Aim High
collected poetry, prose and artwork

Joseph A. West

The wonderfully weird work of Joseph A. West has graced the covers and interior pages of many a small-press magazine over the years, but until now it has never been collected in a single volume.

Aim High exhibits the majority of Mr. West's poetry, prose and artwork. Weird, macabre, morbid (call it what you will) no one does it quite like the inimitable Joe West.

Horror and humor intermingle to stunning effect in this monumental collection by one of the true masters of the field.

Joseph A. West, a native of Richmond, Virginia, has lived the majority of his life in Minnesota. Nearing his ninety-first year, he states quite resolutely: "I'm not really old, just pretending."
AIM HIGH

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First Edition
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AFTERWORD: C. M. Muller

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
We invite you to come along on a journey with poet, storyteller and artist, Joseph A. West. You’ll ride the rails with Old Uncle Joe, on the famous Southern Line, making stops at Clifton Forge, Willsoughby Spit, Hamfat Acres, the old Calder Place, Sawnava Beach, and maybe even New Jersey.

We’ll visit with old friends like Baby Zebisko, the late Rufus Grundy, Edith Lumpkin-Jones of the Shining Wisdom Church, the flamboyant Dr. Slaughter, Good Old Harvey, and, of course, the infamous Studhorse Brown.

Reservations have been made for Dinner at Ed’s. Ed has put together a fine menu for our group at his country inn, Gein House. We can choose from such time-honored dishes as omelets made with Twenty-eight Eggs; Pork Chops and Gravy; Potatoes, Corn and Grouse; and of course there will be Chocolate Pie for Supper. All of this gastronomical goodness can be washed down with Slivovitz or a little Redwine, and it won’t cost you an arm and a leg either.

After dinner we’ll listen to Joe tell the tales of the places he’s been and the things that he’s seen. He’ll tell of his visit with August Derleth, and about the time he entered That House in Providence.
Old Uncle Joe has journeyed across the sea to visit such places as Cumbria, Stonewaite, Ravenglass, and even the Tower of London.

But Joe hasn’t always been an upstanding citizen. He once stole a Roll-Top Desk from a woman named Mary.

Joe’s fame as an artist and writer has spread far and wide. Joe’s artwork has been seen in many prestigious publications, but never in the Wall Street Journal, a publication he shuns.

Joe’s prose and poetry have been read From Tibet to Cleveland, and even the monks in the Yut Quang Hermitage sing his praises as they continuously spin their prayer wheels.

In his lifetime, Joe has worked as a gravedigger in the Renthar-pian Hills; he sold cemetery plots for the Fillmore Graves Mortuary Company of Agony, Iowa; and he was an orderly in the University of Minnesota Hospital for the Very, Very Nervous. When Joe was young, he had planned to go to school to become a train engineer, but times were hard and his plans were derailed.

Now retired, Joe spends his time writing, drawing, and taking long walks in the woods: Lakewood, Rottenwood, Starkwood...

Joe has had a good life, but a hard one. At one time or another, he has suffered from Gonad Fury, Necromania, Bull Run Madness, and other Spooky Stuff. Fortunately, Joe met the Master Sadhu, Ram-chandra Dutt, who could cure anything except Fumes From Hell.

As night falls on our journey, we’ll Turn on the Light, Bend a Wire, do the Lambeth Walk and go Dancin’ in the Moonlight.

We wish each and every passenger a wonderful journey. Our goal is for everyone to enjoy these Shadows from the Past. Why? Because we always...AIM HIGH.
VERSE
I knew a man many years ago
Whose last name was Furst,
And twice a year he’d come unglued
To satisfy his thirst.

Ordinarily he was clean and neat
And with polish on his shoes –
But getting drunk he’d crawl in the dirt
As he flooded his belly with booze.

His shirt got filthy, his eyes got glazed,
His voice got thick and slurred
As he stumbled about bumming drinks;
His reeking hulk was the last word.

Oh! Albert Furst was a fearful sight
Most folks didn’t care to see:
Wild-eyed and foul in his drunken state,
Only death could set him free.

I went to his funeral in the gloom and rain –
His battered hulk I saw interred.
Now his tortured soul is free of pain,
But in remembrance my eyes are blurred.
BABY ZEBISKO

Stanley and Anna once had a child –
One that was bulky, awkward and wild.
He grew like a storm cloud at a furious pace,
And brought to his parents ruinous disgrace.

Baby Zebisko was a grotesque mass –
All out of shape and having no class.
At age four, he looked like a hill;
His was a belly no one could fill.

At age five, he weighed eight hundred and ten!
By age six, he was twelve hundred – and then
One day he just sailed up into the sky –
Lost in the clouds and emitting one cry.

Baby Zebisko flew over the land,
And over the sea so graceful and grand –
His monstrous hulk exploded and fell onto Greece;
Now Stanley and Anna are dead and at peace.
BEND A WIRE

Of all the noble things
To which man does aspire,
Nothing more happiness brings
Than the art of bending wire.

Straight wires offend the senses,
Bent wires bring one joy –
On table tops and benches,
Bending wire can destroy.

Destroy? – – – Destroy what?
We ask and wonder how.
Straight wires are dull, but
Bent wires lift up the spirits now.

With determined minds and hands,
Work hard, you may advance
To lumps of bronze and steel bands,
Asbestos shirts, and copper pants.

Don’t regard all this as a joke.
The world needs its wires bent.
Survive this life of noise and smoke –
Bend wires and be content.
BLASTED HIDES

Down in my old home town
Nothing stays the same.
There’s always someone changing things
And it goes a’gin the grain.

Why oh why can’t they leave things alone?
Damn their blasted hides.

They’s tearin’ down and knockin’ down,
No place for beauty and charm.
Just rippin’ up and shiftin’ around
And doin’ all kinds of harm.

Now I’m livin’ over in Willoughby Spit,
The bay and the hills are grand.
Folks over there ain’t havin’ a fit,
We’re all serene and secure on the sand.

Why oh why can’t they leave things alone?
Damn their blasted hides.
Yeah, that’s what I said and I’m glad I did.
Damn their blasted hides.
**BULL RUN MADNESS**

Flashing thunder, smoke, screams and noise –
Fallen comrades, young men and boys,
Fields and woodlands littered with gore –
The awesome folly of the Civil War.

My friend Lee Cowell is a Civil War scholar –
This is the expert you should follow
In quest of American history of wars.
Cowell is my mentor; the others are bores.

Avoid Freeman, Foote and old man Catton –
They won’t cause your brain to fatten.
Study with Cowell and you will expand
Your glorious fame throughout this land.

Ram jam, zugg flugg, now as before –
Hail the students of the Civil War!
CALDER PLACE

I don’t like the old Calder Place –
It sits back off the street
Surrounded by weeds and whispering trees
It puts “Haw-Lass” into my feet.

Still, I can’t resist, when the darkness falls,
To peer into its grimy panes –
Shadows move as the owl calls,
Uneasy fascination gains.

I stand and gaze in long and long,
Thinking of the days of old
When old Calder lived there without song –
Grim, forbidding and cold.

He’s gone now, almost twenty years.
No one cares, he was nobody’s friend.
Let his rotting corpse fall away in its grave,
There to feed worms, and with the loam blend.

The old place still stands,
But I ain’t a’goin’ back.
Don’t want to be anywhere near it.
His detestable shade
Hangs on that glade;
And his soul cries out
With muttering groans.
God, it’s awful – can’t you hear it?
He’s a card, that dark-skinned Calhoun –
Ol’ Algonquin J. himself.
His services are not a boon
To your pocketbook or your health.

Go to court with this attorney clown,
Your case will fail for sartin’.
His face and your outlook will be brown,
As your freedom and money is partin’.

No judge or jury believe his plea –
He always loses his case;
But Calhoun’s services are never free,
No smile will adorn your face.

So never go to court with Algonquin J.,
Failure will be your lot.
You’ll groan and frown and say –
“That dusky dimwit should be shot.”
CHOCOLATE HOUSE

Do you live in a chocolate house,
Have a lot of fun?
Does the candy and frantic laughter
Keep the blues on the run?

They say I do,
But I’m not sure it’s true,
What with all the creeping shadows,
Bones and dust and clotted grue.

This ain’t no chocolate house,
Of that you can be certain –
I fear every nighttime,
“Hey, what’s that thing
Behind the curtain?”
CHOCOLATE PIE

Workin’ hard, yeah, workin’ hard
All throughout the day,
Movin’ lots of stuff around
With noise and in every way.

Do not be discouraged,
Our reward will be great,
So let this you encourage
A stupendous and delicious fate.

Chocolate pie, yeah, chocolate pie,
That’ll be our evening meal.
Our Joy will be colossal
As we shout and groan and squeal.

I don’t mind the endless toil
As we lift and haul and sweat,
Nothing will alter or spoil
The glory our bellies will get.

Chocolate pie, yeah, chocolate pie
Will fill our gaping maws
And dancing light will fill our eyes
As our joy will have no flaws.
CUMBRIA

Your rocks and hills reach for the sky,
As your tumbling streams go rushing by –
And clouds from sea and Scotland loom,
Then sudden sunlight softens the gloom.

You please me in my heart and mind,
In your hummocks I rejoice and find
A remote and lonely beauty unfold –
In your russet and red, green and gold.

Seascale, Ravenglass, Catbells and Skiddaw –
Fast-moving clouds and winds that are raw;
Crummock, Gavel, Stonewaite and Fall –
Rough hewn and earthy, I love them all.
DANCIN’ IN THE MOONLIGHT

Dancing in the moonlight
Admiring all the stars –
Still I just don’t feel right,
As I wonder where you are.

Don’t like this dancing all alone –
Rather have you in my arms.
Last night I had you on the phone;
Did you call from jail or Windsor Farms?

I don’t like this kind of livin’,
Can’t love you when you’re not here –
Why should I do all the givin’
And my friends are not queers.

Let’s get our romance goin’ –
I’m still alive and all a-fire.
My love for you is still growin’,
And please stop callin’ me a liar.

I’ll give you one more chance dear,
To go with me to Paradise.
We’ll get our happiness glands in gear,
Now won’t that be stupendously nice?
DINNER AT ED’S

Had lunch the other day, I did,
With Ed in his odious house.
He didn’t serve me beans ‘n’ franks,
Potatoes, corn or grouse.
What he did serve me
I nervously ate,
Though my stomach did rebel –
That thing a’resting on my plate
Could send one to the crudhouse,
Or even straight to Hell.
He laughed and joked and stuffed his jaws,
With dripping, chunk-like fishes;
His mirthful shouts and waving paws
Continued while he done the dishes.
Soon I left for home,
My face was green,
My stomach all a’flame.
How I regret I ever ate with that fiend –
I’ll never be the same.
I’m revolted and sick when I recall
Having dined with that loathsome ghoul;
Still shaking and retching
And about to fall,
Hold me up, hurry I say –
Be quick, lead me back to the stool.
DOODLE

Ol’ Doodle Ford was a real card –
Popular with the Old Croakers’ Club.
But sometimes he played too hard,
And therein lies the rub.

Drinkin’ booze, eatin’ eggs,
And dancin’ like a fool –
Then came trouble with his heart and legs,
A tale told out of school.

He ended up in the Vet’s Hospital –
Groanin’ with the gout and clap.
His eyes grew dim and his jaws drooled spittle –
He finally had to face the rap.

Doodle Ford’s funeral was a sorry mess –
Rain fell as they filled his grave.
Old friends did mourn his passing nonetheless,
And wondered if he’d now behave.
(drawn in collaboration with Allen Koszowski)
Do you remember Dr. Slaughter?
He had a lot of trouble with his wife,
But he was always supremely happy
Coming at you with his bloody knife.
Dr. Slaughter was at his finest,
Carving into your reluctant hide –
His shouts and flamboyant slashing
Destroyed your pocketbook and your pride.
More than one outstanding clinic
Ordered him off their land;
But Dr. Slaughter was not a cynic,
He thought his services were really grand.
I’m now solvent, healthy and happy –
I want to keep it going just that way,
Dr. Slaughter’s work is crappy –
Avoid the man and live another day.
FROM TIBET TO CLEVELAND

The communists ran the monks out of Tibet --
So the blighters moved to Cleveland,
There to open a monastery in Hamfat Acres,
And calling it Yut Quang Hermitage.

Abbot Hing Foo Fung rides a unicycle --
The monks do the Lambeth Walk.
Prayer wheels spin continuously,
And holy shouting shakes the walls.

These great souls live on sardines, walnuts and beer.
Their vows are celibacy, poverty and shunning
The Wall Street Journal --
Their prayers and chants batter Heaven's portals.

This Oriental nonsense goes on and on --
Yellow robed Holy-men sit in the lotus position.
If the people of Ohio rebel and say "Go" --
The monks will probably move to New Jersey.

At various times of the day and night
The monks greet and salute one another
In this time-honored fashion --
"Crevran, Crevran
Oui, Oui, Oui,
Gobba, Gobba, Gobba, Gobba, Gobba,
Butana, Butana, Butana, BANG!"
FUMES FROM HELL

When I was young,
They told me to behave --
But all I wanted to do
Was rob a grave.
And when I was a boy,
A-goin’ to school,
All I wanted to do
Was to be a ghoul.
I got them Ed Gein blues,
Oh Lord, I got ’em.
I got them low down Ed Gein blues.

A-sneakin’ around
In the darkness of night,
What I did in them graveyards
Was really a fright –
Diggin’ in the ground
Seeking many rotting stiffs,
My labours favoured me
With loathsome sundry gifts.

So now my reeking home
Is filled with muck and bones,
And those who visit me
Give out with gasps and groans.
Oh Lord, I got ’em,
Them good ol’ Ed Gein blues.
GEIN HOUSE

Avoid, if you can, Gein’s place of abode,
Back a ways on that lonely country road.
Fearful darkness lurks in that place
And insane lust is its ghoulish disgrace.

Gein’s home was a place of terror and dread,
A charnel house of relics long dead,
Of ghastly things removed from the ground,
Grave fragments bereft of all sound.

A place of bones and skulls and gore,
And scattered filth upon the floor.
Creeping shadows flicker there,
And gloomy silence is everywhere.

Ed Gein is gone; his house stands no more,
Nothing remains, not even the floor.
Stay away from the site -- it is well
To shun this reeking outpost of Hell.
-1-
Would you like to flee the border
Of strange abodes in bizarre disorder;
Of boxes and clamps and myriad stamps,
Of coins and cards and tables quite able
To support old books on sea lore and Victorian whore?

-2-
I know the place, you cannot hide
Such a place or simply deride
The feet that stride and thump with creaks --
A den of relics owned by freaks.

-3-
Speak not of spaces galactic or reluctant balls
So still and cold. Better to clap your hands at
The end of a fifty mile hike on tottering legs, and
Shout “GLORY” as you point upward, digest
your cracknels and plan to buy a new car.

-4-
Leo will continue the battle with louse of a spouse,
And chili is served on you carned
So check the mail and pray for
“FREIGHT TRAIN PHILLIPS,”
Because it’s still Winter, my friend.
GRAVE RAMBLE

Have you ever spent a night in a graveyard?  
Wandering around amongst old rotting stones  
Your feet encounter graves soft and hard  
And sometimes you can hear moans and groans.

The light is soft and dim from a gibbous moon.  
Long shadows crawl about the rutted ground,  
Horned owls on tree limbs hoot and soon  
Ghoulish relics from plundered graves are found.

Something moves in the stygian darkness,  
Could be a snake or a furtive rat.  
You are alert and aware in your harkness  
And you damn sure know where you're at.

So enjoy all this creepy midnight madness  
As you inwardly moan out the blues.  
Next day you'll celebrate in gladness  
As you scrape away the grave mold from your shoes.
Me and my good friend Ricardo
Love to wander thru sundry graveyards;
There to let our morbid fancies
Pay tribute to rustics and bards.

We watch, with pleasure, the shadows
Move fitfully over decrepit stones,
And we listen in hushed anticipation
For the cadaver’s deep muted groans.

Their grave songs thrill and delight us,
And make us long to join them
In sepulchral sound,
Exalting in ghastly writhing
Deep in the old burying ground.

The darkness of night approaches,
As the light begins to fail
And the once gentle breezes
Shriek thru the trees like a gale.

Cacodaemonical howling wells up
From the restless underground hordes,
As Ricardo and I stalk above them
Like triumphant, reigning Lords.

The pleasure and happiness we exalt in
From those agitated stiffs,
We accept and enjoy to the fullest
Our just desserts and our bounty –
Our glorious underground gifts.
IN THE GOOD OLD

Summertime is a splendid feast of nature –
Soft air, bright sunshine and easy locomotion.
Oh, it's great to be free from winter all right,

BUT –

Heat prostration ain’t much fun –
And sunburn, wood ticks, and poison ivy
I don’t love with any great passion!

Violent wind storms are not life’s greatest joy,
And noisy streets I’d gladly do without.
Sirens and roaring motorcycles don’t enhance
One’s late-at-night attempts to sleep.

So you summer lovers can count me out –
I’ll take fall and winter every time.
Cold, pale, and sad it was,
The moonlight seen amid the naked trees,
And down below Spectre Hill
In the old burying ground,
Dark forms moved and lurked among
Crumbling slabs and mournful tombs.

As I walked ailing with my sombre thoughts
I heard far off tower bells tell the night
That it was late (like midnight, man!)
Then from the gloom near the wall
You suddenly appeared,
Tall, thin, dark and grave
With Kitty at your heels,
Your face was in shadow, but your voice was good to hear:
“Sir, shall we walk awhile along this
Ancient wall and through this city of the dead?”

We did indeed do this thing;
Our feet took us over midnight terrain
With little strain, over rotting stone
And forgotten bones
And under gnarled trees our knees creaked.
As we sat and gave to sundry graves
The necrophile’s salute and tribute
The dead were at rest and
In our breasts dwelt a Joy --

I loved being with you that dark night, Howard.
MARY’S ROLL-TOP DESK

Of all the wonders in this land,
The thing I love the best
Is the shining wood and curves so grand
Of Mary’s roll-top desk.

Mary’s roll-top desk, Mary’s roll-top desk –
Great Gawd a-mighty, how I long
For Mary’s roll-top desk.

Mary is a fine young girl –
All over she’s the best.
But the thing that puts me in a whirl
Is that lovely girl’s desk.

When first I seen that gleaming wood,
And polished brass so fine –
I did what I knew ol’ Joe West could,
That piece of furniture would be mine.

I promised her a great big house,
And a sailboat on the bay –
Knowing I was a lying louse,
I schemed in every way.

She’s gone now, it’s really sad –
I’ll miss her, sure as hell.
I got the desk from being bad,
But I guess it’s just as well.

Mary’s roll-top desk, Mary’s roll-top desk
Great Gawd a-mighty, how I do love
Mary’s roll-top desk.
MEN AND WOMEN

People differ, there's men and there's women –
Some like to knit and others go swimmin'.
Many stout souls like all sorts of fun,
But there are a few that reach for a gun.

A blast, some smoke and the show is over –
But it's not certain that all is clover.
He or she may now stumble through hells,
And hear falling water and far distant bells.

So work like a dog, save lots of money,
And waller around in things that are funny –
Don't matter you bein' a frau or a man,
You can have fun, know that you can.

Eat fried potatoes, make lots of noise!
Produce many offspring, some girls and some boys.
Avoid the shadow and all them things creepin',
And glow like a monarch, even when sleepin'.
OCTOBER GOLD

No time of year is to me so fine
As October in the Northern States –
Cooler days, bright sunlight and haze;
Far distant smoke, long sad shadows.

Woods and fields, streets and graveyards –
Red and gold leaves on trees and ground,
Naked branches and twisted vines –
Sombre, soothing, silent.

Death-like? I don’t care –
It is all wonder and beauty to me.
Summer’s oppressive heat and noise is gone;
I’m glad – now I feel well and alive.
ODE TO HARDWARE HANK

Hinky dinky, shelly shoe
Eat that pie and when you’re through,
Get back to the gleamin’ hardware store
And work like Hell as you done before.

Umpus dumpus, new found honey
Man alive, we gonna make some money.
Nails, paint and glue sellin’ good
People spendin’ money as they should,
’Cause we got plenty of stock galore
In our mighty good hardware store.

Oowa, Oowa, shattered glee
We’s heading for glory, you and me.
OL’ BEN

Old Ben Franklin came to my house
Long about a quarter to ten,
And how he ever got there
Is really beyond my ken.

Before he could give me
The latest on Poor Richard’s Almanac
I gave him a blast of rhetoric
That caused him to be taken aback.

“Go back to Philly,” I shouted,
“You bein’ here just ain’t right.”
And I sure don’t aim
To stand with you in the rain,
A’tryin’ to fly a kite.

Ol’ Ben just stood there,
With a sad look on his face,
Mud and grave mold a’clingin’
To his brocade and his lace.
The stench of his reeking hulk
Made me sick and determined
To rid my abode of his bulk.

You and your damn Kite Flyin’
Wine drinking and fancy ladies.
I don’t need ’em.
Go back to your grave in Philadelphia,
Or better still --
Back to Hades.
OL’ ROTTENWOOD

I love to roam through graveyards
Maybe more than I really should,
Over buried rustics and bards –
The muted stiffs in Old Rottenwood.

The stones and trees and hoary crypts
Fill me with blasphemous joys,
And I won’t abide the sepulchral gyps
That deprive me of charnel-pit toys.

Oh, Rottenwood, your gloom is so thrilling,
Your ancient tombs touch me so deep –
My heart is pounding and chilling,
As your shadows do fitfully creep.

Darkness falls and I return to Rottenwood –
My urge to plunder graves is swelling!
Exceed Gein’s deeds? I know I could –
Hear my chortling cries and yelling!
RAM JAM BULLIGATOR

Living costs rise and trains lack traction,
But who'd you rather see -- Jesus or Jackson?

Heroes are gone like Lee, Gein and Fall;
Still many things fly and some things crawl.

Today we have marvels in high power linin'
On certain dreaded tapes Nixon's not apt to give-in.

So settle for less turmoil
In search of gas and oil.
Relax, be calm, use the elevator,
And hail your foes with "Ram Jam Bulligator."
RENTHARPIAN TRACK

Nothing is more dark, silent and brooding
Than the Rentharpian Hills –
Always devoid of life and cheer;
No man nor animal can stay there for long.

The single railroad track that winds
And twists through these shunned hills
Is forever empty and cold.

I’m fascinated by this lonely place –
And the never-used track to nowhere.
If I entered the Rentharpian Hills
And stayed too long – I’d go mad.
SAWNAVA BEACH

Everyone needs a nice vacation,
One that’s well within your reach.
The best I know in this nation
Is a stay at beautiful Sawnava Beach.

The cottages there are very nice;
The breeze is gentle, the sand is clean,
Even the sand crabs, flies and lice
Are always happy and never mean.

One day a school of dogfish
Were washed up on that noble shore,
The weather was damp and foggish --
It was a stinking mess we did deplore.

As the putrid tide receded,
The stench was more than we could endure.
I’ll not go back there, even if you pleaded --
No more for me, Jack, you can be sure.
A SKULL IS CRACKING

Oh skull that rests on my bookshelf high,
What fiendish thoughts smoulder within
Your acrid bone box?
What blasphemies lurk within your criminal cranium?
The wardens wanted not your hulk
When bolts of power baked your hide
And Flugg of Bennet Street’s dark and mouldy shop
Displayed your gleaming and leering
Bony face on shelf No. 9.

For Sale

Twelve dollars was the price
And twelve I paid
To haul you home in a fried chicken box.

And now you are mine, Mr. Skull-face;
I like you just where you are,
But don’t go back --
Not here --
Not ever, Charlie Manson.
We entered the forest
Of Phineas Stark --
The sunlight grew dim,
The shadows grew dark;
Furtive winds bent the grass,
Tumbled leaves on the ground.
And far off behind us
Came the baying of a hound.

Reaching finally the hut
Of smoke blackened stone,
The door swung inward,
Emitting a groan.
We couldn’t resist
The invisible hands
That clutched us and forced us
Like cold iron bands
To enter the dwelling
Of darkness and dread.
There to see it and feel it,
And know it was dead.

It glowed in the darkness,
Putrescent and foul --
Extremely evil
In its mouldy green cowl.
The corpse of a madman,
A slayer and ghoul --
Phineas Stark,
The fiend of eldritch St. Pool.

Back home now we try
To forget -- yet we sulk,
For having stolen and incinerated
The festering hulk.
STUDHORSE BROWN

Oh, health and wealth
And vigor supreme –
Oh, where can these be found?
The finest example
I’ve ever seen
Was good ol’ Studhorse Brown.

He went through life
An awesome sight,
With a most impressive staff;
And when you’d see him
Ready to go,
You’d surely have to laugh.

Studhorse Brown,
Oh Studhorse Brown
Showed us how to do it –
Whenever close enough to strike,
He’d plunge ahead
And screw it.

Now he’s gone,
But we still recall
His expertise, prodigious tool,
And his readiness to ball.
TURN ON THE LIGHT

Turn on the light, Jack, I said –
Turn on the blasted light.
You brung me down in this cellar
In the darkest hour of night,
To find, if we could, the source of the noise
And the cause of our nocturnal fright.

When we got down there,
The place was bare.
Then his eyes lit up like coals
And he shouted out with fiendish glee –
“There ain’t no menace down here, Dennis,
The only danger is me.”

He came at me like a charging bull.
I stepped aside as he fell;
Then I jabbed his ass
With a piece of glass,
And kicked him into Hell.

He’s gone now, he’s gone fer good.
But, then, so am I.
Ain’t a’goin’ back to that Hellish place –
Let him and that cellar fry.

I say fry because I finished it off
With a stick o’ dynamite.
That put an end to my former friend
And that dreadful chamber of fright.
TWENTY-EIGHT EGGS

On the Ol’ Southern Line
We were rolling through them hills,
When all at once I realized
My belly needed a fill.

I went into the dining car,
Sat across from a man of great size,
And when I saw that fathead eat,
I could hardly believe my eyes.

Twenty-eight eggs he gobbled down,
With grinding and dripping jaws.
I was awestruck, as would be my friends,
Koblas, Tierney and Hawes.

Then as I watched, the fool dropped dead –
His heart couldn’t stand the gaffe.
He quickly grew stiff and gray as lead,
But all I did was laugh.

They stopped the train at Clifton Forge
To get rid of the body.
His hulk was dumped into a cave –
A makeshift grave most shoddy.

I never rode that train a’gin;
Those tracks are no longer calling –
To me, a weird ol’ rail fan,
Whose final curtain is falling.
TWENTY-EIGHT EGGS

(early version)

He ate his breakfast every day
Early in the morn –
Coffee, toast, fruit and milk
Poured on golden flakes of corn.

But most of all was the twenty-eight eggs
He packed into his belly.
And he just ignored the sneers and jeers

The mess hall was a jolly place,
They all loved to watch him eat,
And observe the swelling slabs of fat
That encased him from skull to feet.

He’s dead now, poor gluttonous fool,
But I reckon it’s just as well.
He’s in his grave and playin’ it cool,
And he’s the Number One chef in Hell.
WATCHIN’ GRUNDY DIE

It was a howlin’, stormy night in March
When I watched Rufus Grundy die –
He lay there in bed
With a bandage on his head,
And his hand clutched a half-eaten pie.

As he left this world,
His body did shake.
But just before he went
He said “I’m hot as the place
I’m headin’ fer –
It’s to Hell I’m sure I’ll be sent.”

Later I did receive from him
A post card from Hell House below.
He now lives like a mole,
Just a’shovelin’ coal
To keep all the fires there a’glow.

Don’t follow ol’ Rufus Grundy
Down to Hades’ sufferin’ and pain.
Don’t embark on the rotten life of a scoundrel –
Eat Girl Scout cookies and try to keep sane.
THE WOODEN OVERCOAT

The box that held him was stylish and long,
Padded within and properly rigid –
Made with screws, nails and prong,
Keeping its tenant dapper and frigid.

Long years it confined him
Under six feet of muck,
Confounding the efforts of worms and nocturnal rats.
But finally he ran out of septical luck –
His grave was disturbed by ghouls and their cats.

Up from the gaping hole in the ground
Was the corpse then transported.
And all of this pitiful burial ever found
Was a green broken coffin and ---

“Hey, turn me loose, get yer hands off
My bones --- let me rest, blast ye!
Put me back in my grave.”
TALES
Phineas Bluntley had always believed in striving for success. “Aim High,” he would often declare, was his battle cry. Bluntley was truly bound for glory.

Phineas took great pride in his job as janitor at Bindlestiff High School in Agony, West Virginia. His feelings of self-importance grew in magnitude until they became unreal. Still, he continued to “Aim High.”

During the Winter of 1933, our noble janitor acquired an apprentice helper named Oliver Wicklow. This 14 year old lad would surely do well. Both Phineas Bluntley and Oliver Wicklow would “Aim High.”

Young Wicklow found his mentor’s combination office-broom-closet a glowing wonderland. Amid the usual clutter of cans, rags, brooms and floor wax, Bluntley had his own table, chairs, radio and coffee-pot. The walls were hung with diplomas, citations and photos all glorifying Phineas Bluntley. This was all very well but the boy was informed that Mr. Bluntley would be addressed as Lord Bluntley and Oliver simply as “Wicklow”. And remember, he was told, we must always Aim High. That settled, they got to work.

After a year of “Yes, your Lordship” and “Will that be all, your Lordship?” Wicklow faced his boss Bluntley for new instructions. “Oliver, my boy, you have done well and I am pleased. From now on you shall be called Sir Oliver and no longer merely Wicklow. I, of course, shall continue as Lord Bluntley or your Lordship.” Phineas then reaffirmed his motto for them both—“Aim High!”
One day Parnel Pinwhistle, Bindlestiff High School’s principal, needed the janitor urgently. He encountered Oliver in the basement and asked for Mr. Bluntley. “I’ll see if his Lordship is in his office,” said young Wicklow with awesome dignity.

“Lordship, hell. I want the janitor now!” shouted Mr. Pinwhistle.

Oliver entered Bluntley’s “office” and almost instantly returned to the waiting principal. “His eminence will see you now,” announced the teenaged janitor’s helper.

At that precise moment, Mr. Pinwhistle exploded.

A few days after this dramatic event, Mr. Phineas Bluntley and young Oliver Wicklow met on the street. They both were looking for new jobs since their abrupt departure from dear old Bindlestiff High. The two forlorn ex-janitors stopped, stood face to face and with unsmiling gloom said “Aim High”.

"Aim High"
Dear Alan,

You’ve asked me to tell you about the fantastic events of the Binford affair, so now I shall do so. May 27, 1964, started out being the greatest day in the history of Binford High School and ended being the worst. Complete disaster! The town of Crawley, Wisconsin, and its Binford High School never recovered from the dreadful “Pinwhistle Affair”.

It was just one week before graduation when Rufus Pinwhistle, Binford High School’s principal, staged his brilliant Eat-A-Thon. The nation’s leading gluttons were gathered together in Binford’s auditorium to compete in a stupendous eating contest. All of Crawley’s citizens were excited and eager to witness a dazzling display of gargantuan gluttony. Fat-belly worship was at fever pitch. Rufus Pinwhistle’s efforts to thrill and entertain the people of Crawley with a big-league, world championship-style eating extravaganza had materialized. Pinwhistle’s popularity soared as bands played, dogs barked, and the town’s old and young danced in the streets. Fun and glory were soon to lift Crawley to Heaven’s highest peak.

Hundreds of townspeople were jammed into the Binford auditorium for this once-in-a-lifetime event. The stage groaned under its burden of tables, chairs, and food. Tons of food! Meat, potatoes, bread, pies, beans, and water, milk, and coffee. Enough food to kill an army. Finally, the contestants appeared on stage amid thunder-
ous applause. First introduced was Benny Flood of York, Pennsylvania, whose grinning 347 pounds awed the local yokels. Next was William “Stud Horse” Brown at 407 pounds. He was loudly cheered. Brown represented the Milwaukee Feasters’ Club. Then came Orville L. Hinkle, the 298-pound “Bull-Dog Gorgor” from Lumpkin, Idaho. Nice fellow! Last to be introduced was Raymond Steinbreaker of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. At 375 pounds, Steinbreaker’s onstage presence was awesome. Principal Pinwhistle then thanked the people of Crawley for their generous support of his efforts to bring fun, glory, and prestige to Crawley and Binford High School. Then the famed contestants took their places at the tables and the show began.

For a lengthy time the only sounds heard were grunts, belches, grinding jaws, and labored breathing. Vast quantities of food were consumed by Flood, Brown, Hinkle, and Steinbreaker. The crowd of viewers sat entranced as the huge gluttons on stage gorged themselves. After thirty minutes a twenty-minute recess was declared. It was announced that during the much-needed time out, the audience would be entertained by Betty “Baby Doll” Jackson. She came up to center stage and stood smiling like a monstrous pink cloud in her fluffy baby-doll dress. “My name is Betty ‘Baby Doll’ Jackson,” she announced, “and I weigh 672 pounds. My mind, body, and soul radiate pure joy and I love everybody.” After this declaration, she began to wave her arms, shake her head, and then dance the Charleston. Her performance was an electrifying spectacle. Laughing, shouting, and cheering rocked the auditorium while some of the crowd noticed an ominous trembling of the floor and felt a growing fear. Then it happened. The floor collapsed as the screaming dancer fell down through the shattered stage to the basement below.

Dust and screams, groans and shouting filled the air. Band instruments were dropped, babies squalled, and dogs barked as fire alarms shrieked. A rush to the basement and a quick check of the wreckage revealed that “Baby Doll” Jackson was dead from her
ghastly fall. Then another horrible discovery was made. The dancing fat lady had fallen on and killed two other hapless souls. These two crushed-to-death people turned out to be a male and a female student. Billy Rockhead, popular football star, and Connie Plukfelder, the school’s favorite cheerleader. Their furtive lovemaking tryst on a floor-mat situated directly under the auditorium stage had proven fatal. A tragic way for two young lovers to die.

This calamity put an end to the eating contest. The stunned and terrified crowd soon grew angry and vengeful. “Where’s Pinwhistle?”—“Damned principal ought to be hung!”—“Let’s get that bastard!” These and other comments were heard as the enraged citizens
of Crawley rushed about. Soon it was clear that Rufus Pinwhistle was in peril. If given a chance, the people would kill him. Quick-acting local police found the fear-crazed school principal hiding in a nearby dumpster. He was handcuffed and smuggled into the Crawley jail.

For the next few days the townspeople tried to overcome their state of shock. The chaotic events at Binford High School had horrified and depressed the entire village. Many wanted to capture and punish Rufus Pinwhistle, but he was cringing in the Crawley jail. He wanted to remain safely behind the bars of his cell. But this was not to be. Failing to convince the mayor and sheriff to release Pinwhistle, the crowd of enraged Crawley citizens tried another tack. They gleefully set fire to the jail and succeeded in killing Pinwhistle by smoke inhalation. Then, when upbraided by Mayor Collins and Sheriff Tubholder, the raging mob burned down the Crawley Library, Hummel’s Gift Shop, and a warehouse full of furniture.

Finally, the mob’s anger subsided and the town returned to its usual state of small-minded dullness. Even today after many years, Crawley, Wisconsin is a gloomy backward place, shunned and scorned by the entire state.

Sincere best wishes,

Uncle Bill
BRANDON’S PIPE

As George Brandon drove his car the seven miles from his home to Grafton Village, he looked up at the sky and smiled. It was dark and raining, and a cold wind pushed against his 1934 Packard. Just the kind of weather he liked—but then, he liked all sorts of things most people disliked. Old things. Dark and gloomy houses. Decaying brick walls. Odd-shaped trees, and the long sad shadows of lonesome places. George Brandon had what he jokingly called a GRAVEYARD PERSONALITY.

The car arrived in Grafton Village and turned off the road in front of Trenchard’s Tobacco Shop. Brandon got out and ran through the rain to the shop’s front entrance. A bell tinkled as his dripping hulk plunged into the dimly-lit interior. The place was small and cluttered and quietly pleasant.

“Let me see that one,” demanded Brandon, pointing to a pipe in the glass case.

Mr. Trenchard unlocked the display case, reached in with his long, thin arm and withdrew the pipe. Handing it to Brandon, he said: “I’ve been holding it for you, Mr. Brandon. It came in last week from New Orleans.”

Brandon held the pipe close to his face, and turning it over in his big hands, gazed intently at the thing. Rather large and heavy, it had a six-inch stem, and its surface was dark and rough.

“It came from someplace in the West Indies—Jamaica I think it was. There’s some queer story about it being cursed or fixed with evil. Of course, that’s all nonsense, but it is a nice pipe. I thought you’d fancy it so I held it for you.” Mr. Trenchard spoke in his soft,
gentle voice. Frail and ascetic, he looked like a child beside the huge, virile George Brandon.

“Perhaps you’ll be needing some tobacco or pipe cleaners,” suggested Trenchard.

Answering “No,” Brandon shoved the pipe into his coat pocket, paid for his purchase, and left. The rain followed him home.

When George Brandon reached home, it was four P.M. He went immediately to his den in the basement. Grace was still out to her afternoon card party, so he was safe from her—for awhile, at least.

Comfortably settled in his red leather chair, he sat for a time in silence. It was nice being home and in his den surrounded by books, pipes, old firearms, and model ships. No wife, at the moment, to criticize. Grace was not bad-looking, and she could do many things well; it was her nasty temper and constant complaining that had become so intolerable. Years of this had made George hate her. He avoided her now as much as possible, finding their marital warfare extremely unpleasant. Certain complicated factors made divorce impractical. Arguing proved to be completely futile. How long all of this could be endured was difficult to say. The marriage was dreadful, and hatred for Grace steadily grew in Brandon’s mind. The den was one means of escape—she disliked the room and stayed out.

Putting these distressing thoughts out of his mind, he thought of his new pipe, and withdrew it from his pocket. Like the others in his collection, this new pipe would be smoked and enjoyed.

George fondled it and gave it a close scrutiny. “A curse on this thing, eh? Just a lot of that superstitious West Indian rot,” thought Brandon. “From the West Indies, is it? Made by some primitive black man from Jamaica, Trinidad, or perhaps Haiti.”

As Brandon sat examining his new pipe, he looked at its rough surface and curious design. Strange-looking and evil in its overall
appearance. More than any other feature of the pipe, the figures carved into the bowl were disturbing—weird, sinister and repellent.

Finally putting the thing down, Brandon went upstairs to dinner. The meal was rather good, although Grace was her usual disagreeable self. They ate in almost complete silence, their expressions showing no outward signs of hostility. A few remarks about her card club and about his sister, whom Grace had always disliked, was all he had to endure.

Later, back in his den, Brandon relaxed in the big chair as he gazed about the room. All the familiar things were there, looking good to him. The den was a wonderful retreat from the world...and Grace.

Switching on a table lamp, Brandon picked up the new pipe, packed tobacco into it, and lit a match. Great fragrant clouds of smoke rose upward as he sucked on the stem. No matter its origin, cursed or not, it was a good smoke.

Twenty minutes passed; the den was all silence and pipe smoke. Then Brandon began to feel strange—light, weightless and free. He felt as though he was expanding, growing to gigantic proportions. What was this fantastic new feeling of limitless power? Brandon only knew that he was possessed of tremendous power to possess, enjoy and command. If he wished, he could crush mountains to dust with his bare hands. Grace was no longer a wife. She was merely an insignificant creature whom he hated fiercely. Hatred for her and pride in himself grew in Brandon's mind until he felt ready to explode. There was a blinding flash of white flame and then utter silence. Empty, dark silence. Brandon's mind was gone.

Days later, when neighbors entered the house, accompanied by police, they found two lifeless bodies. George and Grace Brandon were dead. George's body lay sprawled on the floor, his face wearing an expression of idiotic blankness. Grace was on her back, arms and legs twisted wildly outward. Her face was horribly distorted. Her neck was bruised and broken. It was clear that she'd been bru-
tally choked to death. George had strangled her, and had himself died from heart failure.

The most curious detail discovered by the group of investigators was the presence of a grotesque pipe found on the floor near the dead couple. On the bowl of the pipe were carved two hideous figures—the figure of a man strangling a woman!
Fred and Phyllis Underwood went to Buzzards Bay on their vacation last year. It wasn’t entirely successful. It rained incessantly, Fred broke his arm falling into an empty swimming pool and Phyllis lost her purse. Their car was stolen so a Greyhound took them home. Otherwise, the vacation was just fine.

It is claimed that one rarely, if ever, sees Eskimos walking the streets of Singapore.

Brian O’Shaunessy, a Chinese restaurant owner from Ironwood, Michigan, swam across Lake Michigan in 12 hours and 17 minutes. The distance was 89 miles. Rain fell most of the time during the trip. Upon completing his grueling feat, O’Shaunessy requested a drink of water.

The Big Thunder Noise Lovers Club and the North American Shouting Society held their annual debate in Cleveland this year. Jumping jackrabbits, I’m glad I wasn’t there.
Wisconsin’s Ed Gein achieved worldwide fame as a murderer, grave robber and cannibal in the late 1950’s. Now retired, he’s described as “a down to earth fellow with a grave outlook on life”. A study of his career is not advised for nervous newcomers but is recommended for mature fright fans.

Beauty contests are somewhat different in Horny Junction, Idaho. Much admired Lotta Frate won the title of “Lovely Lass for 1977” there in July. She’s super shapely at 6’ 4” and 317 lbs. Her hobbies are not lady-like things such as tennis, ballet or cooking. No indeed! She enjoys bricklaying, shoeing horses and digging graves.

Otis Gootch entered and won a dancing contest held in Carcinoma, North Carolina. His joy at winning was so great that he drank 18 bottles of beer, kissed 33 old ladies and furiously tap-danced the entire three mile distance from the auditorium to the Grand Flugg Hotel. Gootch is so popular in Carcinoma now that the townspeople’s admiration for him almost equals worship.

Albert Fish, fiendish killer who was executed in 1930, always got a charge out of life. He got an even greater charge out of death. His own death. When he was electrocuted, the two dozen needles he’d embedded in his skin shorted out the electric chair. He had often said, “I love pain but it hurts so damn much”.

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A waitress in a Honolulu cafe, Pearl Diver, was struck on the head by a falling coconut while sunbathing on Makapu Beach. She remained unconscious for 48 hours during which time she produced some weird psychic phenomena. While in this trance-like state she sang cowboy songs in Yiddish, shouted curses in the Tibetan tongue and produced telekinesis. Chairs, books, dinner plates, mirrors and medicine bottles flew through the air in the hospital room. Total damage, three thousand dollars.

Dr. Brutus Skullface of the University of Illinois was trampled to death by enraged fairgoers in 1947. They resented being duped by the cunning professor’s fake side show attraction. He was charging one dollar for tickets to view a large ill-shaped ball of ice. Dr. Skullface was claiming it to be the world’s largest hailstone. In actual fact the ball of ice was cut from a frozen Lake Erie in 1907.

Senator Rockwool Crickenham (Dem. from Ohio) was arrested in Toledo recently. His behavior in the Pangborn Hotel was judged completely unacceptable. He shocked and horrified many people by walking thru the hotel lobby wearing just a Shriners fez and spats. Furthermore, he was dragging a dead goat.
1 — Sometimes, when feeling sad or depressed, I take a slow, thoughtful walk in a graveyard. It always cheers me up. Glories of the past fill my mind and I visualize the Golden Age of Grave Robbing (Edinburgh, Scotland 1800-1832), the gloomy stories of Edgar Allan Poe, and the more recent career of Wisconsin’s ghoulish Ed Gein. Then, satiated with cemetery scenery and morbid musings, I return to our mundane world of struggle and worry wonderfully refreshed.

2 — Newspapers recently reported the death of Dr. Brutus Skullface in Detroit. He was 78. In 1947 this cunning coroner made money and headlines displaying what he claimed was “The World’s Largest Hailstone”. This pumpkin-sized ball of ice was merely a homemade chunk of fakery. Still, the gullible paid money to see “This Marvel From the Sky”. One day the power went out in the special refrigerator containing the celebrated hailstone and it melted. Dr. Skullface was overwhelmed with grief and depression. He died quietly from a self-administered Hemlock Cocktail.

3 — People in New Thunder, Tennessee are usually tolerant of average everyday noise. However, when the North American Noise-lovers Club and the Mid-West Shouting Society came to town, citizens of New Thunder rebelled. The convention-like gathering in Roaring Acres Park turned into an ear shattering riot. Windows and glassware were destroyed; bricks were loosened and painted surfaces ruined. Order was restored and ear pain was alleviated when the culprits agreed to a truce and early return home.
4 — Betty Vonklus had worked for years as a maid cleaning offices in downtown Milwaukee. This work was done evenings from 6 to 11 and it was done well. Betty was efficient and reliable and things went well until her breakdown. She began to break, tip over and spill things. Then, she increased her tempo to where screams and slamming things against the wall became part of her repertoire. Her frenzy finally culminated in her burning down a warehouse full of furniture. It was later determined that the cause of Betty Vonklus's weird behavior was an unwise consumption of large amounts of nutmeg.

5 — In Newsweek magazine for June 22, 1992, Meg Greenfield writes in her column “The Oldest Figure of Fun—and contempt—in the world is the punishing moral crusader who turns out to be guilty one way and another of precisely the failings he had been so unforgiving about in others.” How True! Some clergymen and half-baked preachers are really a pain in the...the...sitting down place. What these bible thumping fat heads need is a good shot of whisky and two hours in bed with a warm-blooded female. Ha! Ha! Ol’ Studhorse Brown could have shown them the way. Oh, Yeah!

6 — Inventions have enriched our lives over the years. Some inventions, however, have had a harmful effect as did those of Otis K. Stranglemyer. This Cleveland clown first invented a skull cooling helmet for migraine headache sufferers. Then Stranglemyer developed a steam driven yo-yo and a whistling coffin. His last invention was a bed clamp which kept you in a perfect north-south position. It was his contention that a constant flow of magnetic force ran from the north pole southward. Therefore, claimed Stranglemyer, we should allow this force to flow through our heads and then out our feet for universal magnetic perfect health.
7 — For most of his first 40 years, life for Cadmus J. Hatfield was very pleasant. Successful in business (rope and tar sales) and happily married, Hatfield seemed on his way to Heaven’s highest shelf. Then one day he was struck on the head by a falling brick while passing a building site. He survived the traumatic experience but was forever after changed. Cadmus Hatfield had lost his mind. His behavior became bizarre to the extreme.

First, he dressed in a Benjamin Franklin suit obtained from a local playhouse. Then, in a period of three months, he slammed a grapefruit into a grandfather’s clock, tried to drag a dead goat through a hotel lobby and finally sat on top of a water tower naked while eating four blueberry pies. Hatfield was eventually placed in an insane asylum. Just before he died of pepto-gullunitis he shouted: “Great god almighty, I wish I could burn down a warehouse full of furniture!”

8 — Always remember one thing: A wet fox will never run at night. Oh, he’ll eat pizza or copulate but he will not run.
GLUTTONS SUPREME

Vast hordes of food have marched into mouths, past teeth and then plunged into cavernous bellies. This is good! But just how good is open to debate.

Phillip Goodnow of Peoria, Illinois once ate 30 clams dipped in kerosene and a sack of Portland cement.

Ponderous McBulk of Grand Forks, N.D. consumed 28 cheese sandwiches, 3 roast ducks and 17 pints of beer in exactly 49 minutes. His funeral was conducted in the deluxe cafe. Very sad!

Alice Flugg of Agony, Tennessee once gained 88 lbs. in 18 days. During this time she ate 640 lbs. of potatoes. Her alarmed husband disappeared into remote northern Alberta. He hated potatoes!

Clifford Plukfelder of Sleepyeye, Minnesota loved fried fish to the point of absolute madness. While eating fried fish, Plukfelder would go into a trance. Pure ecstasy! He died still short of his supreme goal in life. He wanted to fry and eat a whale.
Bruce Randall won the Mr. Universe contest in 1960 in London. Before this he was in the Marine Corp where he distinguished himself in the mess hall. For breakfast Randall consumed 28 eggs, one and a half loaves of bread and two quarts of milk. He liked milk. Ten to sixteen quarts a day.

The city of Atlanta is proud of 478 lb. Doris Zuggpool. This school teacher tried to reduce by cutting down to only 36 pork chops a day. She did get down to a dangerously thin 390 lbs. Unfortunately, she died roller-skating blindfolded in a bus station. She crashed through a brick wall.

Before his death in Dunghill, Vermont, Ernest Shellhorn drank 40 cups of coffee and 55 bottles of beer each day. He drowned on his 31st birthday. Shellhorn probably liked floating holidays.

NOW GO OUT
AND EAT YOURSELF TO DEATH!
GOOD OLD HARVEY

Harvey liked Slivovitz. When he'd drink it his heavy body would tremble and shudder. This Slivovitz is a potent plum brandy. Liquid fire! Other stout souls (or fools) have drunk or eaten strange things from the days of Socrates to our present idiotic times. Ten quarts of milk, thirty turtle eggs, forty blueberry pies, sixty pork chops as well as bicycle tires, broken light bulbs, clam shells and dried toads have been eaten at one sitting. But my favorite is that fellow in Kansas—he ate a sack of Portland cement!

But back to Harvey. He miraculously lived through several gallons of Slivovitz. Before he died of extreme Gullionitis, he dropped a bottle of Slivovitz out of a third-storey window. This by accident, of course. Anyway, the deadly bottle hit the sidewalk and exploded. The fearful blast tore a large gaping hole in the pavement and stunned a nearby dog to death.
GRAVEYARD NEWS ITEMS

CADMUS, OHIO — Rottenwood Cemetery has been closed and may be converted into a golf course. The disturbances there have become intolerable. Each night great hordes of people enter Rottenwood for wild and varied revelries. Tombstones have been stolen, trees felled, mausoleums filled with leaves and set afire and fourteen graves robbed. The grave of Rashly Cornwall Eppinfield was used as a latrine and littered with birth control devices. Enraged citizens of Cadmus now demand the permanent closing of venerable old Rottenwood.

AGONY, TENN. — Senator Brutus Alphonse Jones has defied local and state laws by turning his country estate, Tumble Downs, into a makeshift graveyard. So far, the eccentric senator has buried a horse, five dogs, his enormously fat cook, a barrel of beer and a cigar store Indian. At the time of his arrest, he was busy installing stainless steel grave markers. Jones’ mental state is regarded as sad.

BLASPHEMUS, MASS. — Local rustics here are upset by the far-out activities of the students from nearby Grimsley College. These nitwits have been using Moaning Acres Cemetery as a cross-country race course. Among the outraged townspeople is Henry Clutchpin, a defrocked priest. He claims that “the quick should not be amongst the dead”.
COLD HARBOR, VIRGINIA — Ghouls here dynamited open the burial vault of the Flugg family in Mars Clulu Cadaver Park. Locals have found this decidedly unpleasant. Bodies of three long-dead Fluggs are reported missing. Two coffins were found empty but the coffin of old Professor Epimetrius Flugg contained a disturbing array of worthless stuff—three bullfrogs, seven doughnuts and a bunch of grapes.

SLUGFEST, WISCONSIN — The festering hulk of Ramona Glasscock was removed from her grave in Creeping Shadows Cemetery here in the heart of rural Wisconsin. The grave robbers committed this horrible act last November 17. Later, on December 9, her body was found propped up in a phone booth in the Rattling Bennett Hotel. Authorities were horrified to find her dressed in a scuba diving outfit and clutching a half-frozen dogfish.

BULLINGTON, NORTH DAKOTA — A state of pandemonium exists in the Fillmore Graves Mortuary here. Funeral directors, ash-haulers and shovel artists at the harassed establishment are desperate. It appears that decent funerals can no longer be conducted from Fillmore Graves Mortuary. The reason? The nearby chapter of the North American Noise Lovers’ League and the North Dakota Shouting Society are producing unbearable sounds. As Mayor Will Bury says, “Who needs a hurricane of shrieking at a funeral?”

TANBARK, NEBRASKA — Folks in this quiet rural village are in a shocked and murderous mood after the recent visit of famed writer Cedric Zilch. What they resent are his comments about their local cemetery. Zilch stated that Tanbark’s Gloomfield Cemetery is a dreadful place of fetid odors and unutterable filth. Rapidly growing weeds and rotting trees along with dog-shunned graves give some support to Zilch’s claim.
PIPSISSYW, NEW YORK — A freight train was derailed near here on Halloween last month. Three cattle cars were smashed open, permitting hogs and cows to run madly about. These animals ran amok through Croakus Hills Cemetery. After doing extensive damage to land and monuments, the fear-crazed beasts refused to leave the place. It took two days of heavy work by police and farmers to evacuate the terrified creatures.

LEWDLEY, KANSAS — Local police have arrested Crispin Burnham, funeral director at the Ashley Heights Crematorium. Authorities claim they have discovered evidence indicating that the depraved crematorium manager was selling the bagged ashes of deceased clients to fertilizer distributors in nearby Squawkton.

KRUDBERG, MINN. — The obese body of Cornelius Shekelfilch III exploded today during his funeral at St. Stephanus’ Church. Terrified worshippers fled into the street to escape the smoke and dreadful stench that erupted from the wealthy magnate’s rent carcass. Foreman Al D. Hyde at the Litchrest Cemetery said pranksters obviously broke into the mortuary before dawn and secreted a stink bomb in Shekelfilch’s body. Local juvenile delinquents are receiving rubber-hosings at Krudberg’s 4th precinct station in an effort to discover the perpetrators of this gross atrocity. A two-time offender of known necrophiliac propensities, Robin Graves, is being held for questioning.
HIGH AND MIGHTY

Kermit Stranglemeyer came from a family of great and near great personalities. He frequently made this claim. There was old Judge Otis Stranglemeyer who sent many losers to prison or Death Row.

Then we hear of Dr. Benjamin Stranglemeyer who successfully performed heart surgery on a jaguar, two hyenas, and an orangutan in the London Zoo. He died in Sumatra of snake bite.

Next we’re told of Archbishop Arnold Coates who was a cousin of Kermit’s mother. His Eminence died under questionable circumstances. It was claimed, but never proven, that he fathered the deformed twins of a Boston hotel chambermaid.

Kermit also boasted of an Uncle Brutus Stanglemeyer who reached the level of U. S. Senator from New Hampshire. In 1937, this august political leader disappeared in a Utah brass mine. He was never found nor were the keys he carried to his various secret hoarding places. Also missing and never found was the wife of one of the Senator’s neighbors. According to Kermit, his family was awesome with its great and accomplished members. Kermit himself was and had been an obscure dish washer and clean-up man in a local cafe.

Once I asked Kermit why he was so different from the others in his glorious clan. He put down his coffee cup and turned to gaze vacantly out of a nearby window. Then he faced me and solemnly declared, “Oh, I don’t know—exactly—I guess I’ve just been lucky!”
Bright sunlight filled the streets of Minneapolis, Minnesota, on that early November day when four men were released from the Hennepin County jail. They had each been fined $500 and forced to spend a few days in the cooler. All four were local weird-fantasy fans and their crime was described as “unlawful and idiotic activities in a night-shrouded graveyard.” Their names are John Kobbles, Dick Turney, Smitty Dickson, and Joel Weston. It is doubtful that any of these men will ever again play the fool in venerable old Lakewood Cemetery.

For some years these characters had been fascinated with Lakewood. This cemetery is remarkable in several ways and is exceptionally beautiful. Located at 36th Street and Hennepin Avenue, Lakewood is near Lake Calhoun to the west and Lake Harriet on the east side. The land area is huge and the rolling terrain, winding dirt roads, stately gravestones, fine old crypts and plentiful trees all create a wonderful atmosphere. Natural beauty and pensive gloom pervade this city of the dead. A truly splendid place for avid fanciers of Lovecraftian lore and weird-horror literature.

These four men—Kobbles, Turney, Dickson, and Weston—had decided to enjoy the wonderfully weird atmosphere of Lakewood Cemetery at night by stealth. They would enter undercover and camp there overnight. The plan was to climb over the south wall near the game refuge and enter the graveyard in the early evening darkness. This proved to be somewhat difficult for the four men and the considerable gear they packed. Sleeping bags, flashlights, sandwiches, whisky, and coffee as well as pistols were brought along. Boots, sweaters and gloves were considered advisable for the late October chill.
After an awkward scramble over the wall, the four ghoulish campers went about 200 feet deeper into the dark and silent bone-yard. A flat place between two stone monoliths served as their campsite. The atmosphere here was awesome. For some distance the dirt roads, brooding trees, low hills and ghostly tombstones all appeared spectral and unreal. Only a soft breeze disturbed the dark, lonely isolation, and all of the four men were glad they were part of a group and not alone.

Food and drink were consumed as quiet conversation was enjoyed by the relaxed group. Smitty Dickson played a mournful strain on the violin he'd brought along. Kobbles and Turney talked of Poe, Lovecraft, and other haunters of the dark. Weston smoked his pipe and muttered references to Ed Gein and the Golden Age of Grave Robbing in Scotland from 1800 to 1832. For more than two hours, the huddled foursome enjoyed themselves enormously. Everything was perfect, from the deep shadows and intermittent moon glow to the wind-rustled tree limbs and cool temperature. Then, growing tired, the men reached for their sleeping bags and prepared to sleep—if possible.

A gibbous moon slipped behind a mass of clouds as greater darkness settled on the graveyard. Midnight came and silently dragged by as all remained quiet. Then, suddenly, Kobbles abruptly sat up and whispered, “Great Scott, what’s that?” The others looked as the excited speaker pointed towards the trees near a close-by mausoleum. In the distance a baying hound was heard, thereby increasing their feelings of dread. As the men stared, a vague, bulky shadow moved slowly toward them. Turney then acted. He withdrew his .32-calibre revolver and fired two shots at the dark menace. Shrill screams and yelps filled the air as the wounded form lumbered away and disappeared into the night. “Damn it all, Dick, I think you shot a dog,” shouted John Kobbles. Flashlights were switched on, only to reveal nothing unusual. Just the silence, brooding gloom, scant moonlight, and creeping shadows to depress
the four men. Each felt growing fear and alarm. Then, after about five minutes, fragments of light were seen in the distance amongst the trees and gravestones. Flickering lights and the sound of hushed human voices were heard. Sleep was now impossible and conditions were too disturbing. The furtive four quickly agreed that the time to leave had come. Within minutes, men and supplies were on the move toward the place at the cemetery wall used earlier to enter.

Just when the frightened group had scrambled over the wall and started for home, they were stopped. Three carloads of police commanded the graveyard-loving trespassers to halt. Flashlights, pistols and handcuffs were brought into play. The cops were grim-faced, swift and efficient as they took their captives away. The night’s adventure was over and the ride to jail begun.
LOOK HOMeward,
IF YOU CAN STAND IT

The road was long and arduous but it led me to where I longed to be. Back home in Ridgewood, Wisconsin. Actually, I’d only lived there for seven years, from age 14 to 21, but it was special to me. Once there, I wandered about and enjoyed an unhurried look. The town looked good to me with few changes.

First, I went west on Tenth Street until I reached Grim Avenue. There it was, the Old Shidd House, where the twin brothers Horace and Fuller Shidd lived. Their father, old “Bull” Shidd, had made a fortune selling fertilizer to farmers and feed stores. He was a kindly man who provided his wife, Lotta, and their kids with a splendid home. In later years old Bull and his wife Lotta died of old age and the boys moved to Broken Arm, North Carolina.

Further down Grim Avenue I saw the red brick house of Katherine Ashley. As a boy I’d been in love with beautiful Kathy. She was accidentally hit on her head by a falling tree limb on her eighteenth birthday. She lived but she lost her mind. Started to drink large amounts of Demerara Rum, chant Hindu Mantras and spin around like a dervish in mindless frenzy. Very sad!

Turning off Grim Avenue and over to Oakwood Street, I encountered old man Furst. He was still around after many years of heavy drinking. About four times a year Raymond Elwood Furst would go all to pieces on whisky, wine, beer or after-shave lotion. When sober, Ray Furst was clean, neat, polite and efficient as he worked in his Oakwood Street Pharmacy. Drunk, he was the nastiest, dirtiest,
foulmouthed bum in all of Cretin County. One three-day drunk nearly killed Ray. This experience so badly frightened Ol’ Ray that he quit booze forever. From that time on, he found his happiness in eating seafood, tap-dancing and collecting antique clocks.

Next we strolled down Waterford Road and viewed its squalor. It was uncanny how many of Ridgewood’s losers lived in this once fine but now depressed street. Among those misfits was Helen Flatmore, the village whore who attempted to poison Senator Van Homey, and Frank Glutski the arsonist. This frantic firebug was only caught after setting fire to the local library, Hall’s barber shop and a warehouse full of furniture.
Also worth mentioning was Howard Hinkley, the crazed door-knob thief, and “Brutal Brutus” Jones who robbed and beat up old folks in nursing homes.

Waterford Road was bad news.

After a lunch at Hanover Inn on Bentley Street, I continued my sentimental journey-type tour. On foot past the Tudor Mansion that was home to Ernest Steinbreaker and his wife, Gunhilde. Wealthy and well liked, the Steinbreakers had two teenaged children. Molly, pretty and vivacious at 18, died from a combination of Hawaiian Trichinosis and Siberian Syphilis. Her oddball brother, Brisbane, worked for Maxwell Stenholm, a local crackpot inventor. When their joint efforts to perfect a skull-cooling device for cramming students failed, Brisbane committed suicide. He ate three blueberry pies full of strychnine.

The sun was getting low in the late September sky and the air grew cool and was getting cooler. I knew my visit to dear old Ridgewood would soon be over. As I slowly walked out of the town I glanced at a few more old landmarks. Down Planish Street and past the high school, the dazzling Wisdom Church and the Davis-Greenwater Mortuary.

At the north edge of town I passed Creeping Shadows Cemetery. This graveyard was used by townspeople for furtive and illegal activities. Gambling by flashlights, amorous encounters (condoms all over the place) and an occasional robbing foray. Foot races and drunken riots had also occurred in this blighted boneyard.
Scientific research has revealed the following facts about the average necromaniac:

He is usually male, 5’ 8”, 158 lbs. and about 30. Holding conservative political views and straight-laced sexual attitudes, he likes banjo music (blue grass), cottage cheese sandwiches and bright green socks. Also, in true Lovecraft style, he likes baying hounds, eldritch ruins and gibbous moons for his nighttime search for graveyard goodies.
Recent thrilling discoveries concerning Noah and his famous Ark are to be here noted. It appears that Noah's teen-aged nephew, Clarence Olson, served as First Officer on that animal hauling vessel.

After two weeks at sea, Olson gave notice, quit and cast off in a rubber dingy. "Noah," he said, "I've had my fill of hosing down those blasted animals, breaking up fights between the herons and the hippos, trying to stop the chickens from eating the worms and struggling to keep all the different types of feed straight. By the way, what do Unicorns eat? And some of them animals are getting a bit too friendly. have you ever been hugged by an octopus? I'll tell you, it just ain't natural! I'm sick of this overcrowded, stinking tub! I quit!"

So Clarence Olson, in his little rubber dingy, cast off and made for the New Brunswick coast. When Clarence was two hundred feet from the sad-faced Noah, our boy turned and yelled out, "Oh yeah, and I hope you run into an iceberg!"
Whenever I pass by Creeping Shadows Nursing Home down on Sagmore Street, I think of my days at Binford High School. I was sixteen then and worked part time in this home for aging and decrepit men and women. Some of these old croakers were quite interesting. Working there offered me valuable experiences. Fittingly, Creeping Shadows Nursing Home was situated just one block from Old Rottenwood Cemetery.

My duties there included mopping floors, serving food, shoveling coal into the basement furnace and opening and closing windows. I also fed the cat, emptied trash cans and vacuumed rugs. This noble work made me feel important.
Otto Runquist

One special inmate was old Mr. Otto Runquist. He was a frail, bird-like man of 82 who grinned a lot. His main claim to fame was a long career selling shoe polish and shellac, and being the only brother of a famous Arch Bishop. No one was ever able to prove conclusively that this Arch Bishop Runquist ever existed at all. However, old Otto continued to smile and bask in his claim to family glory.

Bradshaw

Then there was Josephine Bradshaw and her aura of mystery. She professed to be a white witch and a highly developed trance medium. Old now, and crippled with arthritis, Josephine read books on psychic phenomena and practiced her own form of mysticism. Some of her weird rituals and bizarre costumes were both laughable and pitiful. Many of the others there at Creeping Shad-
ows Nursing Home were made uneasy by her disturbing ways. I got along well with this lady and her weirdness didn’t bother me.

After some months she began to claim to be the only sister of Lady Ashton of Brimsley Hall in Devon, England. If anyone showed disbelief in Josephine’s story regarding her relationship to Lady Ashton, she would blow up. In a rage Josephine Bradshaw was dangerous as she thrashed about with her cane, breaking lamps and windows and knocking over tables. A fearful human hurricane she was!

She died one night after eating nine hard-boiled eggs and drinking a pint of “Old Statesman” whiskey. Very sad!

_The Old Captain_

Let me tell you about “Old Captain Huddleston”. His real name was Rufus K. Huddleston, and he’d grown up in Dismal Acres, New Jersey. In past years, this aging rustic had served a hitch in the U.S. Navy and had worked on Great Lakes ore boats. As for the title “Old Captain”, he was certainly “Old” at 74, but his claim of being a “Captain” was never proven.

Huddleston was well liked and fitted in well with everyone at Creeping Shadows Nursing Home. His tales of adventure at sea and Huddleston-heroism were enjoyed but not always believed. Clad in his usual attire of Navy peacoat and yachting cap, Rufus K. was an unforgettable sight. I always liked the old man and showed him due respect. It was fun to have the captain with us at the home. We came to regard Old Captain Huddleston as being in a class with Lord Nelson, Captain Kidd and Horace Bixby.

The end came for Rufus K. one dark gray day in late November. He fell off a bridge into Bassit Creek while sailing a toy ship. He Drowned! A sad death for Old Captain Huddleston.
Old man Rashley Eppenfield was a desiccated bag of bones. His skin, hair and grim facial expression were all dark like the gloom in his Creeping Shadows bedroom. His personality was pleasant enough and I liked him. It was his claim to have once been the Dean of the Grappleton Law School in Camden, New Jersey.

Yeah, Ol’ Rashley loved to talk about Big Time lawyers he’d known, as well as famous Senators and Supreme Court Justices he’d known in past years. These dignitaries had often come to Eppenfield for advice and help in their many complex problems. Big-hearted Rashley Eppenfield was always glad to help those engaged in various aspects of Law.

He had dozens of photos, letters, medals and plaques from prominent people, all honoring “The Great Eppenfield”. Awards aplenty had come his way. He was truly “A Great Man”.

His death was particularly sad. Cancer claimed Rashley Eppenfield at the age of 82. He was halfway finished writing a book entitled “The Strange Laws in Sumatra”.

Another star at Creeping Shadows was Dr. Heinrich Von Steinbreaker of Munich, Paris and other places. “Henry”, as we usually called him, had his room on the second floor, overlooking the neat, garden-like backyard. We’d often gather in Henry’s room of an evening to laugh, tell stories and drink his Demerara Rum. This volatile beverage was smuggled in against House Rules. Loud and ribald fun was the theme in Steinbreaker’s quarters. The tales and claims of glory told by Henry were gems of fantasy with a “Believe It or Not” flavor.
Henry was a proud man and for good reasons. He, Dr. Heinrich Von Steinbreaker, had been for some years Europe’s leading neurologist and supreme brain surgeon. Paris, Edinburgh and Budapest had honored him. Munich, Berlin and Dusseldorf, in Steinbreaker’s own Germany, worshipped him as a scientific marvel. The world had been enriched by this glorious man.

As we sat in Henry’s room and looked at him, it was difficult to accept his claims. He was a plain, faded-looking man lacking in impressive good looks. Still, he did have a certain charm. He was the Eminent Doctor Heinrich Von Steinbreaker.

Irene Philpotts

The largest, brightest and most desirable room at the Home was occupied by Irene Philpotts. She had once been a minor success on the stage and still retained a degree of beauty. Her face and figure were still good but any force or charm in her voice was gone. Cigarettes and whiskey had not helped her sandpaper-like vocal chords. Now, at 82, she and her domicile were a cluttered, garish dump. Bed and chairs littered with clothes, blankets, playbills and photos all related to the past. Past glory, past triumphs and long dead loves. Irene was a fading star or, at least, a dim bulb.

I liked her okay, but most of the others were indifferent. They didn’t really like her pose as a Former Great of stage brilliance.

Before her death from a heart attack at age 83, Irene Philpotts became a spaced-out relic. She shouted, cried and waltzed about in her room. Claimed that she could have been a more desirable and talented beauty than the great and famous Lillie Langtry. Cruel fate and cruel people had conspired to hold back and defeat the lovely and talented Irene Philpotts. Oh, how sad, how sad!
Edith Lumpkin-Jones

In a place as bizarre as Creeping Shadows Nursing Home, you would expect to encounter a religious fanatic. We had one and her name was Edith Lumpkin-Jones. This severe and dried-up old rag bag was a human prayer wheel. She was a Demon of Righteousness!

Edith never smiled or responded to any friendly approach from anyone in the Home. Other people meant little or nothing to Edith. Her entire life was focused on worship of God, constant prayer and the shame of her past sins. When much younger, she had once drank a glass of wine, glanced at a copy of *Playboy* magazine and allowed an amorous building inspector to touch her left breast. These dreadful sins tormented her mind and soul night and day. Later in life, when she became a member of The Shining Wisdom Church, Edith went off the deep end and became a monster of religious mania. Church, scripture study and prayer were the supreme everything for “Saint” Edith. She loved God and nothing else.
One night on Halloween a ten year old boy, dressed in a bright red devil costume, peered into Edith’s bedroom window. This unexpected horror terrified poor Edith Lumpkin-Jones. She died of fright.

**Hellen Ramsgate**

She was still quite pretty at 85 and she made sure that people knew it. I speak of Hellen Ramsgate, from Providence, Rhode Island. She came to Creeping Shadows Nursing Home in March of 1965 and soon became one of our star personalities. Her white hair, pink clothes and regal bearing were nice enough, but her dancing about and strident claims of past glamour and glory were often irritating. Hellen was a very special lady, so she declared, and in years past was as brilliant as Madame Blavatski and as beautiful and talented as Lillie Langtry. This was rather difficult to accept in the modest atmosphere of our small-time domicile. A sense of humor helped us to endure Hellen’s hauteur.

As the daughter of a former Prime Minister to Sumatra, Hellen had been raised in Providence’s famous Ramsgate Hall. She had received honorary degrees from Brown and Yale Universities. Her first marriage to Senator Slaghorn and her second marriage to Dr. Mudridge both failed. Then the assassination of her peerless father resulted in her decline. She was brought down to the level of “The Common Herd”. Poor Hellen!

**Farnsworth Hardley**

A bottle of Slivovitz, an interview with Jack Dempsey and a day at Coney Island are all good things and each enjoyed, at one time or another, by Farnsworth Hardley. He was a colorful and entertaining part of the creeping Shadows menagerie. His enormous pride in his work and past accomplishments provided us with many laughs. Farnsworth was a human cartoon.
This gloating clown had spent his entire working years as a glorified janitor, a broom jockey supreme. According to Hardley, he had studied Custodial Science at the Brinton School of Property Care, worked as an apprentice janitor at Leadpole Industries and then at Princeton University. He had served with distinction for 35 years there. During this long time, Farnsworth had been situated in the main library at Princeton. His work reached such a high degree of excellence that two deans, the president of the university and a prominent senator had all lauded his work. Before his retirement, Hardley received an honorary degree, newspaper and magazine coverage and induction into The Royal Order of the Golden Mop. Farnsworth Hardley had achieved the highest honors afforded any janitor in recorded history. Supreme Glory!

_Cadmus Langhorn_

His full name was Cadmus Rippen Langhorn, but we usually called him Professor Langhorn, or simply “Professor”. The show of respect was due to his flair with words and his rag-tag scholarship. Cadmus was a collector of strange objects and a tireless keeper of records.

Langhorn’s room at Creeping Shadows was crammed with boxes, files, book cases, a roll-top desk and a bronze bust of Oliver Cromwell. His store of records was prodigious and included such rare items as the number of pawnshops in Calcutta, the number of pianos owned by the United States Navy and the amount of blueberry pies consumed each year in Michigan. His collection of museum pieces was awesome. Viewing these treasures was a profound thrill.

There was a black lacquered box once owned by John Quincey Adams, a ceramic pipe smoked at the Battle of Chancerlorsville by General James Longstreet and a baby picture of Henry Ford. Also found in Langhorn’s horde of curios was a bedspread once owned by Martha Washington, a pair of rubber boots recovered from the stomach of a shark, a toy sailboat once loved and used by Lord Ber-
trand Russell and a wooden spoon used by Florence Nightingale to feed a dying Bishop.

Seeing the wonderful things acquired by the Professor was a thrilling experience. We were honored to have the Great Cadmus Langhorn in our midst.

Death came to the Professor quite suddenly one afternoon. He'd been standing out in the backyard during a rainstorm when a bolt of lightning struck him. Cadmus was found wet, stiff and well baked. Dead from lightning. That day we said good bye to The Great Langhorn.

Old Rottenwood

A block down from Creeping Shadows Nursing Home was the main entrance to venerable Old Rottenwood Cemetery. Many of Creeping Shadows residents were buried there after their death. Under
the moist dirt of this ancient boneyard rested a multitude of bloated monstrosities.

For those who loved an atmosphere of weird trees, rolling terrain, dark crypts, rotting tombstones and overall gloom, this graveyard was perfect. The entire place was like something out of *Weird Tales*.

Over the years many grotesque things occurred in this City of the Dead. Most of the townspeople shunned Old Rottenwood Cemetery and dreaded the ghosts and night gaunts sometimes seen there.

Various newspapers and magazines had published articles about dark and sinister things seen or reported in Rottenwood. Terrible and revolting things! Damnable, hellish things!

The imposing mausoleum of Senator Brisbane Stagshead was desecrated with oxblood and camel droppings. Groups of crass college students would meet at night in this blighted graveyard to get drunk, smoke pot and dance naked. Damaged grave stones, mutilated trees, vile graffiti, scattered beer cans and used condoms made extra work for the cemetery workers.

Sadly, I remember the day when a mysterious fire destroyed Creeping Shadows Nursing Home. Two years later Rottenwood Cemetery was closed down and sealed shut. This wonderfully atmospheric old graveyard was lost forever. The graves were disinterred and relocated and the land was converted into an amusement park. A sad day for many of us Old Relics of a bygone day.
Life is one thing that most of us cling to with great tenacity. There are, of course, some who decide to be done with their own life and so proceed to bring about an abrupt entrance into the next world. Suicide! Some of the methods of self-destruction are bizarre indeed.

James Greenwater attempted suicide by entering a cage housing two lions. At first the big cats lazily ignored the intruder. However, when Greenwater threw a jug of water into the lions’ faces, the beasts quickly gave a loud and convincing show of annoyance. Lion teeth and claws are quite sharp, as the would-be suicide soon discovered. Before death could occur, alerted Zoo Keepers rescued the foolish man. Thereafter, James Greenwater was seen as a very subdued character who rarely ever smiled.

A large, round, bald head was Clarence Plukfelder’s most obvious characteristic. This feature played a prominent part in his successful act of Do-It-Yourself dying. Being a carpenter and skilled with a hammer, Plukfelder proceeded to drive nails into his head. And this without the approval of the Carpenters’ Union.

Not everyone likes their job. Roberta Thornbox hated her job as a waitress and single mother of two Hell-Raising teenaged boys. One day she killed herself dead. It was not easy. First she stripped naked and lay down in a snowbank. It didn’t work. Then she hanged herself, but the rope broke. Finally her efforts to end her unhappy life met with success. She drank a half and half mixture of Oil of Wintergreen and Chloroform Liniment.
Old Professor Dudley P. Longstreet gave the impression of being a happy man. He was not! His work at the Rentharpian College was an ever increasing burden, his only child, a son, was a disgrace and his wife was an ill-tempered iceberg. Prof. Longstreet’s work, home life and marriage were bad. Suicide was the answer, he decided. Not wanting to leave this world in any ordinary manner, the professor chose a novel way of departure. He clad himself in a medieval suit of armor and stood outdoors during a violent electrical rainstorm. A flashing bolt of lightning struck him in his steel suit and baked him instantly. He stormed out of this life, you could say, in a neat metal coffin.
We who collect things from beer cans to oil paintings of American Indians are often a strange lot. There seems to be no limit to the variety of things people will collect and no limit to the efforts and expense collectors will resort to. In my case, it’s books I find irresistible and my home is crammed with them. I’m a bookworm of incredible “worminess”. However, my friend Brutus Stonefield has me beat by a mile. He collects almost everything and his home is a curious museum of oddities. Few indeed are the collectors who exceed in fervor this bizarre pack rat. Every time I visit him he delights in showing me his weird assortment of treasures. Foremost among Stonefield’s trophies is a wooden bowl once used by Thomas Jefferson to feed his dog Herman. Then there’s a pair of green socks worn by Albert Fish when he was electrocuted. The collection goes on and on as Brutus Stonefield continues his proud display of marvels. A faded nude baby photo of President Warren G. Harding, three teeth from the jaw of a shark that attacked Benjamin Franklin, a stethoscope owned by the murderous Dr. Crippen and a bullet removed from the body of General James Longstreet. Thrilling and marvelous are the things gleefully shown in Stonefield’s shrine of past glories. Perhaps the greatest of all is an ornate silver box containing a squirrel skull once given to a highborn lady as a gift from Oscar Wilde. Sad to relate, she refused this lovely gift and broke off forever from Wilde. She was no longer “wild” about Wilde!
For over six years I was closely associated with “The Great Stonefield” and lived in the shadow of God’s highest pinnacle. This man and his stupendous career have left me forever marked. I have seen the glory and walked with the divine.

Flavius Trilby Stonefield was a man singularly blessed. The only child of wealthy aristocrats, he enjoyed every possible advantage life in twentieth-century America could offer. His handsome face, fine physique, and lordly bearing commanded universal respect. All of the great ones, from Damon and Pythias to Laurel and Hardy, took a back seat to “Stonefield the Magnificent”.

REDWINE
At age 21, Stonefield decided that the world of business was not for him. With a B.A. degree from Yale and a medal of honor from Cumberland College, his school days were over. Refusing an offer of a high position in his father’s business, the Hinky Dinky Toy Company, he embarked on a career of his own design. Since his hobby of weightlifting and muscle-building had produced for him an exceptionally fine physique, his course was clear. He would be a professional strongman and a monarch of muscular magnificence.

Billed as “The Great Stonefield”, our hero’s stage presence was electrifying. His thick, ruggedly formed muscular arms were especially impressive. His act began with an exhibition of strength feats. Iron bars and sheets of metal were bent and torn apart. Then heavy weights were lifted and tossed about with incredible ease. After loud cheers and applause, the stage was cleared and new equipment brought forth. A posing platform with a black velvet backdrop was placed center stage.

Standing on the platform and under dramatic spotlights, Stonefield stood motionless. Then, as a record player played “Onward to Victory”, he slowly moved from one heroic pose to another. Stonefield’s arms glowed as they writhed and flexed in all their mighty magnificence. Next came the finale. As a lovely young lady stood left stage and sang “I’ll See You in My Dreams”, the wonderful muscle monarch flowed through his final act of posing. The enthralled audience watched in worshipful awe as the music continued and the poses flowed on. The dazzling beauty of Stonefield’s arms cast a spell of almost unbearable fascination. A new star on life’s stage had appeared and stupendous glory had arrived in the world.

Rapidly Stonefield’s fame spread throughout America, the western hemisphere, and eventually the entire world. Books and magazines featured photos and articles about Flavius Trilby Stonefield. Radio, television, and movies glorified him. “The Great Stonefield” and “Stonefield the Magnificent”, as he was called, flourished.
frenzied devotion to and worship of Stonefield blazed forth. Poems and symphonies were written to honor him. Everyone from clerks and storekeepers to law professors, Supreme Court justices, and archbishops met at worldwide Stonefield shrines. Fantastic and even insane were the levels of admiration seen in all localities. Men and boys regarded Stonefield’s arms as God-like and the ladies saw these muscular appendages as divine. Many suicides were committed by frustrated people who couldn’t gain the love and attention of the great Stonefield. To some, an opportunity to see, feel or kiss these golden arms was tantamount to being in paradise. In all of the world’s history, nothing had ever inspired and thrilled the populace as had Stonefield's mighty arms. The flames of extreme love and worship consumed the masses.
Then it happened. An unfortunate accident befell our hero and the show was over. The glorious days of “The Great Stonefield” were now finished. The curtain was drawn on the mad, muscular marvel and a new era begun. The accident occurred when Stonefield was searching for an old trophy in his hall closet. A heavy box fell from a high shelf and struck a stunning blow to his head. Upon regaining consciousness, Stonefield had undergone a profound change. In almost every way, he became a different man. The past was completely gone and a new lifestyle born.

He took the name Redwine. Professor Ramon Durango Redwine. His central interest was science and inventing. First, he invented a skull-cooling device for hardworking students. Then a steam-driven yo-yo was developed by the pulsating professor. Mentholated peanuts were perfected, along with stainless-steel overcoats and whistling coffins. Redwine’s genius flourished and the world accepted his wonderful inventions. Stonefield and his muscle-worshiping madness were dead, finished and long gone. Redwine was now in power and doing well. The future looked bright.

One day in November of 1974, I visited the professor. Redwine grinned and danced about as he gleefully talked of his inventions and future planned projects. As he raved, I thought to myself that he seemed a little odd. More than “a little odd”, he seemed damned bizarre and grotesque. Crazy as hell!

He showed me an enormous cask of murky red liquid. “This is my new super wine,” he babbled. “It is my best discovery.” I was informed that this was Redwine Elixir. This special drink would give super brain power to any and all persons who drank it. These claims sounded goofy to me, but there was no stopping the excited professor. He continued to shout and dash about his laboratory in a frenzy. Fear and alarm gripped me as I watched him climb up a nearby ladder. What madness will come next, I wondered. Redwine then screamed, “Great Gawd A’mighty, I’m heading for Glory!” Then, as I stared in horror, the maniac hurled himself into the cask of wine.
Shattering chaos! The noise, the awful smell and overflowing tub were fearful. The professor had sunk to the bottom and remained out of sight. My mind and body were frozen in horror at witnessing this insanity.

Some moments later, Logan Berry, Redwine’s butler, attempted a rescue. Too late! The great man was dead. In fact, both men were dead. Flavius Trilby Stonefield and Ramon Durango Redwine were gone. Dead and gone and now elevated to greatness.

Radiant figures in history.
“Stupendous Glory” was achieved when —

1 — Katherine Bixby of Black Hole, North Carolina tap-danced nonstop for sixteen hours. She lost 14 lbs. and 1½ inches in height. Her feet were red and swollen for five days.

2 — Clarence “Studhorse” Brown was given the BIG TOOL AWARD for 1948 in Baltimore, Maryland. He got his trophy from the Snap-on tool company.

3 — Fillmore Graves, the foremost mortician in Agony, Iowa buried a full-sized African elephant in Rottenwood Cemetery. Townspeople were irate when Graves called this outrage “No Big Deal”.

4 — Life in some nursing homes might be dull but things at Blotski’s Rest Home were plenty exciting. The problem was old Louie Steinborn, a retired owner of a dump ground, who converted his room at Blotski’s into a junkyard. Great piles of lumber, wire, tires, barrels, bottles, paint cans, pipes and bricks occupied nearly all the space in Louie’s room. When forced to empty his room or vacate, Old Louie Steinborn hanged himself. Sad!

5 — Dr. Rashley Lustmore of Smegma, North Dakota tried to teach sex education in a local high school. It was a mistake of great magnitude. Enraged local citizens dynamited Dr. Lustmore’s car, castrated his dog, smashed his windows, burned down his garage and poured acid on his comic book collection.
6 — Collectors are, by and large, a strange lot. They collect anything that can be moved and kept in a secure place. And expense doesn’t deter these frenzied pack rats. Such a one was Phineas Underwood of Ratchet, Vermont. He was a collector of stones. His house and two-acre yard was littered with hundreds of stones. Every type of stone, except one, was to be found on Underwood’s property. Then, he decided to acquire the one missing stone for his great rock farm. Tombstone!

7 — Louis Cyr of Quebec, Canada was a man of superhuman strength around the year 1900. This massive mound of muscle performed feats of weightlifting that were almost miraculous. However, the great sorrow of Cyr’s life was that he could never insert his thumb into his ear and hold himself out at arm’s length.
My friend Ted Burkett emptied his glass of port, lit a cigar and continued his amazing account of the Avery tragedy.

“I hadn’t seen Morris Avery in almost three years when the letter came. It was brief and to the point. He’d just returned from Asia and would like me to visit him as soon as possible. Fortunately, this was easy for me to arrange, so within four days I joined him in Milwaukee.”

“You encountered no opposition from your wife?” I questioned, knowing how demanding she could be.

“No. Helen offered little resistance.” Assuring me that he’d handled her successfully, Ted went on with his story.

“The drive down to Milwaukee was pleasant enough. As the car rolled on, I thought of our many years of friendship—years in school and afterwards in business. My establishment of the Burkett Tile Company, and Avery’s enormously successful publishing house. Marriage for me, and continued bachelorhood for Avery. With some degree of envy I thought of how his lifestyle allowed him ample time and money to travel to outlandish places and see the Back of Beyond.

“Soon my reliable old Buick had me at Avery’s door. Two dull thuds of his knocker resulted in the sudden appearance of Morris Avery himself. I was given a warm and enthusiastic welcome.”

At this point, Ted Burkett and I refilled our glasses with more port and checked the supply of cigars. He was now getting to the best part of his story, and I was eager to get all the salient features.
“Avery had us in his study within minutes and promptly got down to the business of his recent trip. And a damn strange business it was!”

Having some knowledge of Avery’s odd personality and accomplishments, I easily followed Burkett’s precise narrative.

“For some considerable time I just sat in Avery’s fine study and listened to him tell of his ten months in India, Burma and Ceylon. The six months in India were by far the most rewarding insofar as learning and acquiring esoteric lore.

“Avery reaffirmed his reasons for making the Asian trip. To collect rare items for his private weird museum, develop certain physical powers, and most important of all to enhance and expand his psychic abilities. In Madras he bought an ornate silver box containing three mummified toes of Shree Ramchandra Dutt, the celebrated avatar. A short stay in Pondicherry enabled Avery to acquire an urn filled with ash from a burned-out Kali temple and a skull of Chaitanyas’ favorite goat.

“Bengal and the Punjab proved to be the best areas for Avery’s quest. While in and near Calcutta, Professor Gopal Mukerjee aided Avery in many ways. A trip up the Hoogly River offered a chance to study various ascetic monks, Swamis, Holy Men and Sadhus. Avery and Professor Mukerjee visited Rangha Ashram and the hermitage of Swami Vishwananda.

“At the Holy City of Brindavan, Morris Avery saw and heard many wonderful things. Prodigious physical feats and awesome displays of mind-force were almost commonplace. Here it was that one could witness Sadhus sleeping on single wires stretched between two trees, monks sitting in the lotus position meditating while immersed in ice-cold river water, while others rolled around in pits filled with ashes and cow dung. Some were undergoing the ordeal of thirst while surrounded by ample water supplies. En trance Holy Men, seeking greater spiritual powers, were hopping
about in a trench full of venomous snakes. Their screams of ecstasy-pain could be heard a half-mile away.

“Avery was both thrilled and horrified by the frenzied efforts of the various Sadhus to gain control of the carnal self and mastery of the mind. Soul Force was the lofty goal and relentless were the strivings toward that end.

“Holiness, too, was much sought after. Before leaving the Holy City of Brindavan and its fantastic array of spiritual fervor, Avery witnessed further marvels. There was the howling monk, Deva Nag, who danced for six hours each day in honor of the Bod Siva, thereby gaining merit. Followers of Hanuman, the monkey god, lived in trees and ate bananas. Ascetics who entranced themselves before driving nails into their bodies. One man, naked except for green socks and a fez, crawled on his belly for a distance of eight miles a day. Astral Projection (out-of-body soul travel) was claimed by some, as was clairvoyance, mind-reading and the producing of apports.

“The time came for Avery to return to Calcutta. It was his intention to stay with Professor Mukerjee for a fortnight before boarding the ship for home. This plan worked out even better than expected since the Professor was able to provide Avery with special yoga training. Within this two-week period Avery studied and mastered certain techniques which resulted in phenomenal advancement. Morris Avery thus returned home as a sort of super-sadhu—a man of marvelous mental and physical powers.”

It was growing late and Ted Burkett had to leave. But before he departed he added a few more words pertaining to his visit with Avery.

“You know, it was a pleasure seeing Morris again and hearing of his adventures in India. Still, I felt uneasy and disturbed at the look of the man. His boast of having become some kind of superman and his sudden chanting of mantras and ecstatic dancing about was somehow appalling. Unbalanced and unhealthy!”
We shook hands and said goodbye. I didn’t see Burkett again for almost a year.

Several months passed with me occasionally hearing from Burkett and Burkett seeing Avery. During this time Morris Avery stayed in his home completely absorbed in weird, fanatical practices. Physically, he developed to the point of being able to meditate in tanks of freezing water. He was capable of piercing or burning his flesh without feeling pain. Also, he could now live for weeks without more food than a daily doughnut. His body took on the appearance of a rag-bag full of walnuts. It was altogether frightful!

His mind and spirit had also undergone fearful changes. Clairvoyance, precognition, rigid trance states and the producing of apports were increasingly easy for Avery. Some few observers even claimed that he now emitted an eerie violet glow. He was rapidly losing his humanness.

Burkett and I had both became occupied with our respective projects and thought little of Avery. Then the papers and other news services featured the story of the fire that destroyed the Morris Avery estate. The home and all it contained were lost. Totally and completely destroyed. Avery apparently perished in the holocaust.

One day I was having lunch in Reynaldo’s Restaurant when I saw Burkett enter. It had been months since last I’d seen him and even longer since the dreadful fire. I looked at Burkett but didn’t like what I saw. He looked awful. I called out to him and he joined me. We ate in silence before he got around to talking about the Avery tragedy.

“The death of Morris was a terrible blow to me and recent events have been even more upsetting,” said Burkett as he toyed with a half-eaten piece of pie. He really looked bad and I didn’t expect to hear anything encouraging from him. I watched his ashen features and listened as he continued to talk.

“You can see I’m nervous as hell and down twenty pounds. I’m drained and shocked and don’t know quite what to do about it. It
started two weeks ago that damned night of Thursday, November 6th.” After a pause, I urged him to tell me more about it, if he cared to.

“I woke up around 11:30 to a beastly banging on my front door. Annoyed and somewhat alarmed, I put on a robe and went down. Cautiously opening the door I found...nothing. Not a soul was in sight. But a package was in sight. It was resting squarely on the threshold.

“A cold wind tore at me as I snatched up the box and closed the door. Going directly into my study, I placed the mysterious box on a table and began to open it. Just one layer of paper covered the damned thing.

“When I saw what it was I froze in my tracks. A sick, dizzy feeling gripped me. It was horrible! I almost fell over as I stared at the loathsome object. It was a ghastly human head. The head of Morris Avery! The most shattering thing about it was its show of lingering life. Its eyes blinked and its drooling mouth grinned at me.”
I always liked Lady Katherine Ashley of Charlottesville, Virginia. Her aristocratic bearing coupled with a kind and generous nature made her position in Society secure. She was liked and respected throughout the old Dominion State.

Unfortunately, Lady Ashley’s odd hobby of collecting stones eventually led to her downfall. Her last days were spent in a maximum security Mad House. Very sad indeed!

For many years, people were amused and puzzled by Lady Ashley’s relentless search for more and more stones and rocks of all description. Piles of sand and boxes of gravel were also found on her property. Her house and spacious Estate became a grotesque, cluttered morass of rocks.

Finally, she went to the extremes that ruined her. She began to roam about graveyards at night stealing grave markers. With hired confederates, Lady Ashley removed tombstones from Cemeteries to be added to her ever growing collection. The day of her death, she drank two quarts of whiskey.

Fittingly, you might say she was “stoned” to the very end.
His name was Bruno and he was rather large—two hundred and ten pounds of Saint Bernard dog. He was always hungry and consumed food like a runaway vacuum cleaner. Bruno demanded dessert—a big scoop of cottage cheese. Another dog, a terrier who lived in Seattle and responded to the name Cletus, was quite ordinary except that he wore thick wool sweaters and would not sleep unless he was covered with a blanket.

Mulford, a stocky bulldog living in Philadelphia, was a music lover who would howl and sway to any and all types of music. But he loved bluegrass banjo best of all. Upon hearing “Blue Moon of Kentucky” or “Horn Rim Valley Riot” Mulford would spin around and around at a furious rate of speed. Finally becoming dizzy and spent, Mulford would collapse and remain in a stupor for an hour or more.

Old “Duke” was a lovable spaniel who lived near Dunghill Cemetery. Every day he'd leave home and report for duty at Dunghill. Duke love watching men dig graves, mow grass, eat lunch and conduct funerals. One sad afternoon, when he was 14 years old and considering retirement, old Duke was struck by lightning. After the rainstorm, his wet and half-baked body was solemnly buried near the imposing tomb of Senator Brutus Alphonse Jones.
THOUGHTS WHILE SHAVING

One doesn’t have to eat a whole cow to know what beef tastes like and a man who sells spoons in Georgia has no guarantee he’ll live to be 100!

James Crickenham was a success in Boredom, Massachusetts. Being rich, handsome and the owner of seven shotguns didn’t hurt him, either—unless you’d seen his wife. She isn’t here mostly.

The wacky world of collectors was stunned by the exploits of Wilbriskin Clutchpin. This daemon from Detroit acquired a hoard of door knobs second to none—and all stolen. One thousand nine hundred and sixty four assorted specimens. Clutchpin went to jail and the University of Michigan Special Collections got the marvelous door fixtures. Happily, the loyal door knobs won’t tell or grieve beyond more.
“Aw, man, you talk about strange; I know all about strange. Let’s talk about Rufus Alvin Tiller. He really was strange!”

Having said this, I just sat back and looked at my companions, Cadmus Langhorn and his girl friend, Helen Ramsgate. We were having lunch in the Skull and Bones Inn, near Dismal Acres, New Jersey. After we had our coffee and pie we reminisced about old times.

“Yeah, Joe,” said Cadmus, “I agree Ol’ Rufus was a different breed of cat.” After a short pause, Cadmus continued his thoughts on Rufus Alvin Tiller. “Yeah, I first met Ol’ Rufus in Binford High School. He said that he wanted to do something unusual and even unique in his life. One summer, he went out West to stay with his uncle Zeb Hillgren in Utah, and worked briefly in a brass mine. Later that same year he worked as an elevator operator in a one-storey paint factory.
“Helen, you knew Rufus way back in high school, didn’t you?”

“Yes, I sure did,” said Helen. “Ol’ Rufus used to insist on sleeping with his head facing North and his feet aimed South. It was his belief that a constant flow of magnetic force travelled from the North Pole to the Equator and should be allowed to pass through our bodies unimpeded, from our head down and out through our feet. Without this plan, we could suffer dreadful nerve damage.”

After another short pause, Cadmus offered more Tiller information.

“Yeah, Rufus Tiller was a fantastic study in weird, curious and sometimes idiotic lore. Like his concern for what he called the unnecessary cruel treatment of lobsters.”

The cooking alive of lobsters in great iron caldrons in Maine and other East Coast sea food plants caused Tiller great anguish. He felt the pain of all those ill-fated shellfish. His letter to Congress and President Truman failed to change the life (or death) of lobsters. While all this concern for the welfare of lobsters seemed of great importance to Tiller, it fell short with most of his friends.

In the Spring of 1958, Rufus became desperately unhappy. A lowlife criminal broke into Rufus’ apartment and stole his prized collection of Mutt and Jeff comic books. This event plunged Tiller into a pit of despair. He attempted to destroy himself by drinking a glass containing Oil of Wintergreen and Chloroform Liniment. Last minute efforts saved him and the great (but weird) Rufus Tiller lived.

I remember one time when Ol’ Rufus claimed he was visited by an Angel at around 2:30 A.M. Yeah, he said that this Angel appeared in a glowing light, smiling and clad in a London Fog raincoat and red tennis shoes. The entire experience was radiant and awesome.

Tiller was told that this Heavenly visitor was named Gunhild the Glorious, and that she came with good news especially for him.

“Rufus,” she said. “When you ascend to Heaven, you’ll be thrilled to find that there is an unlimited supply of German potato salad, free bicycle repairs and the singing of hymns and shouting glory is optional.”
As Gunhild left to return to Heaven, she said to Rufus, “Tiller, always pay your taxes, be kind to dogs and honor the Red, White and Blue.”

The last we heard of Rufus, he was in Paris, France. He died there of Stonito Gullianitis, a rare kidney disease first seen in a remote part of Sumatra.

Addenda

Before closing shop on this account of the splendidly weird life of Rufus Alvin Tiller, let us consider his last, sad days in France.
Tiller's time in Paris was spent with his French cousin, Jacques Te Lair, who owned several hardware stores. Te Lair convinced Rufus to do as he did, wear Maximum Security Pants. These pants were made of heavy canvas, stitched with copper wire and had pockets containing a compass, a radio and a can of mace. The stainless steel jock strap was optional.

Tiller and Te Lair worked together to perfect three of Rufus' inventions:

1) Artificial water
2) Invisible light
3) Silent noise

These marvels could be a tremendous help to the film industry and the military. Sad to say, these things failed to be accepted and eventually were abandoned.

For a few days before Tiller died of Gullianitis, heroic measures were taken to cure his awful disease. Soaking himself in a vat of sauerkraut did not effect a cure or prevent Rufus Alvin Tiller's death. Very sad!!!
Old Ben Crudley was certainly a “well rounded personality” with his 226 lbs. on a 5’2” frame. He liked everything from model railroads and Mark Twain books to antique bottle collecting and Civil War relics. But above all he loved to fish. To Ben, fishing was an enormously fascinating passion that surely must be on the agenda in Heaven. One day, while fishing on a Northern Minnesota lake, Ben caught something so shocking that he nearly fell overboard. The big “fish” he reeled in turned out to be a naked, badly decomposed corpse. It was identified as the body of a Dr. Chester Crankshaft who had been missing for three years. To overcome this profoundly disturbing experience Ben Crudley retired from his job, moved to North Carolina and drank himself to death.

Talk about ill-fated families—the Gootch family of Lancaster, Pennsylvania must be unique. Brisbane Gootch fell into Canyon Coyote and was never found. Alice Gootch was shot and killed by a deer hunter while searching for mushrooms in a Maryland woods. Elmer Gootch drowned in Lake Erie when his canoe mysteriously dissolved a mile from shore. Oscar Gootch died from dog bites when he tried to dynamite the Law Library on the Yale campus.

And that’s not all! Mildred and Rufus Gootch, parents of all the aforementioned Gootches were killed in a freak dance hall tragedy. The dance floor collapsed under the heavy pounding of frenzied feet of 329 senior citizen jitterbugs. Only one person lived thru this terrible event. Horace Tillingast of Dunghill, Wisconsin survived the Dance of Death only to spend his remaining years in a laughing academy.
THE WALL OF ZUNG

It was in June of 1934 when the University of Virginia sent Professor Hanson Von Schlitz and his wife, Armadilla, to China. Their purpose was to engage in an important archaeological project. This digging was to be conducted in a very remote area north of Peking. The hoped-for result was to uncover the Wall of Zung Mi Toy which dated back to 3000 B.C.

After some six months of grinding labor the noble Wall of Zung Mi Toy was uncovered and examined. On one section was discovered ancient Chinese words carved into the rough surface of the wall. These words, it was later determined, had been spoken and gloriously preserved by the philosopher Quang Tung and his disciple Hing Lui Fung. Marvelous and wise, these words declared: “There is always someone to screw up the works!” Oh, how true, how true! For thousands of years true!

Before leaving the digging site and China, a curious bit of news came to light. Proof was discovered that Quang Tung and Hing Lui Fung died together in a tragic way. They were trapped in a burning building—a warehouse full of furniture.
People whose money was lodged in the Camberwell Bank in Agony, Ohio could feel wonderfully secure. It was safe! The financial wizard in charge there was Mulford B. Scharnhorst. A more stalwart leader would be difficult to find either here or in the hereafter.

Scharnhorst was of medium height and build. His entire appearance was conservative, quiet and reserved. Unsmiling and methodical, he carried on his duties with ultra efficiency. Everyone trusted Scharnhorst and the Camberwell Bank flourished.

There was one thing, however, that eventually disturbed the townspeople. It was Scharnhorst’s passion for dancing. Although he abhorred alcohol and tobacco, he attended a dance about once a month. At a dancehall, this staid and proper banker would turn into a Wildman. His action would become maniacal frenzies. People became alarmed at his ferocious behavior. Hair flying, face distorted in seeming agony and clothes soaked in sweat, Scharnhorst tore about the dance floor like a madman. The other dancers fled from him in fear. He was regarded as a terrifying menace.

Finally, his dance floor antics led to his being placed in a home for the mentally disturbed. In May of 1978, Mulford B. Scharnhorst suffered a fatal heart attack. He danced himself to death.
NON-FICTION
The Beautiful State of Wisconsin has produced many wonders:

1) Cheese.
2) Winning Football teams.
3) Splendid Farms, Lake and Resorts ---
4) and Ed Gein.

This midwest monster was merely average and unimaginative in his clumsy murders. But in grave-robbing his achievements stand tall. Few ghouls have ever surpassed Ed Gein’s graveyard outrages. His horrific home furnishings were macabre in the extreme and revolting in their stupendous scope. More than one visitor to his morbid manor suffered profound shock, shattered nerves and stomach aflame with tumultuous upheaval.

In considering Gein’s loathsome career, one is reminded of Edinburgh, Scotland and the Golden Age of grave robbing from 1800 to 1832. Burke and Hare, as well as Jolly Andrew would have recognized in Ed a stalwart fellow-traveller. Placed high in the world’s Archives of Anarchistic Activities, the name Edward Gein will endure forever.
DEAD HEADS, BEER CANS
AND STIFFS

My friend, Ray Lundquist, had a truly wonderful career in the United States Coast Guard. Stationed in St. Louis, Missouri, it was his job to patrol the nearby river each day looking for old logs and tree limbs (dead heads), beer cans and dead bodies (stiffs) both human and animal. So, Ray served his country valiantly removing from the Mississippi River dead heads, beers cans and stiffs. Oh, how noble, inspiring and grand. Could anything be better?
When I think of Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis, Minnesota, words like Beautiful, Grand and Regal come to mind. With its hundred fifty acres situated on high ground overlooking lake Calhoun, Lakewood Cemetery is most impressive. Rolling hills, stately monuments and tree sheltered roads are found there. Also to be found in Lakewood are the remains of many celebrated persons.

Buried here is Floyd B. Olson, the much admired Minnesota Governor of the 1930s; the Mars Family of candy bar fame are here; and John S. Pillsbury, founder of the Pillsbury Mills and creator of the Pillsbury doughboy. And there are others...quite a few....

Thomas Lowry, creator of Lake Street and the Twin Cities Rapid Transit Company and Johann Emil Oberhoffer, who conducted the first Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra in 1903.

We should also mention some of the literary notables such as Clifford Simak and Carl Jacobi, who both achieved fame as writers of weird-fantasy fiction.

Some others of local, national and even international fame who are buried here are Cedric Adams, newspaper and radio celebrity, and also author of at least one book; former Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey; and that dynamic singer-songwriter Tiny Tim, who has tip-toed through his last tulip. Oh, what a venerable old Boneyard!
Down the road....I’ve been down quite a few of life’s roads. Most of them were interesting and worthwhile. Some were not so hot.

Along the way have been many wonderful people, places and things. Here in America I could describe much of it as stupendous, marvelous and Grand. But, in England, I’d be urged to call it “A bit of all right.”

Anyway, money and possessions are fine along with food, laughs and a clean bed. However, the importance of other people in our lives is hard to overestimate. Have you spent much time alone? Not much fun!

Since I’m a life-long Democrat, a non-violent Libertine and a censorship hating free thinker, I do have some strong convictions. I will, however, refrain from several volatile subjects. We shall “Play it cool”, as they say in North Pandemonia. In summing up here I will offer this statement from a well known source—The Reverend Jesse Jackson during the opening of a Soviet-American Exchange Center at the Goodwill Games in Seattle:

“I hugged a Russian and I hugged an American —
I found that each had a heartbeat and a soul and humanity.”
MY VISIT WITH
AUGUST DERLETH

From 1938, when I was 16 and still in school—and hated it—I have loved weird-terror stories. I discovered Weird Tales magazine and noticed the frequent appearance of stories by August Derleth. The stories were good and the name August Derleth intrigued me. At that time I lived in Richmond, Virginia. Later I moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota.

On June 1, 1962, my friend Spencer Weeks and I boarded a Greyhound bus and went to Sauk City, Wisconsin. I had exchanged many letters with Derleth for about two years. Spencer came along for “a few laughs and a change of scene” and I made the trip to meet a much admired idol. We both were to have a rewarding experience.

Upon arrival, we obtained a room in a small hotel in downtown Sauk City. Then I called Derleth and got him on the phone. He sounded rather gruff but suggested that we visit him the next day. For the rest of the day, Weeks and I walked around looking the town over. We liked what we saw—a bright, peaceful, well kept village. August Derleth’s hometown is a very attractive place.

Next day, Spencer and I hiked about a mile to the western edge of Sauk City. There we arrived at the Place of Hawks, home of August Derleth. Set back from Leuders Road and obscured by trees, the house is a tan, two-storey, stone dwelling trimmed in maroon. Directly across the road is St. Aloysius Cemetery.
Derleth’s mother met us at the door and sent us upstairs to the author’s study. Derleth bid us be seated and continued to pound a typewriter. After a moment he stopped work, rose from his throne-like chair and cordially shook hands. Then we sat and talked of many things. He was a tall, heavy man of about 53. Strong of face and figure, he spoke in a slow, cultured manner. He wore a green velour shirt, tan pants and beach sandals. His desk, bookshelves, window casements, armchairs, fireplace and nearby bed were all massive and comfortable-looking. In clear sight was a deerstalker’s cap, several Clark Ashton Smith stone carvings and other collector’s items. The entire room was spacious and much to my liking. Derleth sat like a relaxed literary monarch as he spoke of H. P. Lovecraft and Providence, visits to Walden Pond and Thoreau research, and teaching creative writing at the University of Wisconsin. The subjects of Donald Wandrei’s sick sister, forgeries of Lovecraft papers, Derleth’s long past work in Minneapolis, and mushroom hunting, were covered. We continued to talk of weird-fantasy writers, horror pulps, free love exponents and some of Derleth’s works. Spencer then made a statement about himself which provided us with considerable mirth. He said to us, “I’ve written articles for philatelic journals under the name of Anthracite Toynby and I consider myself a dyed-in-the-wool Thoreauvian, an embryonic Lovecraftian and a deltiological philatelist.” Storm of laughter!

Returning to sanity, we discussed writing. The story “The Black Island”, which appeared in Weird Tales for January 1952, took just two days to write. It is a rather long Cthulhu Mythos tale. Walden West was 14 years in the making. Derleth felt that it was his best book. Creating weird horror fiction was just a hobby and a fun thing with Derleth. Books like Concord Rebel, biographies of Lovecraft and Zona Gale and especially the many Sac Prairie stories and novels were, to Derleth, his important and serious work. We looked at several original drawings by Frank Utpatel as well as strings of mushrooms hanging from the walls of his Arkham House mailing
room. Derleth told us he had gout and his doctor forbade him to eat milk and milk products. We were shown the author’s basement containing many cases of Arkham House books, all new and ready for filling customers’ orders.

Before we left Derleth’s Arkham House lair, I bought a copy of *The Feasting Dead, The Traveling Grave*, and Derleth’s short story collection *Lonesome Places*. He signed the latter. Spencer and I were given a ride back to town in Derleth’s small, gray car. He was going to the post office and carried a large wicker basket. As we drove along near the Wisconsin River, our guide pointed out various houses, parks and places that he loved and grew up with. One was his grandfather’s red brick house. Finally, we were let off in front of the ancient, yellow stone Coulter House on Water Street. A few cheery words, a warm handshake and our pleasant visit was finished.
PLACES

People and places. They are mighty important to all of us and especially to this old relic. Yeah, ol’ Uncle Joe has been lucky in regards to people and places. Many years I’ve spent in venerable old Richmond, Virginia, where I was born, and beautiful Minneapolis, Minnesota, where my three children were born. Both of these cities are dear to my heart and wonderful in their own distinctly different ways. I lived a few years in Bemidji, a small town in northern Minnesota. That was an adventure that I loved. I’m happy to say that I found nice people and made great friends in all of these places.

Other places that have enriched my life include Wisconsin, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Louisiana.

Being on or near great bodies of water has always thrilled me. In a very deep sense, the immense, lonely expanse of water speaks to my soul. Four such locales are these: Chesapeake Bay, Lake Superior, Puget Sound and the Cornish Coast in Cornwall, England. Each has its own tides, harbors, ships and boats and special appearance.

Oh, it’s all jolly good fun!

There were a few other places from Maine to Florida and California to British Columbia. All good, all fine and all fun.

Sometimes I feel strangely fragmented, split up, like I was several people and not just one. Was the Joe West who lived and went to school in Virginia the same person who married twice in Minnesota? Or the older man who worked for 32 years at the University of Minnesota Hospitals, had many drawings published and went four times to England? Are we, each of us, one or several players on Life’s Stage?

Think about it!
QUIET PLEASURES

Sometimes, when I feel especially sad or defeated, I take a quiet walk in a cemetery. Graveyards always cheer me up. There’s so much charm and beauty amid the tombstones, burial vaults and ornamental iron. Rolling terrain, venerable old trees, twisted vines and long shadows all contribute to the soothing atmosphere found in these restful places. The dead below ground are nice quiet folks. They make no demands on me and let me enjoy the entire scene at my leisure. Nearby city pressure is but a hushed murmur. At these times, I can think of Poe, Bierce, Long, Blackwood, Derleth and the grand master of horror fiction Howard Phillips Lovecraft. So many terror tales are laid in lonely graveyards. And some true accounts like the loathsome grave robbing of Ed Gein. My favorite boneyard is Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis. The hoary “cities of the dead” that I visited in Scotland and Ireland will always enhance my memory. Usually one sees no ghastly apparitions or grave rending turmoil in these places. Ah, ’tis sad, but then we can’t always have everything, can we?
Way back in 1934, when I was 12 and living with my grandpar-
ents in Richmond, Virginia, my grandfather gave me a copy of Boys’
Life magazine. I looked it over, read some stories and became
hooked for life. Hooked on reading. Since then, I’ve devoured hun-
dreds of books, magazines, newspapers and so forth.

Among the material I especially enjoyed would be the ro-
bust, romantic novels of Sir William Walpole, the fascinating
short stories of W. Somerset Maugham, Arthur Conan Doyle’s
fabulous Sherlock Holmes, the wonderfully humorous stories
and essays of Mark Twain, and the brilliant philosophical writ-
ings of Lord Bertrand Russell.

In Volume One of the three-volume autobiography of Bertrand
Russell is found this statement: “Three passions, simply but over-
whelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the
search for knowledge and unbearable pity for the suffering of man-
kind. These passions, like great winds, have blown me hither and
thither, in a wayward course, over a deep ocean of anguish, reach-
ing to the very verge of despair.”

These words of Russell, like so many others he wrote, impress
me deeply. To them I would like to add a few lines of my own:

“Somewhere there’s a bright and sunny land. A place where its
inhabitants find delight in loving and serving others and grow day
by day closer to ultimate beauty. In this sphere no shadows bring
darkness, no selfishness spoils love and no ambition results in cru-
elty. A place of perfect light.”
All of this seems impossible and is not likely to ever come about. Nevertheless, dreams and hopes will continue for some of us. Something deep within us drives us, compels us to seek freedom.
SHRINES

For many who love history and the ghosts of past years, the practice of “looking backward” is ingrained and compelling. This includes visiting shrines and significant places, whenever possible. So be it with me. I once entered the Peterson home in Washington, D.C. to see the bedroom in which Abraham Lincoln died. Twice I’ve been to the house on Mickle Street in Camden, N.J. where Walt Whitman lived out his last years on earth. The boyhood home of Charles Lindbergh near Little Falls, Minnesota, George Washington’s Mt. Vernon Estate in northern Virginia and August Derleth’s home and grave site in Sauk City, Wisconsin are all worthwhile in my memory. It isn’t possible for me to pilgrimage to all the places I’d enjoy. If it were, I’d go to the place in Cornwall and Wales where Lord Bertrand Russell lived late in his long life. Also, I’d place flowers on several graves and crypts, honoring such greats at Hank Williams, Edgar Allan Poe, H. P. Lovecraft, Thomas Jefferson and Mark Twain. I might even consider Ed Gein and Stud Horse Brown.
328 MICKLE ST.
WALT WHITMAN'S HOME IN CAMDEN, N. J.
Some people think that life is not hard enough. So they devote themselves to making their own life more difficult. In fact, almost unbearable. I refer to some medieval saints, ascetics and East Indian Swamis, Sadhus and so-called “holy men”.

These frenzied, religious demons of righteousness subject their minds, bone and flesh to prodigious pain. They endeavor to punish the flesh and exalt the spirit or soul. Turning their backs on comfort, money and all forms of sex, these idiots grimly pursue “glory”. They live in unheated, stinking, rathole dwellings. They eat food that’s worse than most peoples garbage. The clothes they wear (if any) are mere rags and their lives are asinine in the extreme.

Especially in India we find Sayasins, yogis, Sadhus and “holy men” whose lifestyle reflects madness. These “splendid chaps” go without food and water (the ordeal of thirst), pray and meditate while submerged in ice cold water and lie prone in blazing tropical sunshine. Some sleep on a single wire strung between two trees. Others live in pits full of snakes or roll on the ground for great distances between “holy” shrines. Marriage, school studies, cleanliness and useful work mean nothing to these zealots. Their fanatical strivings are for “holiness”, enlightenment and the acquisition of supernatural powers. So they lead lives of pain and drudgery amid incredible squalor. Self imposed wretchedness to reach some “God” or state of mystical bliss. I hesitate to regard this hellish lifestyle as desirable. In fact, I’d rather be in Philadelphia. Wouldn’t you?
For centuries, throughout the world, there have been legends and folklore concerning so-called “haunted houses”. Places where usually unseen spirits or forces do strange and disturbing things. Often physical objects are moved about and eerie sounds produced. Many of these phenomena can and do create terror in the minds of those experiencing them. Many of the stories in weird-fantasy and horror fiction involve haunted houses. Benign as well as daemonic “ghosts” do their bag of tricks in these places of shadow and gloom. Of course, people argue about whether there are or are not such things as disembodied spirits and haunted places. Some years ago I knew a Benedictine priest in Richmond, Virginia who taught music in a military prep school. And a most genial, charming and intelligent man he was. He informed me of an enchanter he had in a parish house in New York City. I will omit much detail here but will mention this one thing. Three times in one evening he was forcefully hurled upward from his bed by some unseen entity. The force came upward from the space under the bed. Looking under the bed revealed nothing. Whatever it was, it was not visible. One other friend of mine experienced some extraordinary occurrences in a house he once lived in. Here again I wish to omit much detail of this man’s singular adventure. Suffice to say he, over a period of many months, witnessed a great number of weird and disturbing phenomena. Things that were never explained in any mundane or logical manner. He saw ordinary physical objects move, rise up several inches over the table tops and break apart with no visible human touch of any kind! He heard bells, shrill whistles, loud raps or
knocks on walls as well as heavy footsteps overheard in his attic. These fearful sounds occurred during day or night. Repeated searches never revealed any signs of human causes. None of these mysteries were ever shown to be produced by any human or animal agent. Only when he eventually moved to a new place of abode did these happenings cease. It was very difficult for him not to believe in the reality of haunted houses.
That House In Providence

If houses could gather together and have friendly visits, there’s a rather special house in Providence, Rhode Island that would have much to boast of. This house is situated in the venerable old College Hill district near Brown University and it has been, over a span of many years, home to three remarkable men. Samuel B. Mumford, Howard Phillips Lovecraft and John C.A. Watkins.

Originally it rested at 66 College Street. Later, in 1959, twenty-two years after the death of Lovecraft, this yellow two-storey Georgian house was moved to 65 Prospect Street. There it now stands and is the residence of John C.A. Watkins.

Samuel B. Mumford, whose date of birth is unknown, was married in 1818 to Louise Dexter. She was the daughter of Captain Benjamin Dexter, owner of Dexter’s Wharf. From 1825 to 1848 Mumford was listed in the Providence Directory as a commercial merchant. He is believed to have died in 1849. He was part owner of the sloop “New York” and was a merchant/agent (1826-1840) in the coastal trade to New York. The sloop “New York” was under 100 tons and usually hauled flour, iron and chemicals. Samuel B. Mumford left a will and his heirs were taxed for the property at 66 College Street.

Many years later the house was rented and occupied by Howard Phillips Lovecraft. He was there from May 15, 1933 until the time of his death on March 15, 1937. HPL loved this house with its 18th century doorway and fan light, its curious attic windows and its overall Georgian charm. As we know, since his death at age 46, H. P. Lovecraft
has become world famous as a creator of Weird-Fantasy and Horror Fiction. He has been declared the equal to Edgar Allan Poe and Ambrose Bierce as a writer of terror tales.

Now, in our present 1990s, this strange house is again the residence of a prominent and noteworthy personage. I refer to John C.A. Watkins. In some respects he may be the most remarkable of the three. John Watkins’ life and career have been very impressive. He was born in Corpus Christi, Texas on October 2, 1912 to Ruth Woodruff and Col. Dudley Warren Watkins, USAF (Ret.). Educated in private schools, he received a Litt. D. from Bryant College in 1966, Doctor of Journalism from Roger Williams College in 1982 and awarded Order of Merit of the Italian Republic in 1969. His accomplishments are chiefly in publishing and military service. At various times in his distinguished career, John C.A. Watkins has been a reporter, publisher, Lieut. Col. USAF and fighter pilot and recipient of many honors and awards. In 1934-1935 he was a reporter, makeup and aviation editor for the Journal and Herald in Dayton, Ohio. Then from 1935 until 1941 Watkins served as an editor and reporter for the Baltimore Sun. With the Providence Journal and The Evening Bulletin he was assistant to the Publisher in 1945; Assistant Publisher in 1950; Associate Publisher in 1953; Publisher from 1954-1979; President from 1961-1974, and Chairman of the Board in 1974. From 1967-1968 John C.A. Watkins was President of The New England Daily Newspaper Association. The list of his achievements includes many high positions in clubs, press associations and editorial societies. Clubs include Hope Club, Agawam Hunt, Turks Head Club, Spouting Rock Beach Association, Cruising Club of America, National Press Club and La Jolla Beach and Tennis Club.

The military career of John C.A. Watkins saw him attain the rank of Lieut. Col. USAF. He was a WWII fighter pilot, Operations Officer, 325th fighter pilot, Mediterranean Theatre of Operations; Executive Officer, Asiatic Theatre Branch and other positions. In 1948 he organized the 152nd Fighter Squadron, Rhode Island Air National
Guard. John C.A. Watkins was given a Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with nine Oak Leaf clusters, Distinguished Unit Citation, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with three Bronze Stars and other honors.

So there it is and the record is a very good one. One house, attractive though modest, in which three outstanding men lived. The remarkable Samuel B. Mumford, Howard Phillips Lovecraft and John C.A. Watkins.
WHITMAN, THOREAU
AND ME

It would be difficult, I believe, to find someone who enjoys the beauty of nature more than I do. Earth, sky and water have always delighted me and filled my mind with wonder. Even in the muted colors of an overcast day or pervading rain. Every day, in all seasons, I look at trees and love them. The same with rocks and hills, rivers and lakes, clouds and wind-swept fields. As I think of yesterdays and yesteryears, I recall canoeing quiet streams in Virginia and blue lakes in Minnesota. Swimming in Chesapeake Bay, steamship travel on Puget Sound and sitting gazing at Lake Superior. Blue, quiet, restful and lonely. Altogether wonderful! Even the plaintive cry of gulls is not harsh, only soothing. Memories of the Canadian Rockies, Dingle Bay in County Kerry, Ireland, the highlands in Scotland, Silver Springs’ underwater spectacle in Florida and the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia all enrich my mind. Cities and towns certainly have special charms of their own. I’m not blind to this fact. Nevertheless, I prefer a place like Mt. Rainier in Washington to the heat, glare, noise and oppressive crowds found in a place like Las Vegas or New York City.
"HAPPY"
HARRY HUNKMEISTER

HE'S A FANTASY FAN SUPREME

ALWAYS LAUGHING, DANCING, PLAYING THE FOOL

HIS LIFE IS A WEIRD TALE.
Now at 60, after much thought on the subject, I'd say that work is the most important thing in life. None of us could have anything (or even exist for long) without the work effort of many, many people.

Humanity doesn't seem to realize that love is far superior to hate. Hell is where there is no love—just self-defeating selfishness.

It is believed in some quarters that those whose lifestyle features violence would be less violent if they received more love, touching and sexual fulfillment. It must be awful never to be touched. To me, a life devoid of any human touch would be a cold and joyless void.

One should be very careful about religion. It can ruin your life. I said it can, not will or must.

Years ago, people used to gather to enjoy seeing other humans being executed. Hangings, firing squads, burning at the stake and the good old guillotine. Lots of blood—great fun to see—thrilling! Perhaps a secret orgasm from witnessing stark fear and suffering.
Nowadays, we have our high-paid “sports” to supply the blood and injuries. We humans are really “nice”, are we not?

Happily, there are many things, places and people to enrich our lives. It helps to have some brains, time, health and zest to accomplish this. And, of course, an adequate amount of money is rather helpful.

Happy memories from my past include railroad travel. Dozens and dozens of rides on trains both here and in Canada and England. The sights, smells, sound and motion of the trail trips are wonderful recollections to any rail fan. Oceans, lakes and rivers and all manner of boats and ships. Fascinating!

Many people claim that they just can’t save any money. I’m different! I must save. I have a great fear of being unemployed or broke.

Life is one hell of a hard road to travel. Laughs, art, literature, music, friendship, work and love makes the road endurable. Not easy but endurable.

Ever see a gorilla dressed in white tie and tails? I did once on a pulp magazine cover.
Many women have pleased me, in one way or another, and some have amazed me. I’m thinking now of two qualities they have which I greatly admire. The capacity of unselfish giving and the ability to work. I’ve known a few women whose work output was simply prodigious. An all-male world would be rather grim for this old man. As for babies and infants—they’re fascinating to observe.

I think the most despicable criminal is one who would derail a train. But then I would think this way—I’m a dedicated rail fan.

If everyone in the world turned green we might see an end to racial prejudice.
RIPE APPLES

Colorful, entertaining, varied and inexpensive were the old pulp magazines. During the twenties, thirties, forties and early fifties, these literary delights jammed the newsstands. Exciting stories of adventure, mystery, love, horror, sports, war and all types of life experience were represented. The covers on these pulp magazines were real attention getters as were their titles. Thrilling Mystery, Startling Detective, Fantastic Adventure, Ranch Romances, Western Stories, Sea, Far North, Air, War, Sport, Cowboy and Railroad Stories. There were perhaps 150 titles. Any and all types of stories were available. I wish there had been such specimens as Revolting Tales, Sickening Stories, Loathsome Adventures, Nauseating Tales, Insane Stories and any depressing, disgusting, degrading, obnoxious, stomach turning and mind shattering stories. Something for everybody!

There are some jobs I wouldn’t want no matter what they paid. Coal miner, wild animal trainer, paint maker (poisonous fumes), steel worker (walking high girders) and dentist for undrugged alligators.

When I was a boy (many years ago) women and girls wore bras, girdles and dresses or skirts. No jeans (and few slacks) were seen in those days. One didn’t see breasts jiggling and jumping in bra-free abandon then. And the female rear end, encased in girdles and corsets, looked like an unyielding block of granite. Now, I’m glad to see, the ladies’ posteriors are set free and present a variety of pleasing and animated contours. Oh yes, life can be beautiful!
I expect the centuries-old conflict between the Puritans and the Libertines will continue on forever. It seems that about 50 percent of the adult population wants to get laid and the remaining 50 percent always strive to keep them sexually inactive.

You can’t tell people what to like. It just doesn’t work. I dislike T.V. and avoid it whenever possible. Movies Yes, T. V. No! With a good book (or even a lousy book) you do not have to endure some damned, tiresome, lame-brained commercial.

Better, I think, are creative hobbies. I mean hobbies that encourage one to think and do something personally reflective. Operating a loom, building furniture, making clothes, growing flowers, collecting almost anything, drawing, painting, writing, boat building, leather craft, etc. All of these pastimes can give one a wonderful feeling of accomplishment. These things rarely bring trouble or create problems. Certainly better than robbing banks, taking drugs or committing arson.

Wolfgang Zugg is now a happy man. The U. S. Department of Nonsense has agreed to finance his new invention. Maximum Security Pants! Zugg claims his sensational new pants thrill all wearers, enrich their lives and will lead our nation to supreme glory. These Zugg-produced Maximum Security Pants are full cut, made of heavy canvas, sewn with copper wire, are acid proof and come with a compass, twelve maps, a flashlight and a small caliber pistol.
Many of us “old croakers” would like to keep the old and resist the new. It can’t be done. Changes and so-called progress will inevitably come about. But people, places and things do persist in our memories. They are shadows from the past.

It’s natural to inwardly grieve over our loves of the “Good Ol’ Days”. This should not blind us to the really good and valuable things of today. Dentistry, for example. The vast improvements here have made visits to the dentist’s office far less traumatic.

Anyway, this tendency of the old to feel uncomfortable with rapid changes is as old as the hills. It is no joyous thing to see the passing of familiar landmarks. When they go, something in us dies. We march on because we must. The parade goes on and on—until the music stops. Then we can be fitted for a wooden overcoat or proceed to make an ash of ourselves! We’ve urned it!
All of our lives we hear people say that our country is the best in the world. There’s much truth in this claim. In many ways our United States of America is superior to other nations and this we rejoice in. Nevertheless, America has some depressing characteristics which I find disturbing. I refer to our penchant toward violence. Murders and maiming by the use of firearms is especially prevalent. Few nations exceed us in violence and the destroying of life. And this, coupled with our archaic fear of sex and sensual pleasure, creates an unhappy and undesirable condition.

We constantly hear of crimes so brutal that our minds reel from the blow to our sense of decency and justice. In movies and in TV shows I’ve seen vivid scenes of knives cutting throats resulting in much bloodshed and death. There’s very little protest from the Bible thumping brigade. But show a naked breast or any erotic lovemaking and the church crowd screams in protest. Their attitude seems to be “Well, yes, murder is regrettable but sex is really bad.” So, it seems, in our society you can show a knife entering a throat but you can not show a penis entering a vagina.

Strange!
ILLUSTRATIONS
LOCKJAW ZILCH  "RATCHET"

THE WORLDS' GREATEST DETECTIVE
LOCKJAW ZILCH AND HIS ESTEEMED ASSISTANT DR. AMOS RATCHET
Lord Paddington, noted research scientist in London was murdered in Russell Square. He found a cure for Stoneeto Gullianitis in 1975. He collected antique door knobs.

Fun in Russell Square
MATTHEW SOUTH

FROM THE CARL JACOBI STORY

"MATTHEW SOUTH AND COMPANY"
DRONGO
SAVAGE OF ASGARD
THE GRAVEYARD RATS
SOON IT WILL BE SUPPERTIME /CHRIS AND JOE

(drawn in collaboration with Chris Pelletiere)
FUMES FROM HELL?

... NOT WHEN YOU SMOKE AN \textit{El Toro} WORLD'S FINEST CIGAR
“The Haunted Hole in the Ground”
FINIS

Call him what you will, depending on your mood (or his), Joe West has meant many things to many people over the years. To this weird scrivener, he has been an inspiration and a friend. My first encounter with the inimitable fellow came through the pages of Old Uncle Joe, which was being edited and published (in the nineties) by A. M. Decker. Fortuitously, I was working at the very print shop in which this esteemed publication was being brought to life. I was, to say the least, fascinated by the weird writings and artwork I had been tasked to print and bind.

Subsequent to this I was invited to my first L.E.P.E.R. meeting, where I met Joe in the flesh. More importantly I had the opportunity to hear him recite his poetry (one of which was the perennial favorite, “Blasted Hides”). If you have ever heard Joe read from his works, you know exactly how delightful his performances can be. That Southern drawl, those animated pitches in voice and movement, all choreographed to weird perfection. Give me Joe any day over those so-called poet-laureates with their dry monotones. Joe West is the supreme poet-laureate of the weird.
This past year I have had the ultimate pleasure of working with Joe on *Aim High*. Doing so has allowed me to uncover numerous pieces of poetry, prose, and (in particular) artwork which I had not known existed. Indeed, it is quite astounding just how prolific “Ol’ Uncle” has been over the years. I don’t imagine myself being involved in many other projects within my lifetime quite so meaningful as this one. It has been a labor of love, to say the least.

Some of my fondest memories of Joe are spending time with him at his apartment on Bryant Avenue in Minneapolis, discussing various topics (weird and otherwise), and then heading down the road to the local ice-cream parlor to sweeten our palates. Joe always supplied more than an ample array of anecdotes to tickle my fancy. Other memories are of wandering through Lakewood Cemetery (culling curious names from the headstones there), as well as browsing many a secondhand bookstore with the ol’ bibliophile.

I’ve always appreciated Joe’s good humor and gentlemanly stance. Oftentimes, upon shaking hands in prelude to going our separate ways, Joe would state in that wonderful Southern drawl of his, “Maintain your personality.”

I can think of no better parting words.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS


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illustration, p. 264, first published in *The Cynick*.


Note: We have made every effort to include all primary sources in relation to the works included in this volume. Errors or omissions should be brought to the attention of the editors for correction in subsequent printings. Thank you.
Aim High
collected poetry, prose and artwork

Joseph A. West

The wonderfully weird work of Joseph A. West has graced the covers and interior pages of many a small-press magazine over the years, but until now it has never been collected in a single volume.

Aim High exhibits the majority of Mr. West’s poetry, prose and artwork. Weird, macabre, morbid (call it what you will) no one does it quite like the inimitable Joe West.

Horror and humor inter-mingle to stunning effect in this monumental collection by one of the true masters of the field.

Joseph A. West, a native of Richmond, Virginia, has lived the majority of his life in Minnesota. Nearing his ninety-first year, he states quite resolutely: “I’m not really old, just pretending.”
Aim High

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