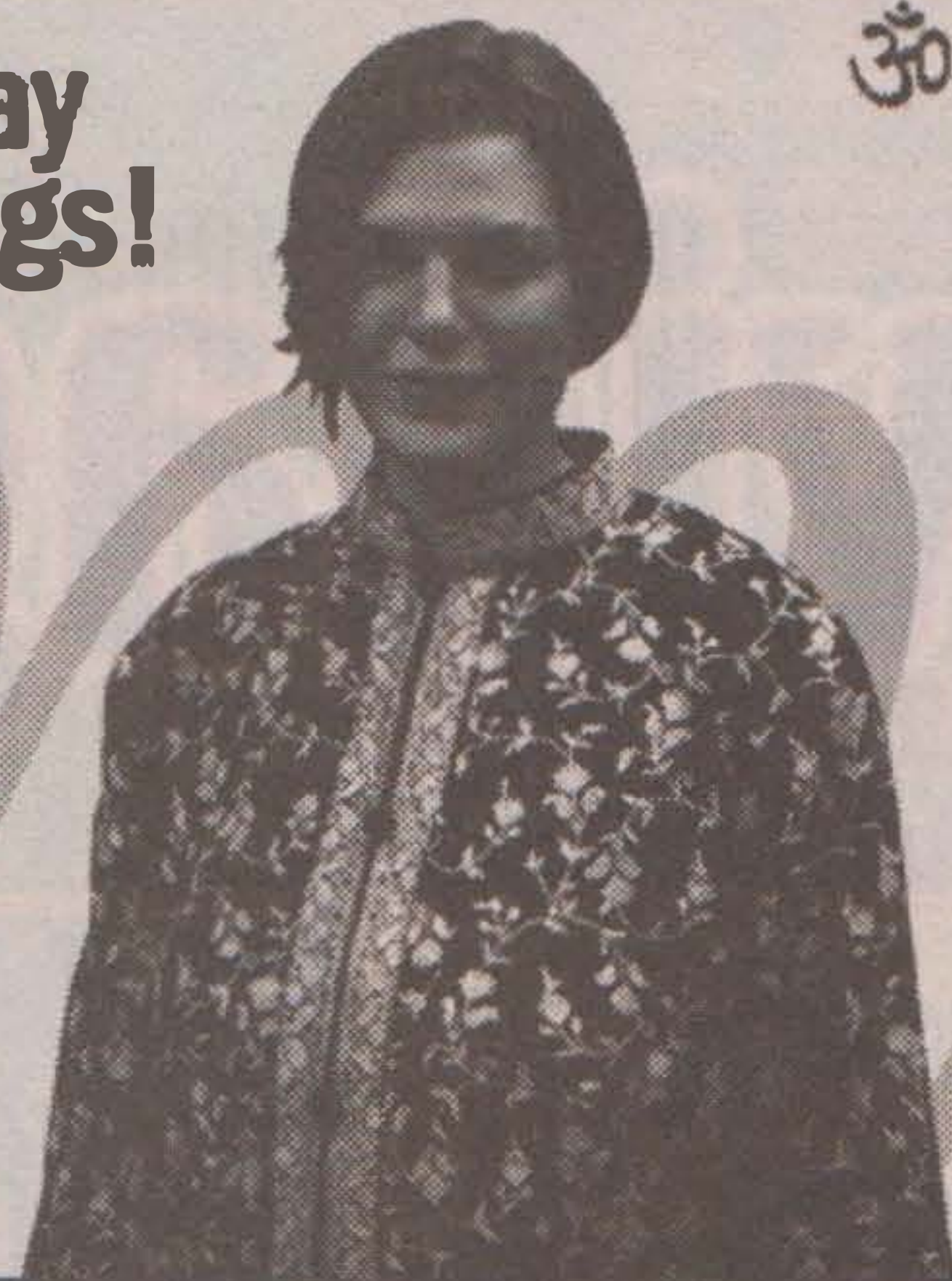
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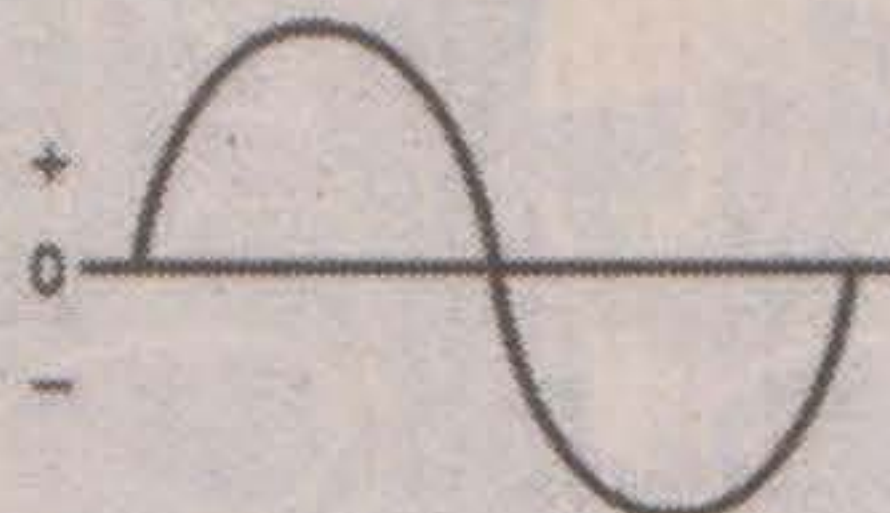
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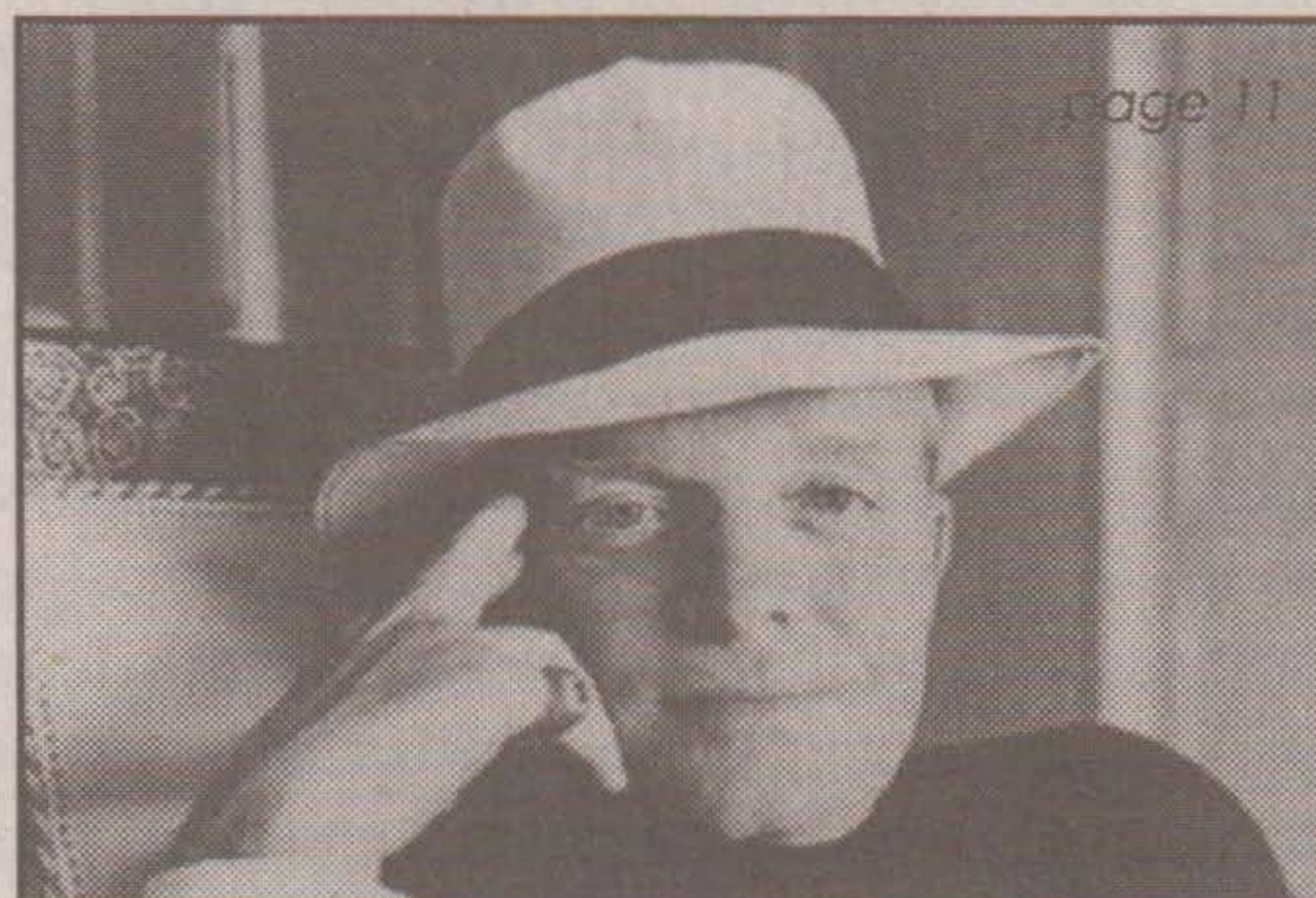
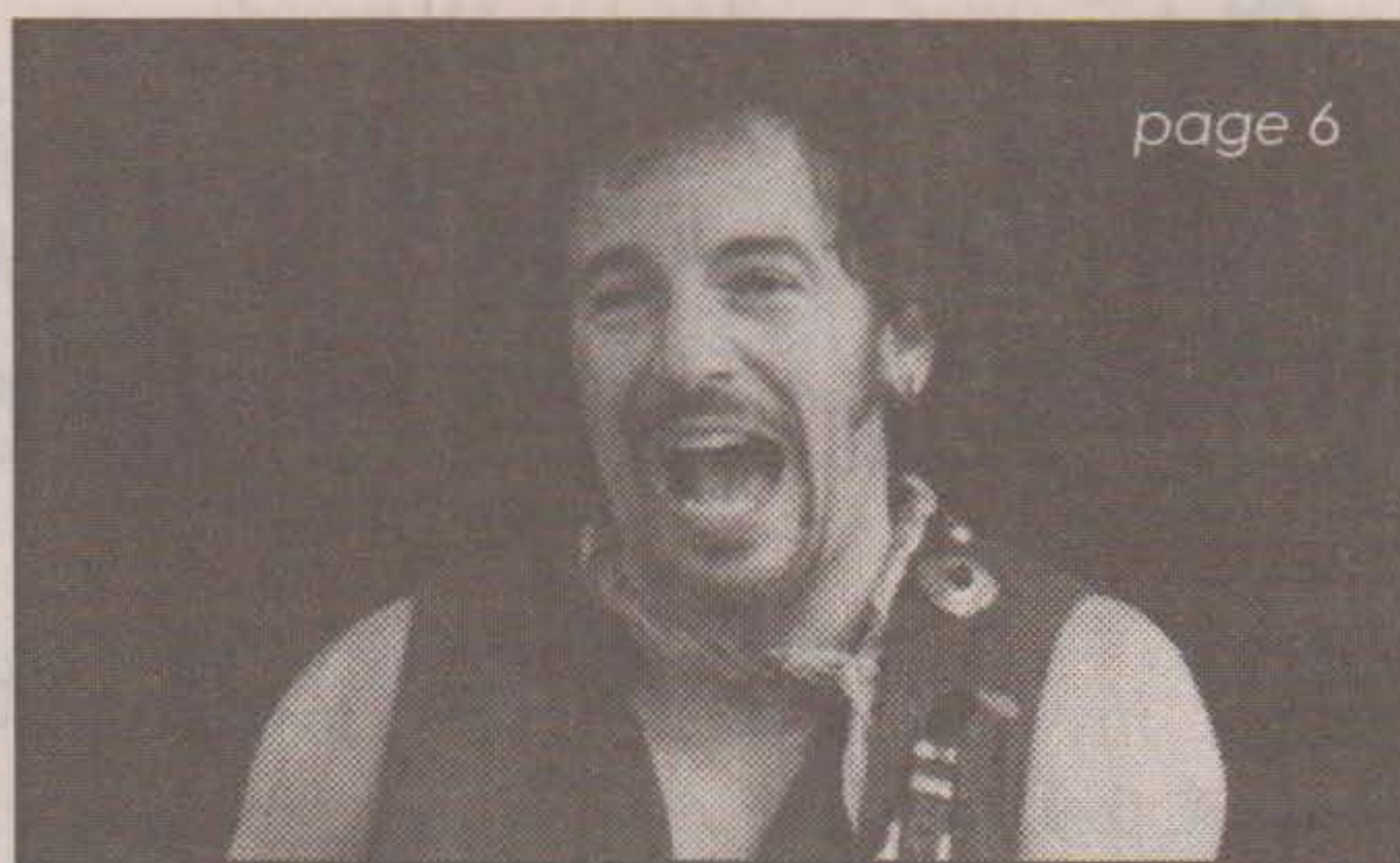
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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



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All I want for Christmas is the tree lot guy . . .

We've lost something at Christmastime in recent decades. Here's one of my favorite memories from growing up in the Midwest in the 1960s and 1970s: going to the Christmas tree lot to buy our Yuletide shrine to the season. I can't remember all the details, but I know my mom and dad went to the same guy every year, who set up one of those makeshift lots on a patch of grass or a corner of a parking lot near a grocery store. My brothers and I would wander the rows of evergreen, dreaming of impossibly huge trees that would never fit in my living room while my dad haggled with the lot owner over something more practical. No matter which compromise tree we ended up with, it was always too big for the living room—but it was always beautiful.

The operative word here is *memory*. Christmas tree “lots” are nearly extinct. And there were a heck of lot more kinds of trees to choose from twenty years ago. And there were a heck of a lot more trees with a little bit of character, too.

First, the lots. I honestly don't know at all who the “guy” was that my parents patronized—whether he was an independent entrepreneur who set up a little holiday business on his own, or whether he was operating a lot for a charity. It doesn't matter—both of those types of cottage industries are nearly extinct. I attended graduate school at The University of Iowa from 1986-1991, and even at that time, I recall my wife and I browsing at least a couple of these types of lots on the Coralville strip, looking for something small and cheap for our apartment. Today, the only lot left that I know of in the Iowa City area is the Optimist Club setting up shop in the Riverside Drive Dairy Queen parking lot.

Of course, there are still several options today for buying a real Christmas tree, including the Optimist Club lot. There are the garden centers, for example. But while many of them are fine local businesses and should be patronized in

general, my concern when it comes to Christmas trees is that they are outrageously expensive. There were garden centers when I was a kid, and my family passed them by for trees for this very reason. (And, to tell you the truth, even though it's great that it's all for charity, the Optimist trees are a little pricey, too.)

The trees at the garden centers are a little too perfect, too. Today, tree farms shear and shape so those that end up at the store look almost as artificial as, well, the artificial ones. I love to look back at old photographs—whether in historical books or my own family album—and gaze upon the sometimes oddly shaped trees, always with open branches. Glittering, delicate ornaments drooped off those spindly boughs with plenty of space to float freely, evanescent symbols of the season that seemed to glide through thin air. Today's Christmas trees are tightly branched and precisely shaped so you can barely “hang” anything on them. There's also something beautifully wild about those old naturally shaped trees, too. Of course, in the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth, many of those trees were simply cut from the nearby woods. I miss that sense of honoring evergreen nature in mid-winter, which was the whole point in the first place.

There are cut-your-own tree farms. Like some garden centers, these are generally locally owned, you're obviously guaranteed a fresh tree, and you can create a family experience out of the harvesting. A pretty good package deal overall! But my experience and research suggests that the prices, while not always premium, are still not very low. And there's still plenty of shearing and shaping going on there.

The major roadblock to our family exercising this option in recent years, however, was our son who, when he was a little boy, was horrified at the prospect of actually chopping down a tree. We rationalized with him, explaining that the trees we bought had at one time been alive and were chopped down. He fully understood that but was still emotionally unprepared actually to

do the deed.

So what's left for a reasonably priced tree? The guy at the lot is gone. What's left is Menards, Lowe's, and Hy-Vee. But even at these discount chains you can't escape for less than 25 or 30 bucks. And even the Hy-Vees aren't all dumping a line of trees on their outer wall anymore, either. The whole purchase process at Menards and Lowe's is depressingly utilitarian, a warehouse transaction.

And whether it's Menards or the trendiest garden center, there are very few choices anymore. Today, 'round these parts anyway, you have about four options—balsam fir, Fraser fir, Scotch pine, and some kind of spruce. I know there used to be a lot more varieties to choose from. What we have here is a perfect example of today's retail environment—as the small, local store is displaced by the ever-expanding big box warehouses, our product choices are actually shrinking in number as square footage and shelf space at chains expand. The “efficiency” of mass discounting leads to the extinction of many product sub-species—including Christmas trees.

There are still plenty of Christmas trees to buy out there. And there are even some good options left. But I think we diminish our lives greatly when the small local provider with a greater variety and a little bit of personality goes the way of the dodo. A piece of Christmas has died for me. The guy with the small lot, with the makeshift Christmas lights strung along a makeshift snow fence, with Bing Crosby or Frank Sinatra warbling Christmas carols out of a tinny speaker, with a wondrous variety of firs and pines and spruces, with that special tree that's just a little funky but won't break the bank—I'm afraid all that's just scrapbook nostalgia. **lv**

Thomas Dean thinks that the 1951 movie version of A Christmas Carol with Alastair Sim (actually titled Scrooge) has never been and will never be surpassed.



All you need to know, down to the core

Chef KMK lets you know how to keep the doctor away for months at a time

This has been a rough year for apples in Iowa. After 2005 devastating late spring freeze, which knocked out blossoms on apple trees statewide, it was a rejuvenating sight to see the “limb-buster” of a crop that rolled in from Iowa’s many orchards in 2006, but the weather is nothing if not fickle and 2007 saw empty or nea-empty orchards statewide.

One of the most delightful things about apples is that there is usually such a variety of them available right here at home. There is one to suit any taste and any purpose, from sweet or tart eating apples to baking apples to cider (including the hard stuff).

An interesting side note: remember that story we were all told about Jonny Appleseed back in grade-school? Well, they left out a couple parts. We were shown the drawings of a simple country boy with a tin pot on his head merrily scattering seeds as he wondered the back roads of our young nation.

What they didn’t tell you was that John Chapman was a real estate speculator taking advantage of the law at the time that allowed him to lay claim to land where he had planted a crop. In addition, most of the resulting harvest, as with all apples at the time, was used to make hard cider – the preferred beverage of the time. Guess they don’t want little kids to know about that stuff.

Because apples keep so well, they are a great treat to share at the holidays. Joyce Wilson of Wilson’s Orchard, just north of Iowa City, told me to store your fresh-picked

apples, place them in a plastic bag with a dripping wet cloth or paper towel. Refrigerate them as soon as possible (ideally at 35 degrees and near 100% humidity) apart from other fruits and vegetables. Apples like Gala, Honeycrisp and Blushing Golden will last for three to six months.

So hopefully you found (or grew!) a large supply of these treasures and are ready to serve them on your holiday table. Naturally an apple pie is the first thing everyone thinks of, and of course that is one delicious option.

But why not branch out a little? Does an apple dish have to be a dessert? Does it have to be sweet? No and no.

Consider making a chutney, or a classic Mulligatawny soup. Sauté sliced Granny Smith’s with onion, garlic and a quick white wine deglaze to serve over a roast pork. Roll slices of them into a leg of lamb.

Dessert recipes are everywhere this time of year, so I’ll share with you a stuffing I make every holiday season that’s loaded with apples and not even a tiny bit sweet.

Here’s hoping you enjoy it, and that your holidays find you surrounded with family, friends, and wonderful food. **lv**

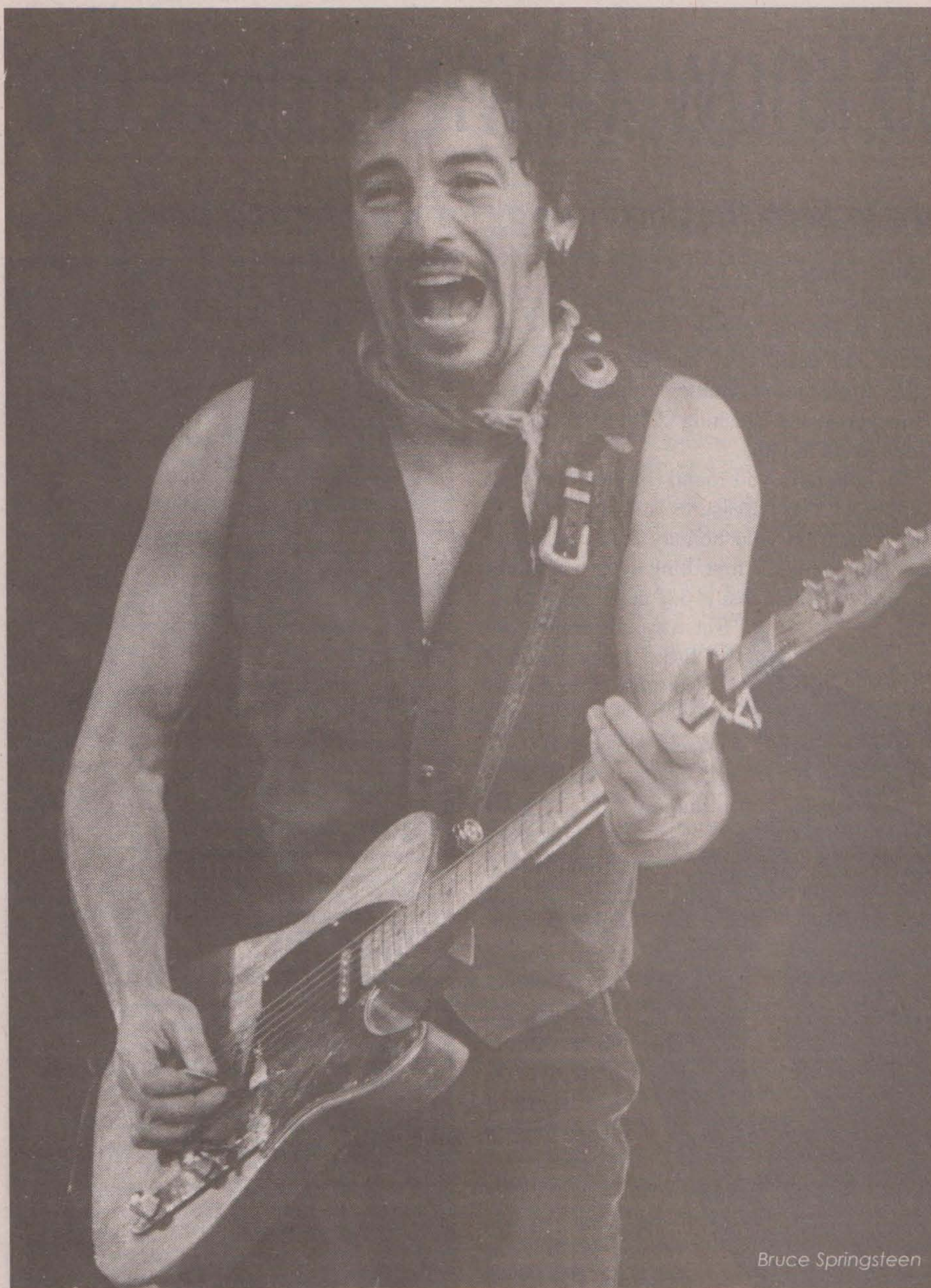
It's About the Food is a monthly feature of The Little Village. Chef Kurt Michael Friese is co-owner, with his wife Kim, of the Iowa City restaurant Devotay and serves on the Slow Food USA Board of Directors, as well as being editor-in-chief of the local food magazine Edible Iowa River Valley. He lives in rural Johnson County. Questions and comments may be directed to devotay@mchsi.com.

Apple-Pecan Stuffing

- 2 cups Granny Smith Apples, diced
- 3/4 cup pecans, dry-roasted
- 1 each onion, diced
- 1 stalk celery, diced
- 1 loaf French bread, diced
- 2 tablespoons sage
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 1/4 tablespoons cracked black pepper
- 1/4 cup butter
- 1 quart chicken stock, more or less

Melt the butter in a large sauté pan over medium high heat (do not brown). Sauté the apples, pecans, onions, and celery until just tender. Add the sage, salt and pepper. Add the bread and mix thoroughly. Add the stock, a little at a time, until it is absorbed and the stuffing reaches the desired consistency (all a matter of taste, really; you may need more or less stock).

Cool to use as an actual stuffing, or put in a shallow casserole and bake about 1/2 hour at 350 until crisp & crusty on top to serve as a side dish.



Bruce Springsteen

PONDERING THE PATRIARCHS

A look at who's been there and who's still there

One of my earliest memories of music was hearing Bruce Springsteen's "Hungry Heart" through my mom's AM radio when I was about eleven. The one-second drum roll that launches the song's piano-and-sax riff—followed by Bruce's "Yeah!" a few seconds later—are wired directly into my syn-

apses, and my psyche. I loved Top 40 radio, loved it, and to me Springsteen's infectious little masterpiece was, and is, a perfect pop song.

I still remember dancing through our little living room every time "Hungry Heart" came on, and when *Born in the USA* was released a few years later, I was hooked. Using my library card, I checked out the LP from my local

branch and duly taped it onto cassette, which was also true of *Born to Run*. And then there was the time I listened to all four hours of the *Live/1975-1985* album when it was broadcast commercial free on a Norfolk, Virginia FM radio station, something I also taped. ("Home Taping is Killing the Music Industry," went one famous anti-piracy slogan from the time. However, in this case it certainly didn't kill Springsteen's career, nor did my home taping keep me from buying his albums, but more on that in a second.)

This Boss has been a soundtrack to my life, which doesn't mean that he was the only thing I consumed, for there was plenty of other music competing for my attention as a kid: punk, hip-hop, and—again—Top 40 radio. And there were many times I forsook Springsteen because he seemed uncool and corny (over the course of my lifetime I have enthusiastically bought and later sold in shame at least a dozen of his records). When attending one of his stadium shows during the 1980s, I recall wanting to strangle some of his drunken, flag-waving fans, a constituency that made it even harder to support him back then.

The 1990s also weren't kind for Springsteen aficionados because he appeared to be borderline-washed-up, having parted ways with the E Street Band and only releasing three studio albums, considered by many to be pretty weak efforts, during that decade. It didn't help that those albums (*Lucky Town*, *Human Touch*, and *The Ghost of Tom Joad*) didn't live up to his past glories. With only the faint echoes of "Born in the USA" and "Dancing in the Dark" ringing in people's ears—with their cheesy 1980s production values and all—it was pretty hard to justify this fan's love to others, particularly fellow record store clerks.

Thankfully, all these concerns have evaporated, especially after seeing Springsteen's rockin' performance with the E Street Band in St. Paul this past November. It was a treat to see someone who could easily be phoning it in (hello, Mick Jagger!), but who clearly wasn't, even at age fifty-nine. It was poignant, reminding me of another one of my inspirations, another soundtrack to my life: Sonic Youth, whose 1986 *EVOL* album went into heavy rotation on my stereo not long after growing disenchanted with the Boss's all-enveloping superstardom. The irony of Sonic Youth's name is that they are all pushing fifty (or have already pushed past it), but in the past decade this noise rock institution has made some of the best albums of their career.

Speaking of phoning it in, after recently seeing Bob Dylan in an arena—one of the most alienating experiences I've ever had as a fan, one that reminded me why punk needed

Sonic Youth



to happen—I was skeptical about attending another big show. However, all fears were dispelled when the E Street Band took the stage and immediately throttled into “Radio Nowhere,” the first single from Springsteen’s latest album, *Magic*. With the houselights on full, and the music raging full on, it was a jaw-dropping display of rock star charisma, the kind that can bring thousands together as one (I know that sounds trite, but it’s true).

The difference between the Boss’s performance and almost every other arena show I’ve seen was apparent in just how *into it* the entire audience was, even those way, way up there in the nosebleed seats. The other cool thing about the “Radio Nowhere” opener was that virtually everyone knew the words to a song that had only just been released. Compare this to Springsteen’s other rock aristocracy peers, who are lucky just to slip one new song into the set list—only to have the crowd use it as an excuse to get beer or take a bathroom break.

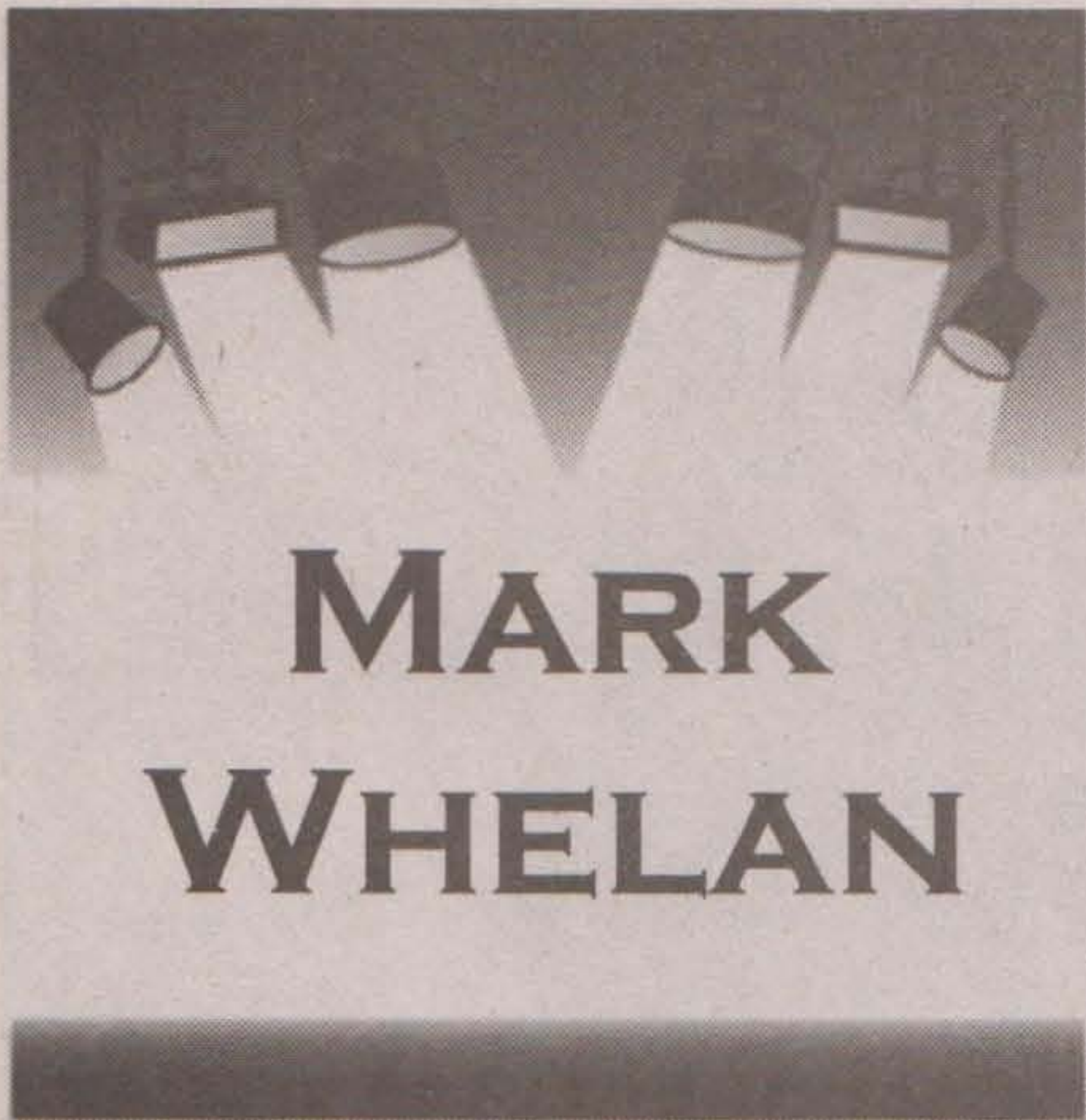
Even many younger bands wouldn’t consider coming out and playing three quarters of their new album, which the E Street band did that night, let alone have the audience go bananas over it. Some live highlights from *Magic*: the sunny “Girls in Their Summer Clothes,” with its Phil Spector-esque wall of sound; the catchy-yet-melancholy “Living In the Future”; and the angry “Last to Die.” Unlike his previous album with the E Street Band, *The Rising*—which I found to be a little plodding and dirge-y at times—his latest captures that AM radio sparkle that first hooked me. In fact, “Hungry Heart” wouldn’t at all sound out of place on *Magic*.

In addition to the new tunes, there were of course the classics, not least of which was the one-two punch of “Thunder Road” followed by “Born to Run,” as well as other audience favorites like “Badlands,” “Dancing in the Dark,” and “Incident on 57th Street.” But rather than sounding and looking like he was

flogging a dead horse, he and the band made these songs purr and hum along like a vintage ’57 Chevy.

When I was a kid, I never could have imagined it was possible for Springsteen, or Sonic Youth, for that matter, to remain relevant a quarter century after their glory days. However, that night Springsteen proved it was possible to still have passion, and to love what you do after all those years. I’m no rock ‘n’ roller, I’m just a professor, but it’s nice to have this kind of role model—to know that if I don’t die before I get old, at least I don’t have to get stale. **IV**

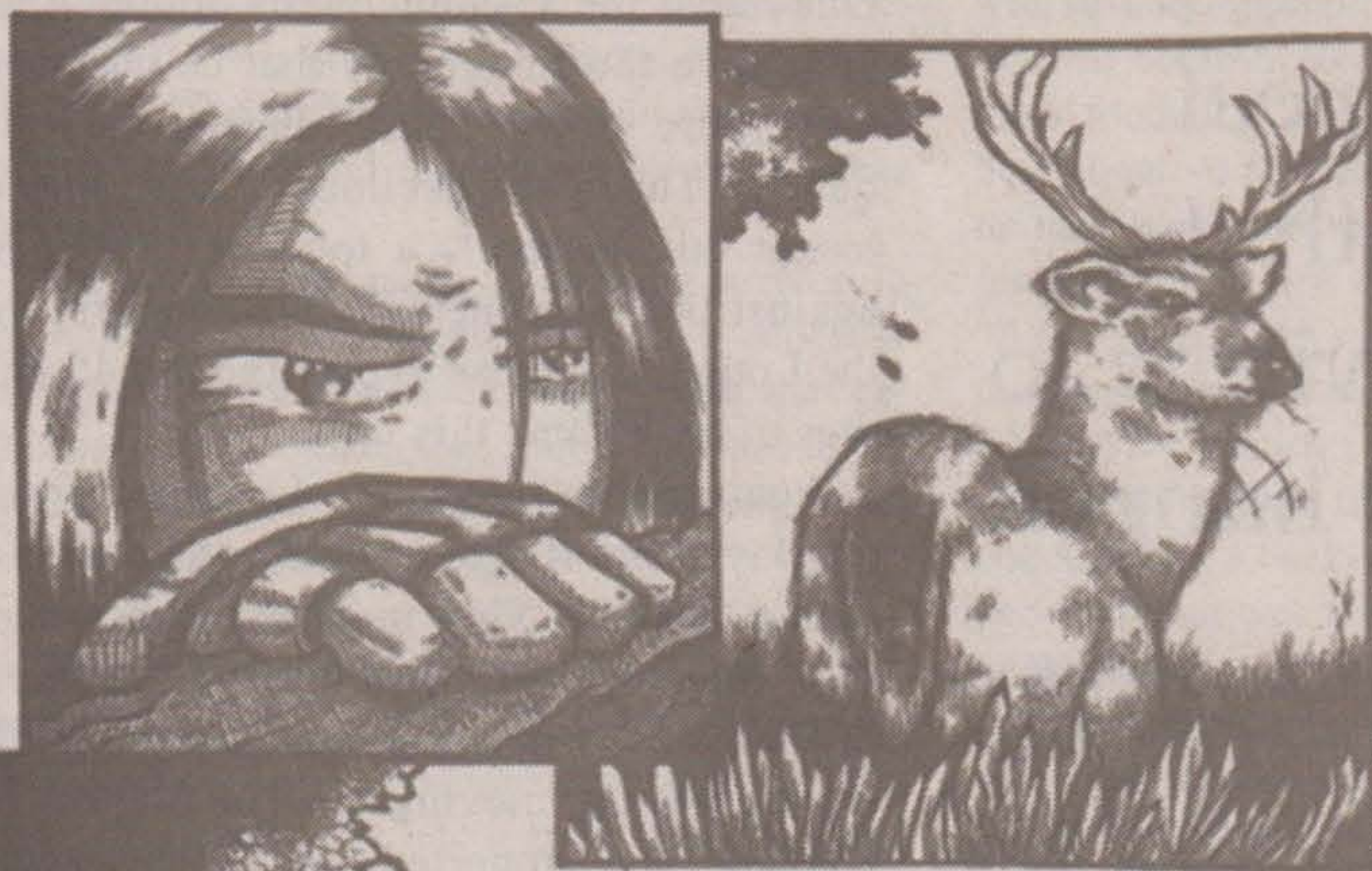
Kembrew McLeod is a music critic and a UI professor of Communication Studies. His primary advice to the youth of America is the following: While it is important to reserve the right to rock, one should never rock it hardcore 24 hours a day. It’s that simple.



Mark Whelan was born in Decorah, IA on January 27, 1979 to Jane and John Whelan. An astute follower of cinema, as well as a lover of theatre and literature, Mark sites his greater inspirations stemming from master filmmaker's Akira Kurosawa and Stanley Kubrick to graphic novelists Hayao Miyazaki and Wendy Pini. He currently resides in Iowa City and can be reached at kierberg@yahoo.com.

Theses drawings are taken from the upcoming second issue of Mark's *Crown* series.





Simple games and valuable lessons

On an unseasonably warm October day, six men play out a host of admirable traits

A hot, westerly wind pushed the afternoon temperature up to 83 degrees, unusually warm for Oct. 19 and not the kind of football weather you'd expect on the last day of the regular season. And given the odds stacked against them, the Longhorns of McPherson County High School in Tryon, Nebraska, probably aren't the kind of team you'd expect to see on the field, either.

With a grade K-12 enrollment of about 70 this year, the McPherson County school system is one of the smallest, if not the smallest, in Nebraska. It serves a sprawling, sparsely-populated chunk of the Sandhills region in the heart of ranch country. Some 500 residents live in McPherson County, a jurisdiction nearly twice as large as the average Iowa county but with no incorporated towns.

The county seat, Tryon (pop. 90), is about 40 miles northwest of North Platte. Along with the schools, court house and road maintenance garage, the hamlet has a post office, a newspaper ("The Tryon Graphic: Since 1889"), a filling station, a motel, a ranchers' feed and supply store, two eateries, and two beauty parlors. A Methodist church and museum are points of interest.

So, too, is the football field. (This is Nebraska, after all.) The field could be described best as minimalist, with no lights and a set of five-row bleachers that seat about 50. The back row is about five feet off the ground, low enough for some adults to lean on from the back while standing, with elbows resting on the top plank. Just right for Friday Night Lights, McPherson County style.

The players are warming up, preparing for the 3:00 kickoff soon after classes are dismissed. The band is unloading its instruments at the sidelines, behind the home bench. I count seven instruments but only four performers. Then, just before we stand for the national anthem, three football players step over the dividing rope, and for a couple of minutes they double as musicians. One plays bass drum, another plays saxophone, and a third handles the cymbals. At the conclusion of the Star-Spangled Banner, they carefully put down their instruments and run back onto the field.

Kickoff time arrives at last, as the

Longhorns host the Rock County Tigers. It has been a tough season for the home team, with only one win in its previous six outings. Today would be another grueling test. The numbers give some clues.

The Tigers have 19 players suited up, nearly twice as many as the Longhorns. Both teams represent small rural school districts that qualify to play only six-man football, but the contrast in numbers even between these two schools is striking. Only four ex-

Playing for the
simple love of the
game. Encouraging
your teammates
along the way.
Mutual respect.
Sticking with it.
What a privilege to
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tra players are on the home bench; across the field, meanwhile, over a dozen are available to substitute.

Small as the Longhorn team is, its 10 players represent nearly 80 percent of the 13 boys eligible to play this year. (To put this in perspective, my small town Iowa high school – Charles City – would yield some 300 players with the same turnout.) Of the Longhorns' three seniors, two are foreign exchange students – Petar from Serbia and Artur ("Tui") from Brazil. Neither one had picked up an American football until about ten weeks before.

A quick review of six-man football rules suggests that some slack is cut for these guys. The field is 80 yards long, not 100. Quarters are 10 minutes long, not 12 or 15. But it's 15 yards to go on the first down, not 10, and the offense plays from the line of

scrimmage on all four downs. I'm not completely familiar with six-man rules, but it appears that if the offense doesn't convert on the fourth, it doesn't punt. Instead, the other team takes over possession at that field position. It seems to open up more scoring opportunities. Teams switch from "O" to "D," from "D" to "O," back and forth, all afternoon.

In other words, no special teams, no full-time defense coordinator, no dedicated offensive line.

What accommodation the rules make for six-man football is countered by the challenge of sheer exhaustion that comes from running, reversing, mentally shifting gears, in a 40-minute game that stretches out over two hours.

Though not recognized by the Nebraska School Activities Association, six-man football is officiated under many of the same rules that apply to teams from larger towns. One rule is the 35-point mercy option. A referee gave the Longhorns that choice when they were down 56-20 during the third quarter. The coach declined. Their lopsided losses this season – a total of 132 points against their opponents' 454 – confirm that the Longhorns chose to play the full 40 minutes of each game this fall.

Against the Tigers, the Longhorns were outplayed but did score five touchdowns in their 63-34 loss. They made mistakes – fumbles, interceptions, open holes – but stayed in the game, persisting stubbornly, picking themselves up, moving on. The players encouraged and supported each other, whether after a setback or score. Naturally, there was frustration. But they didn't let it stop them, an attitude that revealed much more about their character and strength as individuals and as a team than their 2007 record of 1-7 suggests.

Playing for the simple love of the game. Encouraging your teammates along the way. Mutual respect. Sticking with it. What a privilege to watch it all happen. **lv**

David McCartney is the University of Iowa archivist. He visits Tryon and the surrounding Nebraska Sandhills once or twice each year.

Imagine a morning in late November. A coming of winter morning more than twenty years ago. Consider the kitchen of a spreading old house in a country town. A great black stove is its main feature; but there is also a big round table and a fireplace with two rocking chairs placed in front of it. Just today the fireplace commenced its seasonal roar.

A woman with shorn white hair is standing at the kitchen window. She is wearing tennis shoes and a shapeless gray sweater over a summery calico dress. She is small and sprightly, like a bantam hen; but, due to a long youthful illness, her shoulders are pitifully hunched. Her face is remarkable—not unlike Lincoln's, craggy like that, and tinted by sun and wind; but it is delicate too, finely boned, and her eyes are sherry-colored and timid. "Oh my," she exclaims, her breath smoking the windowpane, "it's fruitcake weather!"

The person to whom she is speaking is myself. I am seven; she is sixty-something. We are cousins, very distant ones, and we have lived together—well, as long as I can remember. Other people inhabit the house, relatives; and though they have power over us, and frequently make us cry, we are not, on the whole, too much aware of them. We are each other's best friend. She calls me Buddy, in memory of a boy who was formerly her best friend. The other Buddy died in the 1880's, when she was still a child. She is still a child.

"I knew it before I got out of bed," she says, turning away from the window with a purposeful excitement in her eyes. "The courthouse bell sounded so cold and clear. And there were no birds singing; they've gone to warmer country, yes indeed. Oh, Buddy, stop stuffing biscuit and fetch our buggy. Help me find my hat. We've thirty cakes to bake."

It's always the same: a morning arrives in November, and my friend, as though officially inaugurating the Christmas time of year that exhilarates her imagination and fuels the blaze of her heart, announces: "It's fruitcake weather! Fetch our buggy. Help me find my hat."

The hat is found, a straw cartwheel corsaged with velvet roses out-of-doors has faded: it once belonged to a more fashionable relative. Together, we guide our buggy, a dilapidated baby carriage, out to the garden and into a grove of pecan trees. The buggy is mine; that is, it was bought for me when I was born. It is made of wicker, rather unraveled, and the wheels wobble like a drunkard's legs. But it is a faithful object; springtimes, we take it to the woods and fill it with flowers, herbs, wild fern for our porch pots; in the summer, we pile it with picnic paraphernalia and sugar-cane fishing poles and roll it down to the edge of a creek; it has its winter uses, too: as a truck for hauling firewood from the yard to the kitchen, as a warm bed for Queenie, our tough little orange and white rat terrier who has survived distemper and two rattlesnake bites. Queenie is trotting beside it now.

Three hours later we are back in the kitchen hulling a heaping buggyload of windfall pecans. Our backs hurt from gathering them: how hard they were to find (the main crop having been

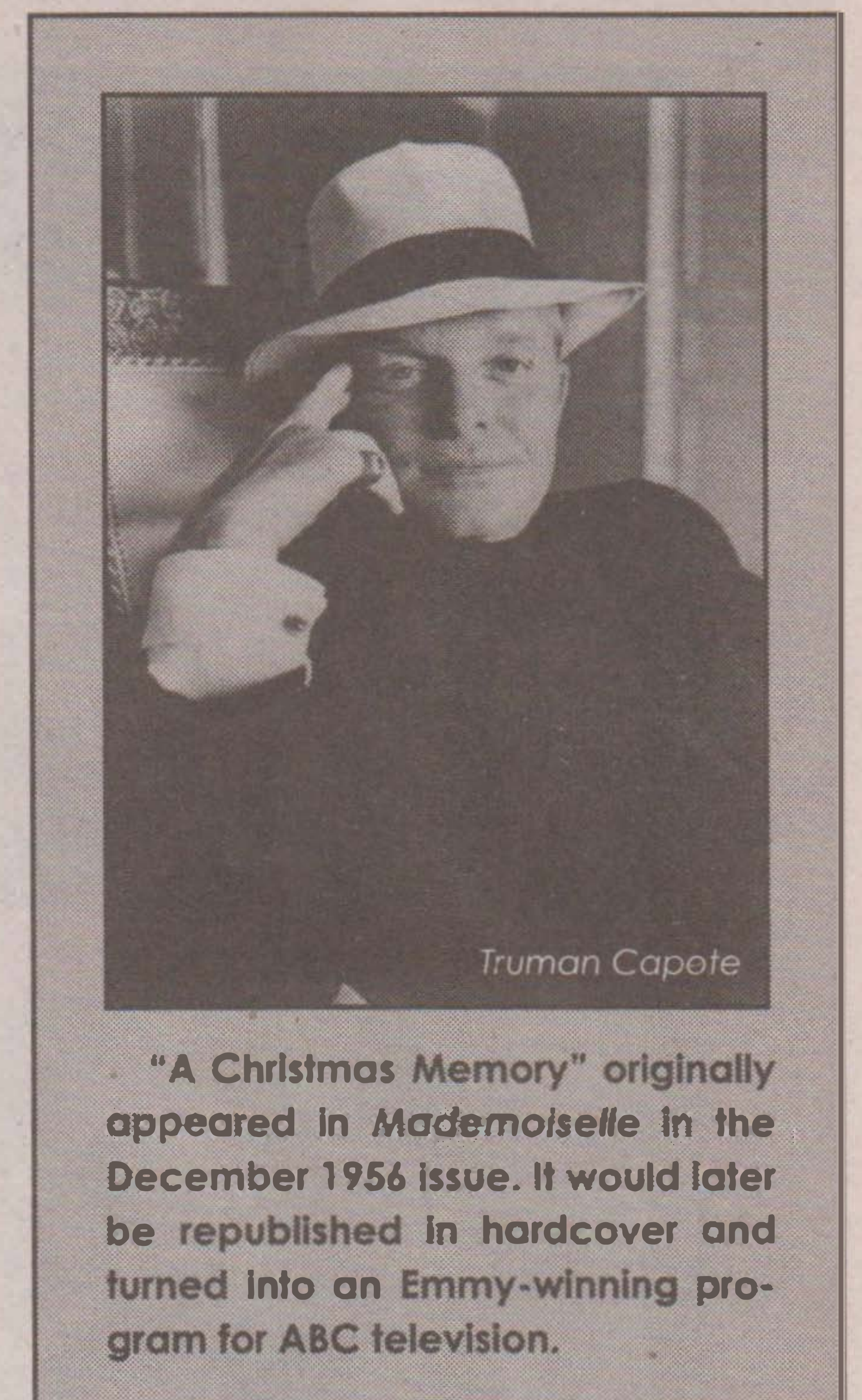
shaken off the trees and sold by the orchard's owners, who are not us) among the concealing leaves, the frosted, deceiving grass. Caarackle! A cheery crunch, scraps of miniature thunder sound as the shells collapse and the golden mound of sweet oily ivory meat mounts in the milk-glass bowl. Queenie begs to taste, and now and again my friend sneaks her a mite, though insisting we deprive ourselves. "We mustn't, Buddy. If we start, we won't stop. And there's scarcely enough as there is. For thirty cakes." The kitchen is growing dark. Dusk turns the window into a mirror: our reflections mingle with the rising moon as we work by the fireside in the firelight. At last, when the moon is quite high, we toss the final hull into the fire and, with joined sighs, watch it catch flame. The buggy is empty, the bowl is brimful.

We eat our supper (cold biscuits, bacon, blackberry jam) and discuss tomorrow. Tomorrow the kind of work I like best begins: buying. Cherries and citron, ginger and vanilla and canned Hawaiian pine-apple, rinds and raisins and walnuts and whiskey and oh, so much flour, butter, so many eggs, spices, flavorings: why, we'll need a pony to pull the buggy home.

But before these Purchases can be made, there is the question of money. Neither of us has any. Except for skin-flint sums persons in the house occasionally provide (a dime is considered very big money); or what we earn ourselves from various activities: holding rummage sales, selling buckets of hand-picked blackberries, jars of home-made jam and apple jelly and peach preserves, rounding up flowers for funerals and weddings. Once we won seventy-ninth prize, five dollars, in a national football contest. Not that we know a fool thing about football. It's just that we enter any contest we hear about: at the moment our hopes are centered on the fifty-thousand-dollar Grand Prize being offered to name a new brand of coffee (we suggested "A.M."; and, after some hesitation, for my friend thought it perhaps sacrilegious, the slogan "A.M.! Amen!"). To tell the truth, our only really profitable enterprise was the Fun and Freak Museum we conducted in a back-yard woodshed two summers ago. The Fun was a stereopticon with slide views of Washington and New York lent us by a relative who had been to those places (she was furious when she discovered why we'd borrowed it); the Freak was a three-legged biddy chicken hatched by one of our own hens. Every body hereabouts wanted to see that biddy: we charged grown ups a nickel, kids two cents. And took in a good twenty dollars before the museum shut down due to the decease of the main attraction.

But one way and another we do each year accumulate Christmas savings, a Fruitcake Fund. These moneys we keep hidden in an ancient bead purse under a loose board under the floor under a chamber pot under my friend's bed. The purse is seldom removed from this safe location except to make a deposit or, as happens every Saturday, a withdrawal; for on Saturdays I am allowed ten cents to go to the picture show. My friend has never been to a picture show, nor does she intend to: "I'd rather hear you tell the story, Buddy. That way I can imagine it more. Besides, a person my age shouldn't squander

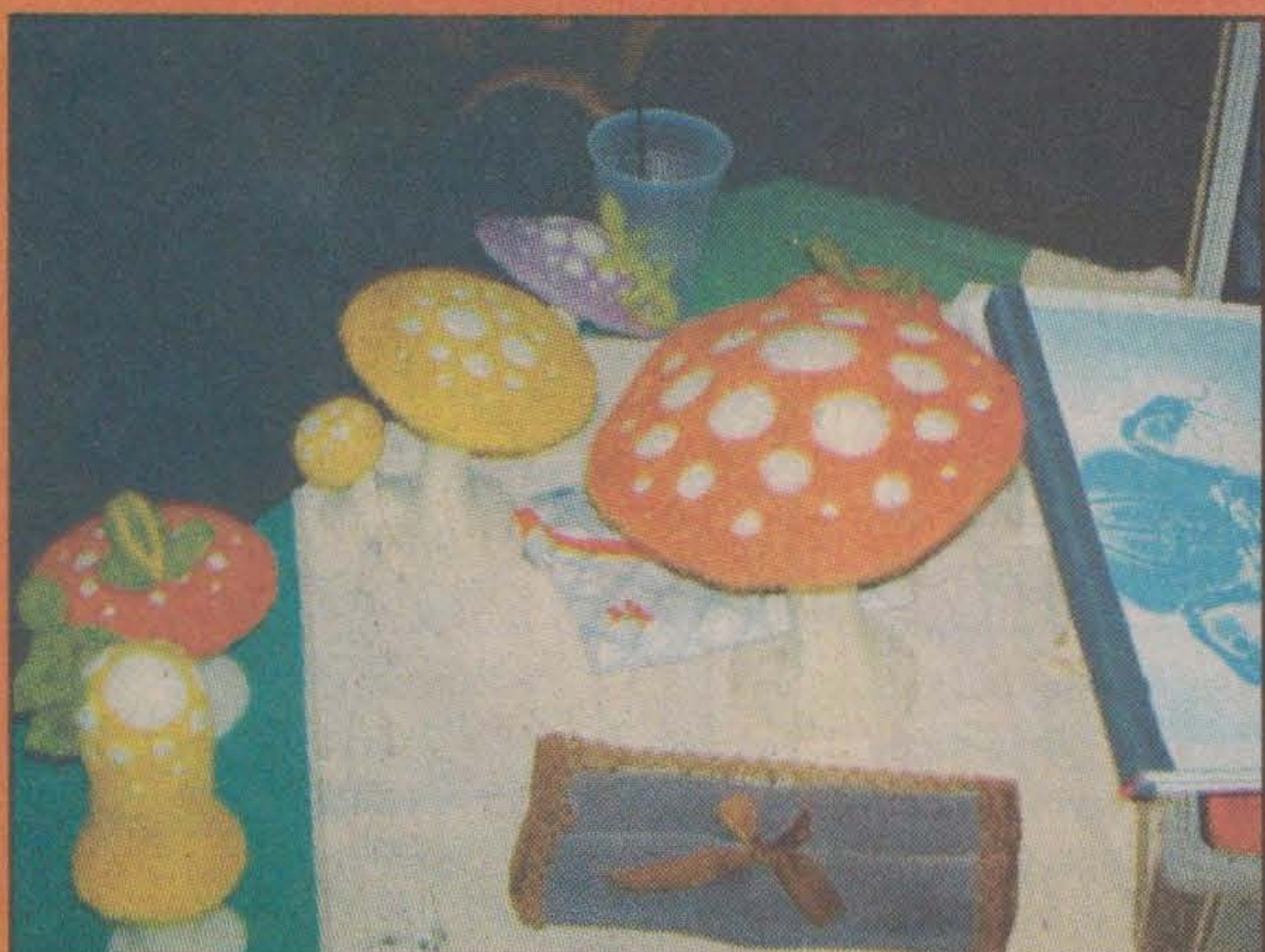
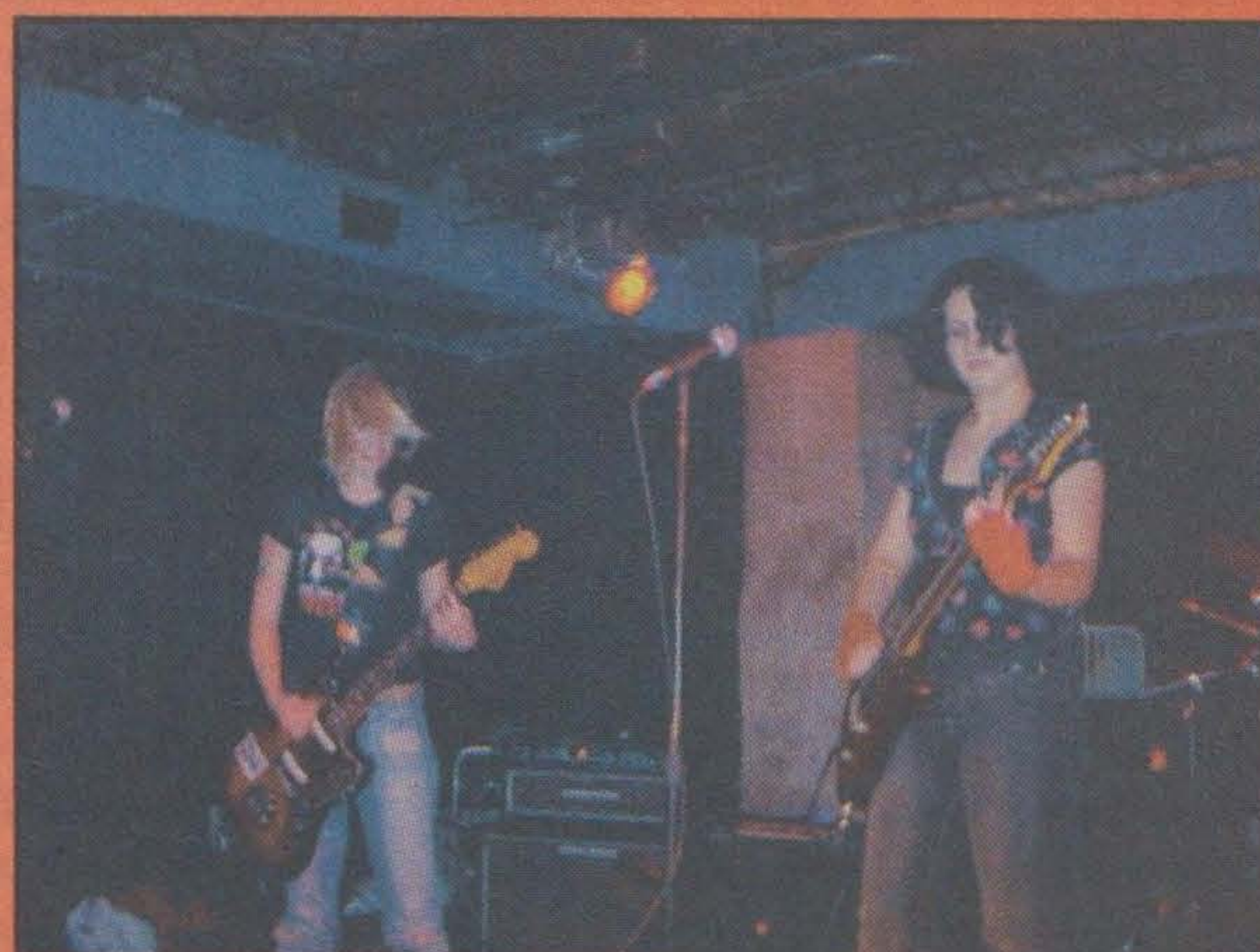
their eyes. When the Lord comes, let me see him clear." In addition to never having seen a movie, she has never: eaten in a restaurant, traveled more than five miles from home, received or sent a telegram, read anything except funny papers and the Bible, worn cosmetics, cursed, wished someone harm, told a lie on purpose, let a hungry dog go hungry. Here are a few things she has done, does do: killed with a hoe the biggest rattlesnake ever seen in this county (sixteen rattles), dip snuff (secretly), tame hummingbirds (just try it) till they balance on her finger, tell ghost stories (we both believe in ghosts) so tingling they chill you in July, talk to herself, take walks in the rain, grow the prettiest japonicas in town, know the recipe for every sort of oldtime Indian cure, including a magical wart remover.



"A Christmas Memory" originally appeared in *Mademoiselle* in the December 1956 issue. It would later be republished in hardcover and turned into an Emmy-winning program for ABC television.

Now, with supper finished, we retire to the room in a faraway part of the house where my friend sleeps in a scrap-quilt-covered iron bed painted rose pink, her favorite color. Silently, wallowing in the pleasures of conspiracy, we take the bead purse from its secret place and spill its contents on the scrap quilt. Dollar bills, tightly rolled and green as May buds. Somber fifty-cent pieces, heavy enough to weight a dead man's eyes. Lovely dimes, the liveliest coin, the one that really jingles. Nickels and quarters, worn smooth as creek pebbles. But mostly a hateful heap of bitter-odored pennies. Last summer others in the house contracted to pay us a penny for every twenty-five flies we killed. Oh, the carnage of August: the flies that flew to heaven! Yet it was not work in which we took pride. And, as we sit counting pennies, it is as though we were back tabulating dead flies. Neither of us has a head

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Scenes from last year's fair. Clockwise from top right: Lipstick Homicide, Ed Gray, Sam Locke-Ward, and a variety of handmade goods.

If you craft it, they will come

Area craftspeople and musicians gather for another year of What a Load of Craft!

Story by Kevin Koppes

With the holiday shopping season already in full swing, most Iowa City residents have almost certainly made a trip or two out to the mall in attempt to get a jump on gift buying for family and friends. But while the month of December is unquestionably a huge time of year for the nationally dominant retailers in the area, some members of the community are out to bring a more local focus to this most ravenous of purchasing periods.

Now in its third consecutive year, the What a Load of Craft! (WALOC) art, music and craft fair represents an effort by area artisans and artists to make people more aware of the hand-made goods being made right in their own collective backyard. This year's festivities are taking place on December 8th at The Picador, starting at 3 p.m. According to WALOC co-founder Susan Junis, the im-

"This isn't about selling tea cozies. It's an event to bring the community together."

petus for the creation of the fair was thought of as something of a necessity during its formative stages.

"Basically, Grace and I didn't have a place to sell our stuff," Junis said, speaking on behalf of herself and fair co-creator Grace Locke-Ward. "This was before White Rabbit was around and there just wasn't any place for a radical crafter to sell his or her stuff in large amounts."

Though the Iowa City area boasts a number of craft fairs throughout the year, Junis felt the items they were looking to market appealed to an existing, but much different, audience.

"Skirt didn't really fit in at the traditional craft fairs," Junis said. "Our stuff was too 'out there' and the table fees were so high that we couldn't afford them or make enough back."

Skirt, the craft collective headed up by Junis and Locke-Ward, initially started as a zine in 2001. As Susan and Grace got more interested in sewing and crafting, the zine faded away, but their interest in DIY enterprise did not. In addition to organizing WALOC, Skirt now sells items on consignment around the country and through their own online site, www.skirt.etsy.com.

Not surprisingly, WALOC is something of a far cry from other craft fairs in feel and organization. Aside from the "off the beaten path" nature of many of the items, the entire approach to the fair represents a stark contrast when compared to kindred events.

"We want [WALOC] to be more participatory than just glazed over browsing," Locke-Ward said. "We want it to be more like a party than a traditional craft fair, and, as corny as it sounds, celebrate the creativity in everyone."

Junis was quick to add that the patron involvement associated with WALOC carries a greater meaning with it, as well.

"This isn't just about selling tea cozies," Junis said. "It's an event to bring the community together."

As the name would clearly imply, What a Load of Craft! is primarily an event for craft makers and buyers. Few craft fairs, however, get as noisy as WALOC does after 10 p.m. Live music has always been an integral part of the fair since it first began. This year's line-up includes local musicians 12 Canons, Ed Gray, Miracles of God, Coolzey and the Killed By Death DJs.

"We wanted to draw people who might not come to craft fairs, but we also want to be entertained while we're selling stuff," Locke-Ward said. "Susan and I wanted the event to have a lot of different components so that people would come for a variety of reasons, not just to shop."

Even outside of the fair itself and the following show, WALOC presents a lot to see and do for those who attend.

"Downstairs there will be an art show of local artists, which will be up for the month of December," Junis said. "Also, Doug Roberson is hosting a record swap where folks can come sell and buy vinyl."

Locke-Ward quickly added another exciting event new to the fair.

"This year we are very excited to announce that we have added a Craft Death Match, where crafters will create badass items in a finite amount of time, in different categories, to a soundtrack of metal provided by Killed by Death," she said. "The match will run from 6-8

WALOC continued on page 14

WALOC 2007 List of Vendors

• Skirt •

Messenger bags, bibs, quilts, onesies, wallets, hats

• Miss Prints (White Rabbit) • Screenprinted goods

• Snaggletooth Turtle • Magnets, mirrors, bottle-openers

• High Voltage DIY • Punk-rock inspired jewelry

• Subterranean • Enamel kitchen wares

• J and M Studios • Greeting cards

• Ultraviolette • Photography, barrettes, bags, wallets

• Knitty Gritty • Knitted items

• American Porn • Comics

• Industrial Glitter • T-shirts, squidchimes, cards

• Fleurs de Libra • Flower-centric items

• Ramona Muse • Intaglio prints, screenprints, knitted and sewn items

• JoAnn Larpenner and Norma Sinclair • Jewelry, sewn apparel, aprons

• Ipar Demir • Jewelry, ink on wood

• Bekah Winters Jewelry, paintings

• Chloe • Screenprinted cards and paper

• Jen Show and Britney • Knitted and sewn items, revamped furniture

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pm, with categories include macaroni pictures, speed knitting, potato stamps, felt creations, decoupage/collage, and portrait drawing.”

The Death Match will be judged by local artists Matt Cooper, the creators of American Porn comics, and Cortnie Widen of Miss Prints and White Rabbit. The winners will receive gift certificates from local businesses including the grand prize, a tattoo from Rev. Matt Cooper.

The Picador, for the second year in a row, will serve as the host location for WALOC. Originally, the fair and accompanying performances were housed at the Hall Mall. The move, according to Junis, was a simple matter of necessity and convenience.

“We moved out of the Hall Mall because we needed more space, and we wanted a better sound system for the bands,” she said.

The need for more space and better accommodations would seem to indicate that What a Load of Craft! has seen a substantial amount of growth since it first began. Both Junis and Locke-Ward enthusiastically confirmed this conjecture when discussing the size, direction and future of WALOC.

“It’s definitely growing,” Locke-Ward said. “This year we’ve doubled the number of vendors and even have a waiting list in case anyone drops out.”

“The momentum and fervor surrounding WALOC is really encouraging and leads us to believe it’s just going to get bigger,” Locke-Ward added.

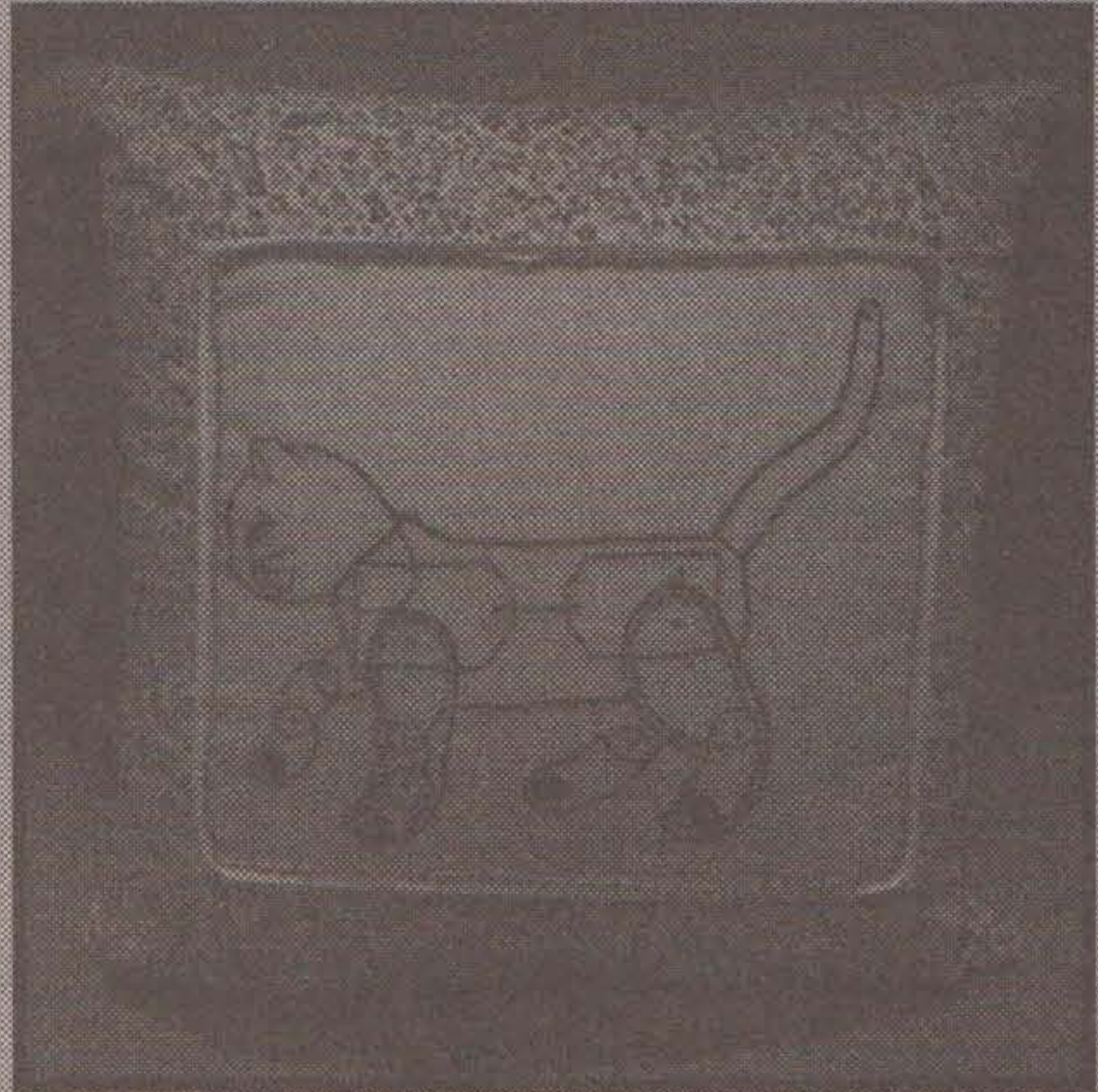
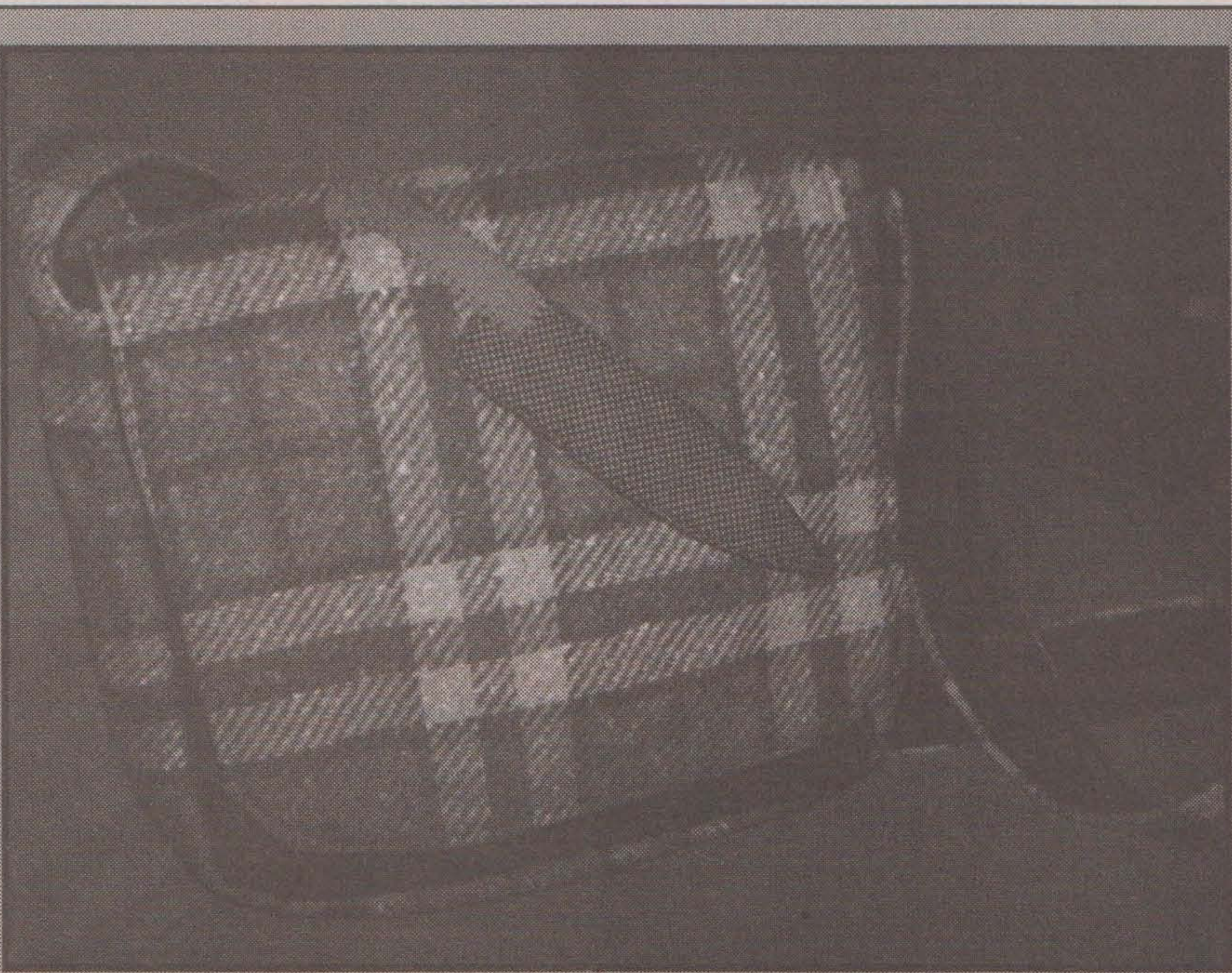
The leap in growth between this year’s fair and last year’s has already got the Skirt duo wondering if a once-a-year event is going to suffice.

“We would like to do it twice a year if there is community support for it,” Junis said. “We found that having it in December is the best time because people are shopping for holiday gifts anyway.”

“There would definitely have to be support from the community to have it in the Spring,” Locke-Ward added. “But if the community would support it, we’d do it.”

When the dust has settled at the end of the fair, both Junis and Locke-Ward seemed confident that the overarching emphasis on local involvement will be heard loud and clear by attendees.

“We want people to know that you don’t have to move to a bigger city to get exposure for your art and music,” Junis said. “There’s a lot of talent in this town and WALOC is a place to showcase and celebrate it. It’s a celebration of how creative and amazing the Iowa City area is.” **lv**



These crafts, made by Susan Junis and Grace Locke-Ward of Skirt, are just examples of the wide array of handmade goods available for purchase at this year’s What a Load of Craft! fair on Dec. 8th at The Picador.

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A Christmas Memory | Truman Capote

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for figures; we count slowly, lose track, start again. According to her calculations, we have \$12.73. According to mine, exactly \$13. "I do hope you're wrong, Buddy. We can't mess around with thirteen. The cakes will fall. Or put somebody in the cemetery. Why, I wouldn't dream of getting out of bed on the thirteenth." This is true: she always spends thirteenths in bed. So, to be on the safe side, we subtract a penny and toss it out the window.

Of the ingredients that go into our fruitcakes, whiskey is the most expensive, as well as the hardest to obtain: State laws forbid its sale. But everybody knows you can buy a bottle from Mr. Haha Jones. And the next day, having completed our more prosaic shopping, we set out for Mr. Haha's business address, a "sinful" (to quote public opinion) fish-fry and dancing cafe down by the river. We've been there before, and on the same errand; but in previous years our dealings have been with Haha's wife, an iodine-dark Indian woman with brassy peroxidized hair and a dead-tired disposition. Actually, we've never laid eyes on her husband, though we've heard that he's an Indian too. A giant with razor scars across his cheeks. They call him Haha because he's so gloomy, a man who never laughs. As we approach his cafe (a large log cabin festooned inside and out with chains of garish-gay naked light bulbs and standing by the river's muddy edge under the shade of river trees where moss drifts through the branches like gray mist) our steps slow down. Even Queenie stops prancing and sticks close by. People have been murdered in Haha's cafe. Cut to pieces. Hit on the head. There's a case coming up in court next month. Naturally these goings-on happen at night when the colored lights cast crazy patterns and the Victrolah wails. In the daytime Haha's is shabby and deserted. I knock at the door, Queenie barks, my friend calls: "Mrs. Haha, ma'am? Anyone to home?"

Footsteps. The door opens. Our hearts overturn. It's Mr. Haha Jones himself! And he is a giant; he does have scars; he doesn't smile. No, he glowers at us through Satan-tilted eyes and demands to know: "What you want with Haha?"

For a moment we are too paralyzed to tell. Presently my friend half-finds her voice, a whispery voice at best: "If you please, Mr. Haha, we'd like a quart of your finest whiskey."

His eyes tilt more. Would you believe it? Haha is smiling! Laughing, too. "Which one of you is a drinkin' man?"

"It's for making fruitcakes, Mr. Haha. Cooking."

This sobers him. He frowns. "That's no way to waste good whiskey." Nevertheless, he retreats into the shadowed cafe and seconds later appears carrying a bottle of daisy-yellow unlabeled liquor. He demonstrates its sparkle in the sunlight and says: "Two dollars."

We pay him with nickels and dimes and pennies. Suddenly, as he jangles the coins in his hand like a fistful of dice, his face softens. "Tell you what," he proposes, pouring the money back into our bead purse, "just send me one of them fruitcakes instead."

"Well," my friend remarks on our way home, "there's a lovely man. We'll put an extra cup of raisins in his cake."

The black stove, stoked with coal and firewood, glows like a lighted pumpkin. Eggbeater's whirl, spoons spin round in bowls of butter and sugar, vanilla sweetens the air, ginger spices it; melting, nose-tingling odors saturate the kitchen, suffuse the house, drift out to the world on puffs of chimney smoke. In four days our work is done. Thirty-one cakes, dampened with whiskey, bask on windowsills and shelves.

Who are they for?

Friends. Not necessarily neighbor friends: indeed, the larger share is intended for persons we've met maybe once, perhaps not at all. People who've struck our fancy. Like President Roosevelt. Like the Reverend and Mrs. J. C. Lucey, Baptist missionaries to Borneo who lectured here last winter. Or the little knife grinder who comes through town twice a year. Or Abner Packer, the driver of the six o'clock bus from Mobile, who exchanges waves with us every day as he passes in a dust-cloud whoosh. Or the young Wistons, a California couple whose car one afternoon broke down outside the house and who spent a pleasant hour chatting with us on the porch (young Mr. Wiston snapped our picture, the only one we've ever had taken). Is it because my friend is shy with everyone except strangers that these strangers, and merest acquaintances, seem to us our truest friends? I think yes. Also, the scrapbooks we keep of thank-you's on White House stationery, time-to-time communications from California and Borneo, the knife grinder's penny post cards, make us feel connected to eventful worlds beyond the kitchen with its view of a sky that stops.

Now a nude December fig branch grates against the window. The kitchen is empty, the cakes are gone; yesterday we carted the last of them to the post office, where the cost of stamps turned our purse inside out. We're broke. That rather depresses me, but my friend insists on celebrating—with two inches of whiskey left in Haha's bottle. Queenie has a spoonful in a bowl of coffee (she likes her coffee chicory-flavored and strong). The rest we divide between a pair of jelly glasses. We're both quite awed at the prospect of drinking straight whiskey; the taste of it brings screwed-up expressions and sour shudders. But by and by we begin to sing, the two of us singing different songs simultaneously. I don't know the words to mine, just: Come on along, come on along, to the dark-town strutters' ball. But I can dance: that's what I mean to be, a tap dancer in the movies. My dancing shadow rollicks on the walls; our voices rock the chinaware; we giggle: as if unseen hands were tickling us. Queenie rolls on her back, her paws plow the air, something like a grin stretches her black lips. Inside myself, I feel warm and sparky as those crumbling logs, carefree as the wind in the chimney. My friend waltzes round the stove, the hem of her poor calico skirt pinched between her fingers as though it were a party dress: Show me the way to go home, she sings, her tennis shoes squeaking on the floor. Show me the way to go home.

Enter: two relatives. Very angry. Potent with

eyes that scold, tongues that scald. Listen to what they have to say, the words tumbling together into a wrathful tune: "A child of seven! whiskey on his breath! are you out of your mind? feeding a child of seven! must be loony! road to ruination! remember Cousin Kate? Uncle Charlie? Uncle Charlie's brother-in-law? shame! scandal! humiliation! kneel, pray, beg the Lord!"

Queenie sneaks under the stove. My friend gazes at her shoes, her chin quivers, she lifts her skirt and blows her nose and runs to her room. Long after the town has gone to sleep and the house is silent except for the chimings of clocks and the sputter of fading fires, she is weeping into a pillow already as wet as a widow's handkerchief.

"Don't cry," I say, sitting at the bottom of her bed and shivering despite my flannel nightgown that smells of last winter's cough syrup, "Don't cry," I beg, teasing her toes, tickling her feet, "you're too old for that."

"It's because," she hiccups, "I am too old. Old and funny."

"Not funny. Fun. More fun than anybody. Listen. If you don't stop crying you'll be so tired tomorrow we can't go cut a tree."

She straightens up. Queenie jumps on the bed (where Queenie is not allowed) to lick her cheeks. "I know where we'll find real pretty trees, Buddy. And holly, too. With berries big as your eyes. It's way off in the woods. Farther than we've ever been. Papa used to bring us Christmas trees from there: carry them on his shoulder. That's fifty years ago. Well, now: I can't wait for morning."

Morning. Frozen rime lusters the grass; the sun, round as an orange and orange as hot-weather moons, balances on the horizon, burnishes the silvered winter woods. A wild turkey calls. A renegade hog grunts in the undergrowth. Soon, by the edge of knee-deep, rapid-running water, we have to abandon the buggy. Queenie wades the stream first, paddles across barking complaints at the swiftness of the current, the pneumonia-making coldness of it. We follow, holding our shoes and equipment (a hatchet, a burlap sack) above our heads. A mile more: of chastising thorns, burrs and briars that catch at our clothes; of rusty pine needles brilliant with gaudy fungus and molted feathers. Here, there, a flash, a flutter, an ecstasy of shrillings remind us that not all the birds have flown south. Always, the path unwinds through lemony sun pools and pitchblack vine tunnels. Another creek to cross: a disturbed armada of speckled trout froths the water round us, and frogs the size of plates practice belly flops; beaver workmen are building a dam. On the farther shore, Queenie shakes herself and trembles. My friend shivers, too: not with cold but enthusiasm. One of her hat's ragged roses sheds a petal as she lifts her head and inhales the pine-heavy air. "We're almost there; can you smell it, Buddy?" she says, as though we were approaching an ocean.

And, indeed, it is a kind of ocean. Scented acres of holiday trees, prickly-leaved holly. Red berries shiny as Chinese bells: black crows swoop upon them screaming. Having stuffed our burlap sacks with enough greenery and crimson to garland a dozen windows, we set about choosing a tree. "It should be," muses my friend, "twice as tall as a

boy. So a boy can't steal the star." The one we pick is twice as tall as me. A brave handsome brute that survives thirty hatchet strokes before it keels with a creaking rending cry. Lugging it like a kill, we commence the long trek out. Every few yards we abandon the struggle, sit down and pant. But we have the strength of triumphant huntsmen; that and the tree's virile, icy perfume revive us, goad us on. Many compliments accompany our sunset return along the red clay road to town; but my friend is sly and noncommittal when passers-by praise the treasure perched in our buggy: what a fine tree, and where did it come from? "Yonderways," she murmurs vaguely. Once a car stops, and the rich mill owner's lazy wife leans out and whines: "Giveya two-bits" cash for that ol tree." Ordinarily my friend is afraid of saying no; but on this occasion she promptly shakes her head: "We wouldn't take a dollar." The mill owner's wife persists. "A dollar, my foot! Fifty cents. That's my last offer. Goodness, woman, you can't get another one." In answer, my friend gently reflects: "I doubt it. There's never two of anything."

Home: Queenie slumps by the fire and sleeps till tomorrow, snoring loud as a human.

A trunk in the attic contains: a shoebox of ermine tails (off the opera cape of a curious lady who once rented a room in the house), coils of frazzled tinsel gone gold with age, one silver star, a brief rope of dilapidated, undoubtedly dangerous candlelike light bulbs. Excellent decorations, as far as they go, which isn't far enough: my friend wants our tree to blaze "like a Baptist window," droop with weighty snows of ornament. But we can't afford the made-in-Japan splendors at the five-and-dime. So we do what we've always done: sit for days at the kitchen table with scissors and crayons and stacks of colored paper. I make sketches and my friend cuts them out: lots of cats, fish too (because they're easy to draw), some apples, some watermelons, a few winged angels devised from saved-up sheets of Hershey bar tin foil. We use safety pins to attach these creations to the tree; as a final touch, we sprinkle the branches with shredded cotton (picked in August for this purpose). My friend, surveying the effect, clasps her hands together. "Now honest, Buddy. Doesn't it look good enough to eat?" Queenie tries to eat an angel.

After weaving and ribboning holly wreaths for all the front windows, our next project is the fashioning of family gifts. Tie-dye scarves for the ladies, for the men a homebrewed lemon and licorice and aspirin syrup to be taken "at the first Symptoms of a Cold and after Hunting." But when it comes time for making each other's gift, my friend and I separate to work secretly. I would like to buy her a pearl-handled knife, a radio, a whole pound of chocolate-covered cherries (we tasted some once, and she always swears: "I could live on them, Buddy, Lord yes I could—and that's not taking his name in vain"). Instead, I am building her a kite. She would like to give me a bicycle (she's said so on several million occasions: "If only I could, Buddy. It's bad enough in life to do without something you want; but confound it, what gets my goat is not being able to give somebody something you want them to have. Only one of

these days I will, Buddy. Locate you a bike. Don't ask how. Steal it, maybe"). Instead, I'm fairly certain that she is building me a kite—the same as last year and the year before: the year before that we exchanged slingshots. All of which is fine by me. For we are champion kite fliers who study the wind like sailors; my friend, more accomplished than I, can get a kite aloft when there isn't enough breeze to carry clouds.

Christmas Eve afternoon we scrape together a nickel and go to the butcher's to buy Queenie's traditional gift, a good gnawable beef bone. The bone, wrapped in funny paper, is placed high in the tree near the silver star. Queenie knows it's there. She squats at the foot of the tree staring up in a trance of greed: when bedtime arrives she refuses to budge. Her excitement is equaled by my own. I kick the covers and turn my pillow as though it were a scorching summer's night. Somewhere a rooster crows: falsely, for the sun is still on the other side of the world.

"Buddy, are you awake!" It is my friend, calling from her room, which is next to mine; and an instant later she is sitting on my bed holding a candle. "Well, I can't sleep a hoot," she declares. "My mind's jumping like a jack rabbit. Buddy, do you think Mrs. Roosevelt will serve our cake at dinner?" We huddle in the bed, and she squeezes my hand I-love-you. "Seems like your hand used to be so much smaller. I guess I hate to see you grow up. When you're grown up, will we still be friends?" I say always. "But I feel so bad, Buddy. I wanted so bad to give you a bike. I tried to sell my cameo Papa gave me. Buddy"—she hesitates, as though embarrassed—"I made you another kite." Then I confess that I made her one, too; and we laugh. The candle burns too short to hold. Out it goes, exposing the starlight, the stars spinning at the window like a visible caroling that slowly, slowly daybreak silences. Possibly we doze; but the beginnings of dawn splash us like cold water: we're up, wide-eyed and wandering while we wait for others to waken. Quite deliberately my friend drops a kettle on the kitchen floor. I tap-dance in front of closed doors. One by one the household emerges, looking as though they'd like to kill us both; but it's Christmas, so they can't. First, a gorgeous breakfast: just everything you can imagine—from flapjacks and fried squirrel to hominy grits and honey-in-the-comb. Which puts everyone in a good humor except my friend and me. Frankly, we're so impatient to get at the presents we can't eat a mouthful.

Well, I'm disappointed. Who wouldn't be? With socks, a Sunday school shirt, some handkerchiefs, a hand-me-down sweater, and a year's subscription to a religious magazine for children. The Little Shepherd. It makes me boil. It really does.

My friend has a better haul. A sack of Satsumas, that's her best present. She is proudest, however, of a white wool shawl knitted by her married sister. But she says her favorite gift is the kite I built her. And it is very beautiful; though not as beautiful as the one she made me, which is blue and scattered with gold and green Good Conduct stars; moreover, my name is painted on it, "Buddy."

"Buddy, the wind is blowing."

The wind is blowing, and nothing will do till we've run to a Pasture below the house where Queenie has scooted to bury her bone (and where, a winter hence, Queenie will be buried, too). There, plunging through the healthy waist-high grass, we unreel our kites, feel them twitching at the string like sky fish as they swim into the wind. Satisfied, sun-warmed, we sprawl in the grass and peel Satsumas and watch our kites cavort. Soon I forget the socks and hand-me-down sweater. I'm as happy as if we'd already won the fifty-thousand-dollar Grand Prize in that coffee-naming contest.

"My, how foolish I am!" my friend cries, suddenly alert, like a woman remembering too late she has biscuits in the oven. "You know what I've always thought?" she asks in a tone of discovery and not smiling at me but a point beyond. "I've always thought a body would have to be sick and dying before they saw the Lord. And I imagined that when he came it would be like looking at the Baptist window: pretty as colored glass with the sun pouring through, such a shine you don't know it's getting dark. And it's been a comfort: to think of that shine taking away all the spooky feeling. But I'll wager it never happens. I'll wager at the very end a body realizes the Lord has already shown Himself. That things as they are"—her hand circles in a gesture that gathers clouds and kites and grass and Queenie pawing earth over her bone—"just what they've always seen, was seeing Him. As for me, I could leave the world with today in my eyes."

This is our last Christmas together.

Life separates us. Those who Know Best decide that I belong in a military school. And so follows a miserable succession of bugle-blowing prisons, grim reveille-ridden summer camps. I have a new home too. But it doesn't count. Home is where my friend is, and there I never go.

And there she remains, puttering around the kitchen. Alone with Queenie. Then alone. ("Buddy dear," she writes in her wild hard-to-read script, "yesterday Jim Macy's horse kicked Queenie bad. Be thankful she didn't feel much. I wrapped her in a Fine Linen sheet and rode her in the buggy down to Simpson's pasture where she can be with all her Bones...."). For a few Novembers she continues to bake her fruitcakes single-handed; not as many, but some: and, of course, she always sends me "the best of the batch." Also, in every letter she encloses a dime wadded in toilet paper: "See a picture show and write me the story." But gradually in her letters she tends to confuse me with her other friend, the Buddy who died in the 1880's; more and more, thirteenthths are not the only days she stays in bed: a morning arrives in November, a leafless birdless coming of winter morning, when she cannot rouse herself to exclaim: "Oh my, it's fruitcake weather!"

And when that happens, I know it. A message saying so merely confirms a piece of news some secret vein had already received, severing from me an irreplaceable part of myself, letting it loose like a kite on a broken string. That is why, walking across a school campus on this particular December morning, I keep searching the sky. As if I expected to see, rather like hearts, a lost pair of kites hurrying toward heaven.

Art/Exhibits

African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center
55 12th Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids,
877-526-1863

Learning Safari – African Fun & Games, Dec. 5, 1:30pm • *Kwanza Feast & Celebration*, Dec. 8, 5:30pm • *Learning Safari – Happy Kwanza*, Dec. 11, 10:30am • *Kwanza Observed*, Dec. 26 through Jan. 1.

AKAR
257 E. Iowa Ave., Iowa City, 351-1227

30 x 5, Nov. 16 through Dec. 7.

Brucemore
2160 Linden Drive SE, Cedar Rapids, 362-7375
The Families of the Brucemore, ongoing • *Holiday Tours*, Nov. 23 through Dec. 30 • *Santa, Snacks, and Stories*, Dec. 2 & 4, 5:30pm – 7:30pm.

Cedar Rapids Museum of Art
410 Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids,
366-7503

Ulfert Wilke, through Feb. 3 • *Laurie Hogin: The Forest of the Future*, through Jan. 13.

Chait Galleries Downtown
218 E. Washington St., Iowa City,
338-4442

Iowa City Essentials, through Jan.

11 • *Works of Color Wonderment*, through Jan. 11 • *In the Eye of the Beholder*, through Jan. 4 • *The Extraordinary Holiday Show*, through Jan. 4.

Faulconer Gallery
Grinnell College, 1108 Park St., Grinnell, 641-269-4660

Seven International Artists with Roots in Morocco, through Dec. 16 • *Subject Space: Interiors from the Grinnell College Art Collection*, through Dec. 16 • *Faulconer Arts Outreach for Young and Old*, Dec. 1, 2pm.

The History Center
615 1st Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids,
362-1501

Circus Through the Centuries, ongoing • *Chautauqua*, ongoing • *Union Station Fireplace*, ongoing.

Hudson River Gallery
538 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City,
358-8488

Arbe Bareis & Conifer Smith: A Conversation, through Jan. 12.

National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library
30 16th Ave. SW, Cedar Rapids,
362-8500

Homelands: The Story of the Czech & Slovak People, ongoing • *The History of the Brave Czech Nation*, through Jan. 27 • *Grand Christmas Exhibit*, through Jan. 7 • *Blue Moods: The Maude B. Trotman Collection*, through Apr. 6.

Senior Center

28 S. Linn Street, Iowa City,
356-5222

Mindfulness 101: An Experiential Workshop for Seniors, Dec. 5, 6:30pm • *Voices of Experience Holiday Concert*, Dec. 18, 2:30pm.

UI Museum of Art

150 North Riverside Dr., Iowa City, 335-1727

I Am: Prints by Elizabeth Catlett, through Jan. 6 • *School of Art and Art History Faculty Show*, Dec. 16 • *Laylah Ali: Drawings from the Typology Series*, through Jan. 6.

Music

Clapp Recital Hall
UI campus, Iowa City,
335-1160

All music 8pm unless noted otherwise.

Philharmonia and All University String Orchestra, Dec. 2, 3pm • *Composers Workshop*, David Gompper, director, Dec. 2 • *Iowa Woodwind Quintet*, Dec. 4 • *University and Concert Bands*, Dec. 5 • *Anthony Arnone*, cello, and *Shari Rhoads*, piano, Dec. 7 • *Target Family Concert Series: Maia Quartet*, Dec. 8, 3pm • *Volkan Orhon*, bass: *Chamber music with faculty, staff and students*, Dec. 8 • *UI Chamber Orchestra*, David Nelson, conductor, with David Greenhoe, trumpet, and Kristin Thelander, horn, Dec. 9,

3pm • Christine Rutledge, viola, and Ksenia Nosikova, piano, Dec. 10 • High School Latin Jazz Festival Concert, Dec. 14 • Semi-annual Last Chance concert, Iowa Percussion, Dan Moore, director, Dec. 16.

CSPS

1103 Third St. SE, Cedar Rapids, 364-1580

All music 8pm, except Sundays, 7pm.

Tribute, Dec. 5 through 8 • Legion Arts New Year's Eve concert with Pieta Brown and friends

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City, 688-2653

Jazz To The World, Dec. 1, 7:30pm • *Festival of Carols*, Dec. 13, 7pm.

Hancher Auditorium

UI Campus, 335-1160

A Rockapella Holiday, Dec. 5, 7:30pm • *Sweet Honey in the Rock*, Dec. 8, 7:30pm.

The Java House

211 E Washington St, Iowa City, 335-5730

WSUI's Java Blend performances every Friday at 12pm. Friday evening performances at 8pm.

Typhanie Monique and Neal Alger, Dec. 7, 12pm • University of Iowa Storytellers, Dec. 7, 8pm • Radoslav Lorkovic, Dec. 14, 12pm • Nikki Lunden, Dec. 14, 8pm • he Bowmans, Dec. 21, 12pm • Sharon

Bousquet, Dec. 21, 8pm.

The Mill

120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City, 351-9529

Open Mike Mondays, 8 pm • All music, 9pm unless noted otherwise.

Grooveship w/ Three Page 5's, Dec. 1 • Crass Brass, Dec. 4 • Great Lakes Music, Old World Charmers, Noah Earle, Dec. 6 • Big Wooden Radio, Dec. 7 • Wylde Nept, Dec. 8 • Burlington St. Bluegrass Band, Dec. 12, 7pm • Justin Crippen and the Revival, Dec. 13 • The Gilded Bats, Dec. 14 • The Salsa Band with Ray Vega, Dec. 15 • Uniphonics, Mikey the Miraculous Sidecar, DJ Jose, Dec. 20 • Billy Hoake and the Hoax, Caw! Caw!, A Vague Sound, Mannix!, Dimas Lemus, Dec. 21 • Kevin Gordon, Dec. 22, 8pm • Burlington St. Bluegrass Band, Dec. 26, 7pm • Funkmaster, Dec. 27 • Dave Zollo and the Body Electric, Dec. 28 • The Beaker Bros., Dec. 29 • Euforquestra, Dec. 31.

Old Capitol

Pentacrest

UI Campus

Holiday Tubas, John Manning, "Santa," front steps, Dec. 14, 12:30pm.

The Picador

330 E. Washington St., Iowa City, 354-4788

Physical Challenge Dance Party, Thursdays, 9pm. All music, 9pm

unless noted otherwise.

Big Smith, Randy Burk and the Prisoners, Dec. 1 • Randy Rogers Band, Dec. 5 • The Schwag, Dec. 6 • Dead Larry, The Dig Angees, Dec. 7 • What a Load of Craft! w/12 Canons, Ed Gray, Miracles of God, Coolzey, Private Dancer, Dec. 8, 10pm • Cross Canadian Ragweed, Back Porch Mary, Dec. 9, 8pm • Burnt Ends, Farewell Flight, Unknown Component, Dec. 10, 6pm • Dinosaur Jr., Awesome Color, The Reaction, Dec. 11, 7pm • Headlights, Grand Old Party, Caleb Engstrom, Envy Corp, Dec. 12 • The Diplomats of Solid Sound, TBA, Dec. 14 • Duhka, Freak Label, Lost Nation, Speedfinger, Dec. 15 • The Sword, Valient Thor, Black Cobra, Dec. 16 • Eyedea & Abilities, Sector 7G, Abzorbr (Kristoff Kane), Dec. 18, 6pm • Rose Funeral, A Well Thought Tragedy, Dec. 19, 6pm • VitalLight, TBA, Dec. 21, 6pm • House of Large Sizes, Beat Strings, Petit Mal, Dec. 28 • Matt Cooper's Birthday Bash w/Snow Demon, Church Burner, TBA, Dec. 30 • Murder By Death, TBA, Dec. 31, 6pm & 9:30pm.

Paramount Theatre

123 Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids, 363-1888

Jim McDonough & Friends present *Holiday Grande 2007*, Dec. 9, 2:30pm • CRSO Holiday Pops Extravaganza, Dec. 15, 2:30 & 7:30pm and Dec. 16, 2:30 & 7:30pm.



The Nutcracker

Englert Theatre

Fri., Dec. 7th at 7:30pm

Sat., Dec. 8th at 2:00 and 7:30pm

Sun., Dec. 9th at 3:30pm

www.englert.org

Few artistic events, and perhaps no other dance performance, is as closely linked to the holiday season as Tchaikovsky's fairytale ballet, *The Nutcracker*. A holiday classic in the truest sense of the term, this wildly popular Christmas-time ballet will be gracing the Englert Theatre stage for three days and four performances this December.

First performed over a century ago in St. Petersburg, Russia, *The Nutcracker* tells the story of a young girl who receives a wooden nutcracker as a Christmas gift and the magical adventures that transpire with it.

Since the ballet first opened,

it has grown into an unprecedented cultural phenomenon on an international scale. Even those who have never seen it performed would certainly recognize a number of musical movements from it, most notably "The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy."

Accompanied by a live, 24-piece orchestra, the Englert performances will feature professional dancers and local children from the Nolte Academy of Dance, Forum and River Point, with Carey Bostian conducting.

So, regardless of your age, background, or affinity for the high arts, *The Nutcracker* is a spectacle that truly must be seen to be appreciated. Give yourself the gift of one of these performances this holiday season.

by Kevin Koppes

Riverside Casino & Golf Resort

3184 Highway 22, Riverside,
648-1234

Ronnie Milsap, Dec. 9 & 10 •

WinterFest 2007 w/Draw the Line,
Denny Diamond, Freebird, Dead or
Alive, Silver Bullet, Wheel in the
Sky.

UI Museum of Art

150 North Riverside Dr., Iowa
City, 335-1727

*Know the Score LIVE! With Ksenia
Nosikova and others, Dec. 7, 5pm.*

Uptown Bill's Small Mall

401 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City,
339-0401

*Open Mic Night, every Friday,
8-11pm, all other performances,
7pm.*

Yacht Club

13 S. Linn St., Iowa City,
337-6464

*Blues Jam, Sundays, 9pm;
Throwdown: Free Dance Party,
Tuesday nights; Open Jam,
Wednesdays, 10 pm. All music,
9pm, unless noted otherwise.*

Dennis McMurrin & The
Demolition Band, Dec. 1 • The
Mayflies ft. Annie Savage,
Blueheels, Dec. 6 • Euforquestra,
Dec. 7 • Chicago Afrobeat Project,
Dec. 8 • Samba Nosso, Dec. 14 •
Hunab, Hyentyte, Dec. 15 • Public
Property, Dec. 31.

Theatre/Performance/

Dance/Comedy

CSPS

1103 Third St. SE, Cedar Rapids,
364-1580

Salsa classes with Baile Latino,
Dec. 1, 3:30pm • Cedar Rapids
Tango Club, Dec. 2, 3pm • Latin
dance taught by Gloria Zmolek and
Ananda Adams of Baile Latino,
Dec. 8, 3:30pm • Salsa classes with
Baile Latino, Dec. 15, 3:30 pm
• *Out of Bounds*, Dec. 15, 8pm •
Cedar Rapids Tango Club, Dec. 16,
3pm.

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City,
688-2653

The Nutcracker, Dec. 7, 7:30pm,
Dec. 8, 2pm 7:30pm, Dec. 9,
3:30pm.

Hancher Auditorium

UI campus,
335-1160

My Fair Lady, Dec. 12 through 15.

Riverside Theatre

213 N. Gilbert St., Iowa City,
338-7672

Goat Show, Dec. 1 & 2.

Space/Place Theatre

North Hall, UI campus, Iowa
City

Timeless Suspension of Dreams,
Dec. 1, 8pm • Graduate Concert,
Dec. 6 through 8, 8pm • Dance

Forum Winter Concert, Dec. 15,
8pm, Dec. 16, 3pm.

Theatre Cedar Rapids

102 Third St. SE, Cedar Rapids,
366-8592

Thursdays, Fridays, & Saturdays:
7:30pm; Sundays: 2:30pm.
Christmas: Hans Christian
Andersen, Dec. 1-3, 8-10, 14-17.

UI Theatres

Theatre Bldg., UI campus, Iowa
City, 335-1160

Anton in Show Business by Jane
Martin, Dec. 1 at 8pm, Dec. 2 at
2pm, Dec. 5 at 8pm, Dec. 6 at
8pm, Dec. 7 at 8pm, Dec. 8 at
8pm, Dec. 9 at 2pm • One Act
Plays: University Theatres Gallery,
Dec. 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15 at 8pm •
No Shame Theater, Dec. 7 & 14,
11pm.

Words

Art Building West

UI Campus

Ceramics Studio Pottery Sale, Dec.
1, 10am to 5pm.

Faulconer Gallery

Grinnell College, 1108 Park St.,
Grinnell, 641-269-4660

Open Mic Poetry and Fiction
Reading, Dec. 5, 7:45pm.

Voxman Music Building

UI Campus,

335-1603

Die Zauberflöte by W.A. Mozart.
Essentials performance by UI
Opera Studio, Opera Room, Dec.
14 & 15, 8pm.

The Mill

120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City,
351-9529

Talk Art Cabaret, Dec. 5 & 19,
10pm • Poetry Slam, Dec. 12 & 26,
10pm.

Film/Video

Bijou Theatre

UI Memorial Union
UI Campus,
335-3258

Check www.uiowa.edu/~bijou for a
complete listing of showtimes.
King Corn, through Dec. 6 • *Mala*
Noche, through Dec. 6.

Uptown Bill's Small Mall

401 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City,
339-0401

Movie Night, Sundays, 6pm.

You're reading this.
(so are 7000 other people)

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advertise with us
and reach new customers

little-village@usa.net

YOUR MISSION: RELATIONSHIP VERIFICATION

According to The Terminator, all relationships must survive their own form of "Judgment Day"

Dear Terminator,

I've been hanging out with this guy a lot lately, and we've been getting along really well. I do have a question, though. How can I tell if I'm actually dating this guy or if we're just hanging out a lot? I've thought about bringing it up, but I'm kind of scared that such a "serious" topic might scare him off. Do you know of anyway to bring this up casually without making it seem like a "make or break" conversation topic?

Where Do I Stand

Thank you, WDIS, for submitting a question to this relationship advice column. Human interaction is one of my system sub-routines. Please listen very carefully. My mission is to help you.

In order for you to affirm the status of your relationship, you must first decide what is the mission to which you have assigned yourself. Clearly you have not elected to terminate your target. Lacking more detailed files, my assessment based on your statements is one of amorous acquisition. If this is the case, we may then proceed.

All missions, whether or not they involve time-travel, advanced prototypes, or Skynet, carry with them a series of priorities. Figuring these priorities out does not require a neural net processor. All it takes is a writing instrument, a piece of paper, and the fine motor skills necessary to transcribe thoughts into the written language of your choosing.

With the pen you have obtained, write down what you think are the most important factors necessary to the completion of your mission. Your mission priorities will be different from those of your fellow humans and may even differ from those of past missions. But there should be similarities between your list and all other lists involving this type of mission.

Chief among these priorities must be a willingness to communicate with your target about the processes currently being undertaken in your CPU. You call them "thoughts" or "feelings." Conveying these things to your target is your ultimate mission priority.

Is the process of conveying information to your target an event that necessitates the onset of what you call "pain?" Negative. These actions should be accompanied by the release of endorphins and congenial teeth baring. Be aware, though, that this exchange of information will result in Judgment Day.

Judgment Day, in this case, is the event of your determining whether or not you and your target have begun engaging in mutually exclusive emotionally invested relationship. In order for your mission to be completed, and for your mission priorities to be followed, this event must take place. Judgment Day is inevitable.

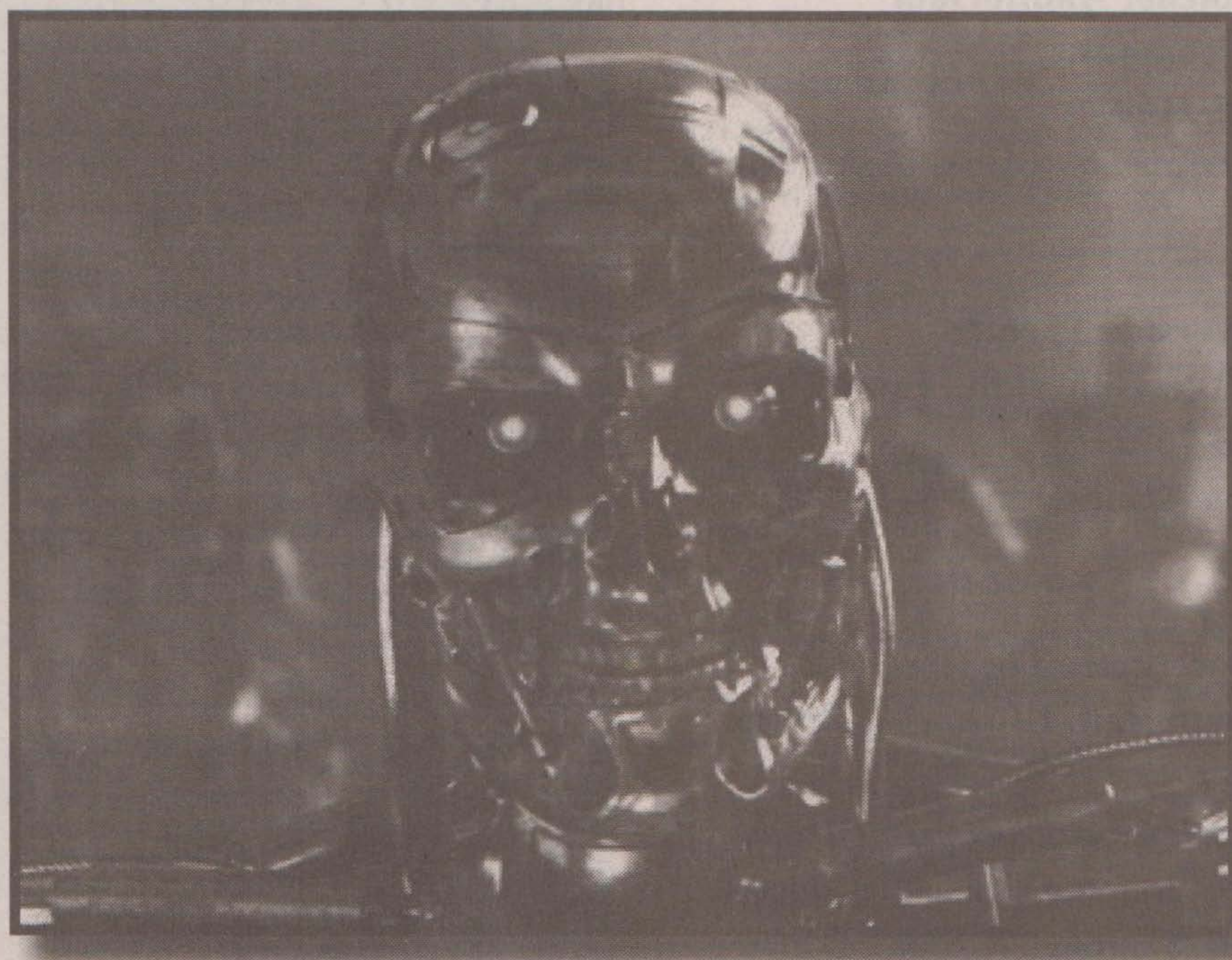
There are many points to keep in mind during Judgment Day. Since target acquisition is your presumed objective, be mindful of what might cause the target to be made to feel anxious. Even if you experience an accelerated heart rate, nervous movements, or liquid secretion through the living tissue over your metal endoskeleton, you must remember that maintaining functionality is one of your mission parameters. Acting without certainty and in a mode of desperation or haste might cause you to lose contact with your target. This is tactically danger-

ous.

There is a strong probability that your target possesses the same files you do. He may anticipate your move. In this case, continue to express your data in a concise manner. Should your target flee, thus postponing Judgment Day, you can derive pleasure in knowing that you have maintained the integrity of your mission objective, priorities, and parameters. Should you maintain target acquisition, your mission will have been completed. At this point, you may wish to sample the target by physical contact.

My advice to you regarding your mission is now concluded. Strict adherence to this advice will result in your life improving at a geometric rate. In closing, the future is not set, there is no fate but what we make for ourselves. **lv**

The Terminator is a cybernetic organism, Cyberdine Systems Model 101. It can't be bargained with. It can't be reasoned with. It doesn't feel pity, or remorse, or fear. And it absolutely will not stop, ever, until your questions have been answered . . . because you told it to.



Letting your target know what you are thinking is a mission priority.

FORECAST FOR DECEMBER 2007

♈ ARIES—Your boat is rocking, but it's still quite seaworthy. Events will continue to support you if you continue to move in a constructive direction. You have all the pieces. You just need to make them settle down and fit together. You will probably have to make some lasting changes to your personal attitudes and lifestyle choices. You might also have to build some stuff from scratch. The tensions will seem pretty serious at times. However, the planets are providing solid support during this time of transition. Finances could tighten.

♉ TAURUS—A tough row to hoe. Personal fulfillment, romantic, spiritual and otherwise, is beginning to compete with vital long-term financial goals. This tension will grow and could become acute at times. Abandoning personal fulfillment to meet financial goals or vice-versa is self-defeating. Truly fulfilling goals wisely pursued are sound investments. They add meaning to your economic efforts. The planets suggest that it will take a lengthy and concerted effort to bring these two parts of your life into proper balance. It might require new initiatives and some risk.

♊ GEMINI—Things are coming to a head. At work, colleagues and key associates continue to issue ultimatums and serious tensions lurk beneath the surface. At home, the pressure is building. Household and family duties that once seemed easy are becoming a chore. Make some choices. You have it within your power to make needed changes while preserving your dignity and status. The key is to assert your freedom and independence in a way that commands agreement and respect from others. Renewed efforts to consolidate your financial situation will meet with success.

♋ CANCER—Hold your temper. You will find yourself confronted increasingly by demanding and stubborn people. But you will also find people willing to lend a helping hand. Don't let your temper draw you into confrontations or you could get more than you bargained for. It would be best to focus on the good. Deepening and lasting ties in the community will become quite valuable. You still possess great freedom of movement and the planets are keeping you safe from mishap. Surprise romantic encounters could be liberating, but keep things within bounds.

♌ LEO—Remain confident. Be patient and keep your temper in December. Work and financial areas are under annoying and frustrating influences. Your temper will also tend to be a bit overactive. However, December should bring you some gratifying advances in job or professional areas. Any economic stresses you might be experiencing should ease, too. December will also provide an opportunity to adjust gracefully to new or rapidly evolving situations on the job. Overall conditions are a bit problematic and it would be best to hold something in reserve.

♍ VIRGO—Turning point. Frustration could reach a high point as you struggle to knock your lifestyle into livable shape. Everything seems a little too burdensome and people in your life aren't being as mature and responsible as you need them to be. If you show a little temper, it might help get your point across and firm up your resolve. On the upside, pressures that have troubled you for years are subsiding, permanently. Financial pressures should also ease and relations with the young will take a definite turn for the better.

♎ LIBRA—Heads Up. You'll have to change old attitudes and habits to protect your interests. Key areas of your life are being

affected by a new and challenging energy, long-term. It will bring an increase in power struggles and tensions. You might also have to deal with manipulative and shady characters more often. Much can be accomplished by avoiding or side-stepping troublesome people and situations, where possible. But don't worry too much. A benevolent and protective influence is also at work in your life now. The budget might tighten. Avoid things that cost too much or involvements that threaten income.

♏ SCORPIO—Lightening the load. It does seem that Scorpio has been carrying more than their fair share of responsibilities for a long-time. You have also been dealing with all kinds of financial pressures. Some subtle, some not so subtle. You will soon feel a significant improvement as tensions over financial issues begin to resolve. Your neighborhood and community will soon become sources of active concern and involvement. While you might feel somewhat pressured at times, these involvements will bring substantial and lasting benefits. You will become good at side-stepping needless conflict.

♐ SAGITTARIUS—One step at a time. Early in December, you can make great strides as you adapt to new circumstances. Your influence over events will be at a peak. But hold something in reserve in the event that more difficult circumstances develop toward month's end. The forces of disorder and unreasonableness will take their toll, both at home and at work. Use maturity and experience to contain—or work around—the willful and counterproductive behavior of others, especially if your personal finances are affected. Overall, given present risks, a conservative approach will serve you best.

♑ CAPRICORN—Maintain a holding pattern. You should consider it a major personal achievement to simply contain the unruly forces presently at work in your life. You will have many options as December opens, but choices will narrow and pressure build later in the month. As yet unforeseen challenges could bring new complications. A benevolent, protective influence will slip into Capricorn this month. This welcome influence will make things a lot easier. It heralds a new cycle of growth and prosperity. But you need to take it slow, at least for now.

♒ AQUARIUS—Easy does it. As motivation and optimism surge, be careful to keep your balance. It is good to express optimism and to take on new projects, but be careful not to overextend. Your biggest challenge will come from others. Key associates and fellow employees will be full of energy, raring to go and a bit short-tempered. You will have to keep their expectations within bounds, establish a sustainable pace and prevent emotions from getting out of hand. You must also rein in your own innate idealism and independence a bit.

♓ PISCES—Doors will open. You have to move forward. You have to be realistic. But you can't abandon your ideals, either. Prospects are good but it would still be best to take small steps. Take it one day at a time. Work with patience and determination. The astrological energies are changing. New planetary positions will soon remove a lot of the resistance you have been facing and new paths will begin to open up. Events will soon bring the people and material you need to build what you want. Don't let the past weigh you down.

Contact Dr. Star at chlon@mchsl.com

I love lamp. I love to go to...

PHYSICAL CHALLENGE

...AND DANCE!

THURSDAY NIGHTS!!!

19+ DOWNSTAIRS



Sat. Dec. 1 --
Big Smith
Randy Burk and the Prisoners

Wed. Dec. 5 --
Randy Rogers Band

Thurs. Dec. 6 --
"An Evening" with...
The Schwag

Fri. Dec. 7 -- ALL AGES 5PM
East Eighteen Backdrop Still Tickin'

Fri. Dec. 7 --
Dead Larry The Dig Angees Inept

Sat. Dec. 8 --
WHAT A LOAD OF CRAFT!
with 12 Cannons Ed Gray Miracles of God Coolzey
the Killed by Death DJ's and more fun!
Also featuring a record swap and a fantastic craft fair!
ALL AGES til 10PM / DOORS AT 3PM

Sun. Dec. 9 --
Cross Canadian Ragweed
Back Porch Mary

Mon. Dec. 10 -- ALL AGES 6PM
Burnt Ends Farewell Flight Unknown Component

Tues. Dec. 11 -- ALL AGES 7PM
Dinosaur Jr. Awesome Colour The Reaction

Wed. Dec. 12 --
Headlights
Grand Ole Party Caleb Engstrom Envy corp

Fri. Dec. 14 --
The Diplomats of Solid Sound

Sat. Dec. 15 --
Duhka Freaklabel Lost Nation Speedfinger

Sun. Dec. 16 --
The Sword Valient Thor Black Cobra

Tues. Dec. 18 --
Eyedeas & Abilities
Sector 7G Abzorbr (Kristoff Krane)

Wed. Dec. 19 -- ALL AGES 6PM
Rose Funeral A Well Thought Tragedy

Fri. Dec. 28 --
House of Large Sizes Beat Strings Petit Mal

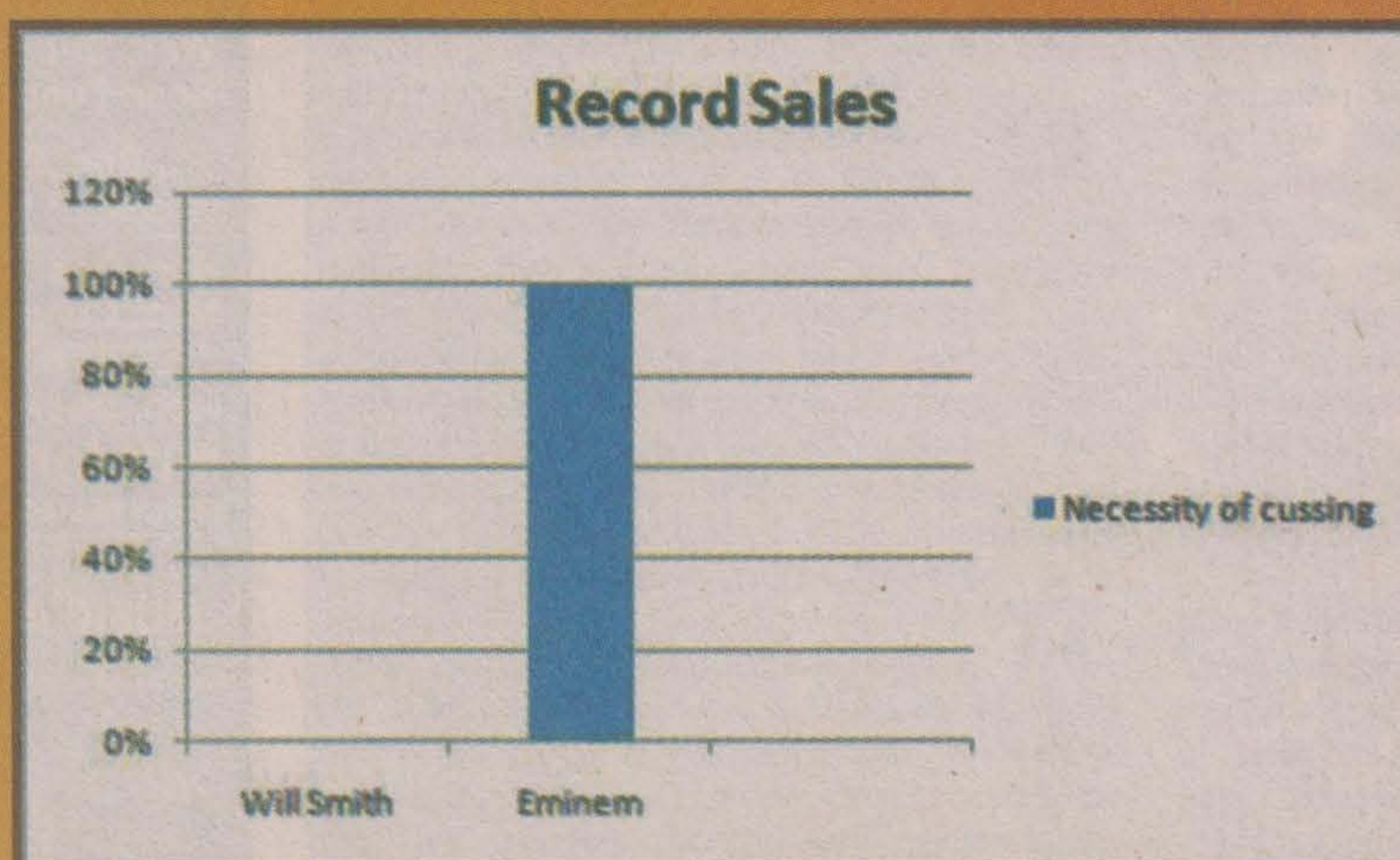
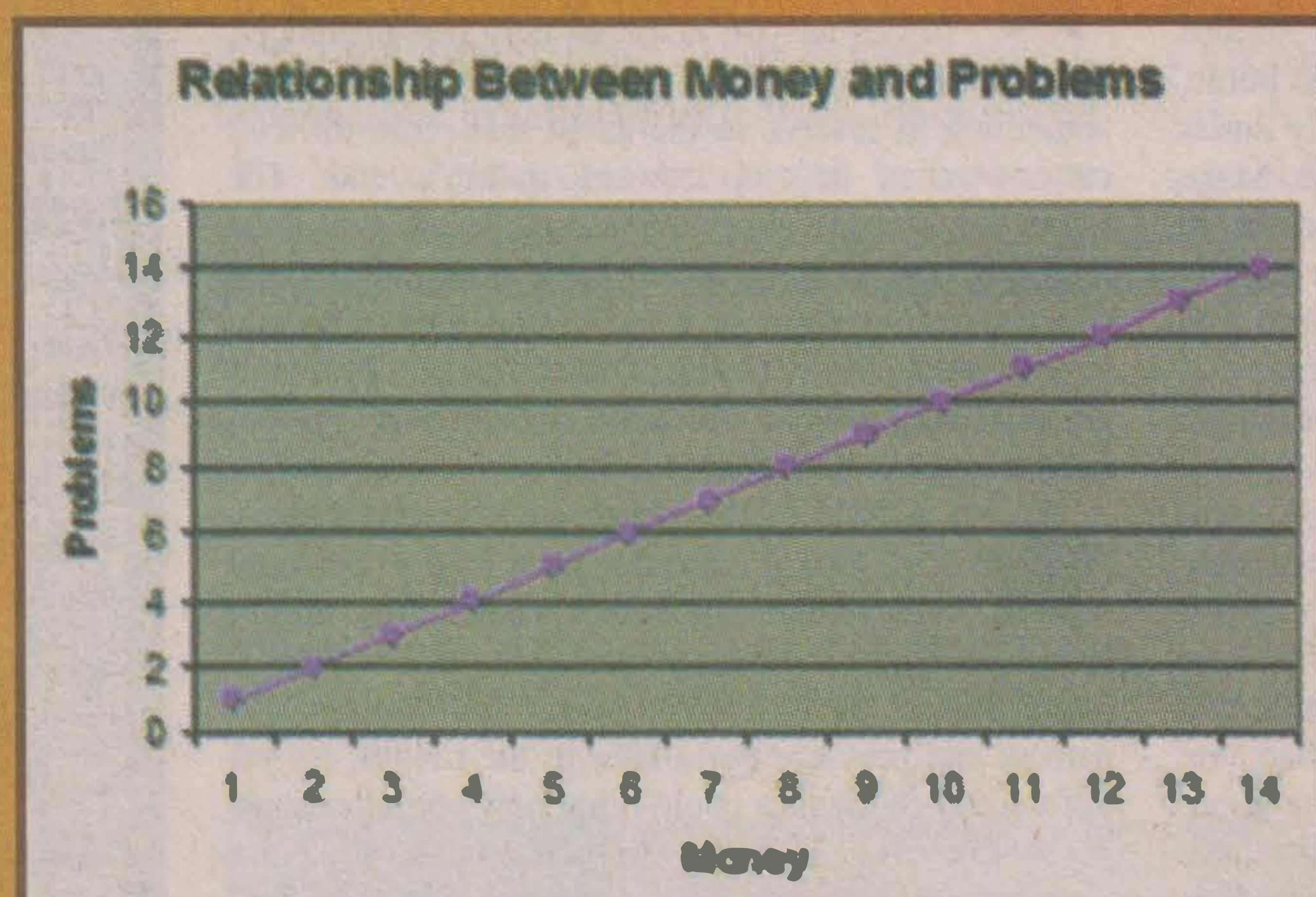
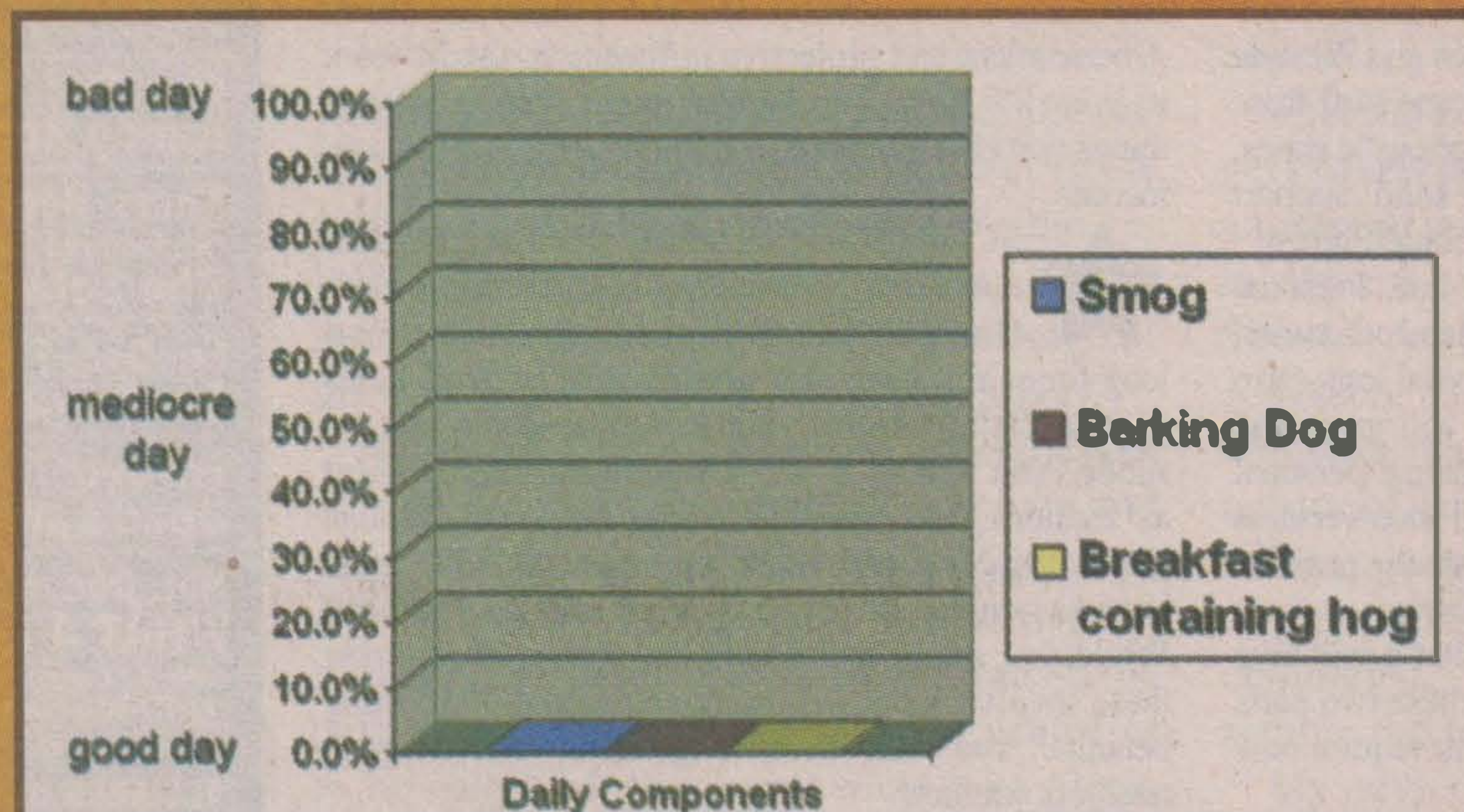
Sun. Dec. 30 --
Matt Coopers Birthday Bash!
with The Horde Snow Demon Church Burner Shores of the Tundra

Mon. Dec. 31 -- 2 SHOWS WITH...
Murder By Death
EARLY ALL AGES 6PM -- with Lost Apparitions
LATE SHOW 9:30PM -- with The Tanks Weather is Happening

MUSIC APPRECIATION TUESDAYS
DOWNSTAIRS AND FREE!
1st TUESDAY -- METAL 101
2nd TUESDAY -- ADVANCED HIP-HOP TUTORIAL with Coolzey
3rd TUESDAY -- DJ SUPA RUSTY

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Little Village



It's all in the numbers.