



In print

A book for brains

"Brainstorm"
Jim Blasfield, Gideon Bosker
Marble Press, Portland, 1983
\$4.95, unpagged

In one of your more lame-brained moments, have you ever imagined what a map of Nancy Reagan's brain would look like? According to Portland authors Jim Blasfield and Gideon Bosker, 70 percent of Mrs. Reagan's cerebral mass would be devoted to an appreciation of fine china, five percent would house the "de la Renta zone with Bloomingdale Abberation," 15 percent would cover "smiling" (subdivided into smiling while listening, while talking, while sleeping) and the remaining 10 percent would be surrendered to the First Lady's "love of small sandwiches."

Don't worry, though. Blasfield and Bosker don't limit their elucidation of the brain to public figures and politicians. These guys have written and illustrated a little cartoon-style book that takes a humorous look at the chief mystery of human anatomy.

Artist Jim Blasfield — who also edits the well designed Portland newsmagazine, *The Clinton St. Quarterly*, writes and stays away from full-time advertising jobs — has always had a fascination for the brain.

"I've always wondered how brains really worked," Blasfield said. "From a distance I'm fascinated by the ideas that minds can shape. Brains are like so many radios that are wired differently. For instance, I just wonder how

somebody on a bus could spend time counting all the people with lipstick on."

Blasfield says we're all a little afraid of the brain. It's the seat of our anxieties about the universe, but as "Brainstorm" whimsically illustrates, it's also a very understandable mechanism. It's built like a percolator. It has a deep, dark area like a basement that stores up information. It moves, sometimes like a lazy susan, and explodes sometimes, like an angry machine.

According to the authors' zany analysis, the lumpy grey mass was discovered in 1955 by Mrs. Elaine Bevis who was brushing her hair at the time. Much later, in the year one million six hundred four, all brains marched into the sea, were picked up by a group of martian fishermen and were later sold throughout the solar system as industrial sponges.

That was Blasfield's ending. Bosker insisted that the book end on a note of hope. It does. Shelved in a supermarket, the brain is preparing for reconnection with a subhuman world. The grey mass is last seen whispering to a martian-like kid, suggesting that he could start a Little League team or invent linoleum.

Though the unpagged book could read like a spate of brain jokes and brain teasers, it's better read from start to finish, Blasfield said.

"There's a lot of cultural commentary going on that's beside the point," Blasfield said. "You might miss the point if you just read it like a bunch of brain jokes



An illustration of "screwing your brains out," according to authors Jim Blasfield and Gideon Bosker.

for people who can't think of any new ways to abuse cats."

Though Blasfield admits to having been a compulsive joker in his long-past teen-aged days (and to having worn a Halloween costume this year that tagged him as the Rod Stewart of the Animal World), he rejects the funny-man stereotype.

And he denies having co-authored the book for some quick and dirty laughs.

Instead, when Bosker (who is also an Emergency Room physician and columnist on the side) suggested doing the brain book, a fascination turned into a labor of love.

"You do the things that you're interested in," Blasfield said. "I figured that some other peoples' brains would have the same-sized holes and we would connect."

Angela Allen Morgan

Roseanne funnier on screen

"Roseanne Roseannadanna's 'Get Back to Work' Book"
Gilda Radner, Alan Zweibel
Long Shadow Books, New York, 1983
\$4.95, confused paging

"Hey Roseanne!" I said. "What are you doing on my desk? Get up and do something funny like you do on television!"

But she just sat there, looking at me with this stupid expression. "Come on, Roseanne," I said. "Make me laugh!" Then I took a few steps closer and noticed she was looking kind of flat.

"Hey Roseanne, you're a book!" It shouldn't come as any surprise that "Roseanne Roseannadanna's 'Get Back to Work' Book" doesn't have anything to say about getting a job. What might be surprising is that it really

isn't all that funny.

Something is definitely lost in the translation from the T.V. screen to the book. Gilda Radner relies heavily on facial expression and that screechy voice to make us laugh while watching Saturday Night Live. It doesn't make it in the book.



The book tells the tale of Roseanne Roseannadanna and gives the history of the whole Roseannadanna clana, their arrival in the United States and the founding of the Very Wet Laundrette and the Very Dry Dry Cleaners.

Roseanne ends with being fired

from her job at NBC because of "Reaganometry."

"Roseanne, if you have a 69-year-old President who stands at a 70 degree angle to the ground and whose understanding of the economy is that of a man whose I.Q. is 71, how many people will end up out of work?" her boss asks.

Well, Roseanne's one of them. Too bad it couldn't have happened earlier than page xciv of the preface. That's one hell of a preface.

The way to read this book is to sit in front of a blank television screen, look into the television and read the book aloud softly, attempting to mimic the voice of Roseanne Roseannadanna. If you squint your eyes and try real hard you might get a few laughs.

Frank Shaw

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