

A candid talk with Hunter S. Thompson

By Kim Carlson
Of the Emerald

Things couldn't have been going smoother. Oh sure, Hunter Thompson's plane was 30 minutes late, and, at 8 p.m., he was changing from his trademark Hawaiian shirt into a button-down shirt and tie in the men's room at Mahlon Sweet Airport. Meanwhile at MacArthur Court, about 1,200 people were anxiously expecting him to walk on stage any moment. Other than that — everything was cool.

During the car ride into Eugene, Thompson was talkative and candid; everything was peachy.

That is, until about 8:45 p.m. when we arrived in the parking lot at Mac Court and the trunk of the borrowed brown Mercedes which carried us and the Gonzo journalist from the airport refused to open.

"Oh goddammit. Oh goddammit," muttered Paul the driver under his breath as he jiggled the only key he had to the lock. "I need my cigarettes," Thompson said, becoming more impatient every minute. "Are you sure this is the only key?"

"I'm really sorry about this," said Paul after about three minutes of intense lock action. He was beginning to sweat. "We can get you more cigarettes, no problem."

"Damn. I need my wallet, my tape recorder," grumbled Thompson, hitting his hand on the trunk. After about five luckless minutes, hope was all but gone. Then, as if by divine providence, the hood sprung open. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief. Everyone, that is, except Thompson, who seemed nonplussed by the fortunate turn of the key. "I need my cigarettes," he said, grabbing for the leather satchel in the trunk. "I don't like being late. I'm late here."

He headed toward the building, toward the

throng of fans who waited there.

Before the commotion with the Mercedes' trunk Thompson had sat in the front seat and talked. He talked about his new book and his recent passion: the 1984 presidential campaign. He's following the primaries with the intention of doing "an analytical piece" for *Rolling Stone*. He said he'll probably write something on the "weird ups and downs" of the campaign.

"The campaign has been so strange. It swings back and forth so violently. Hart has no business being in there. The whole thing is set up to keep this from happening. But now when they go to San Francisco they're going to have, what, \$50 million completely wasted. All the primaries are totally useless. It's going to be just a flesh market, a wild scene down there."

Would Thompson publicly support any of the Democratic presidential candidates? Perhaps Hart?

"Probably yeah, I probably would, but only because Gary's an old friend, a neighbor and you know, my senator. I think he'd either beat Reagan or utterly destroy the Democratic party. And either one of 'em's good enough for me."

A nasty rumor spread not so long ago that Thompson was steering clear of journalism. So what's he doing tagging along to the primaries?

"I got dragged back into this like a junkie. You can't resist this — a possible forced ballot... I tried to quit. I did everything possible. It's like sliding back into some heinous heaven. Some things you can't resist."

"The Curse of the Lono," Thompson's most recent book, originated when he and a cohort, English illustrator Ralph Steadman, were in Hawaii covering the Honolulu marathon for *Running* magazine.

"The book was so chopped up, about half of it went to press and half of it didn't. At one

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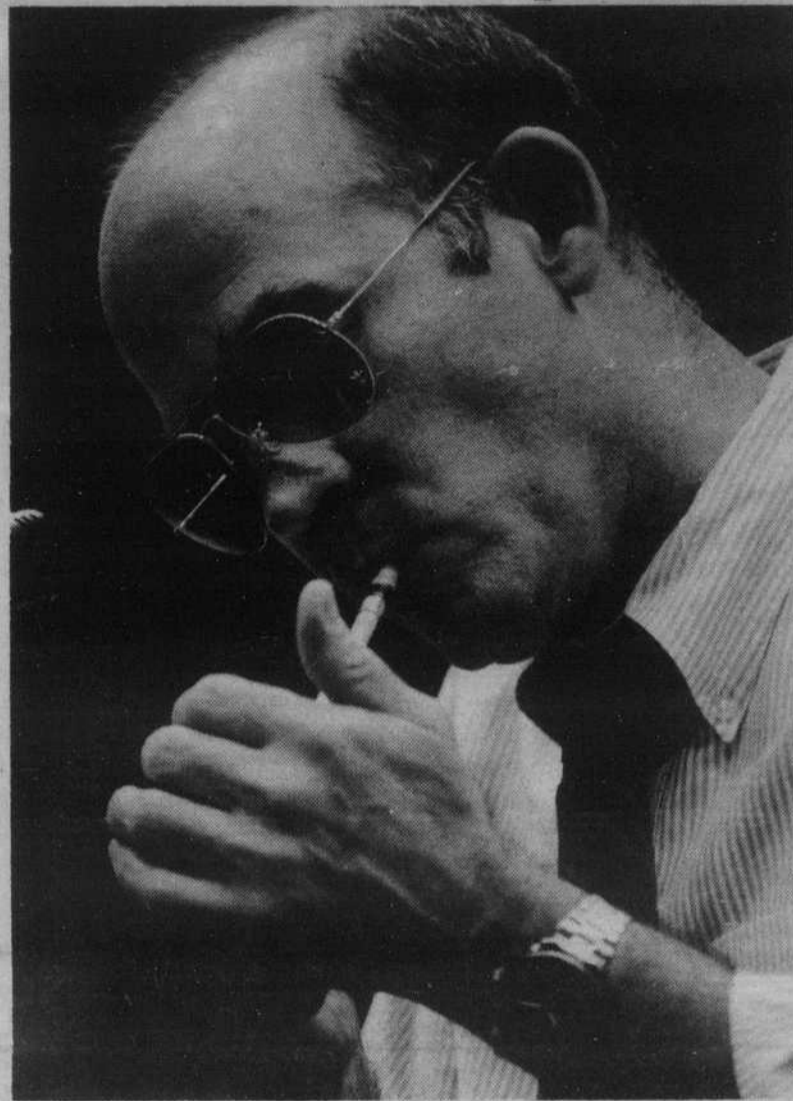


Photo by Michael Clapp

Hunter Thompson lights up a Dunhill while in Mac Court last night for a question and answer with about 1200 fans.

Thompson's incisive comments woo Mac Court crowd

By Angela Allen Morgan
Of the Emerald

Master of the hyperbole, gifted with gab, gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson — Doctor, if you please — er — winged his one-man question-and-answer show last night at MacArthur Court in front of about 1,200 die-hard fans.

"An Evening of Questions and Answers Political in Nature," began in usual Hunter Standard Time: one fashionable hour late. It lasted another two, as the 44-year-old writer chain-smoked Dunhills, guzzled suspicious substances and fielded questions from predictions on the NBA playoffs (Celtics) to a comparison of Reagan's brand of democracy to Duarte's ("OK, it's the same").

Because the self-confessed political junkie has suffered, feared and loathed his way through "intense, demented involvement in politics," Thompson's perspectives were entertaining, insightful and ar-

ticulate. Having written about and covered a number of presidential campaigns, including fellow Coloradan Gary Hart's, Thompson is a seasoned critic of the campaign trail. He is also an unflinching soothsayer of America's future.

"The whole notion of democracy right now," he said from a voice gnarled by smoke and travel, "is in very serious trouble. We have a bunch of crooks and criminals who've taken free enterprise and turned it into a goddamned carnival."

Thompson spared little, noting that his decision to wear a tie doesn't make him a moderate. His opinions are the acerbic ones of the dyed-in-the-wool unobjective cultural analyst that he claims to be.

For example: Hart ("a cowboy — brave, straight"), Grenada ("yes, I'd accept an ambassadorship there"), Nixon ("the fact that he appears to be a gentleman shows us where we are right now"), Reagan (a "GE appliance salesman, a creep, you wouldn't want him in

your house for a drink"), lawyers ("they should have a brand put on their foreheads — it's... the legal profession... the most evil profession in this country") the Washington football Redskins ("they're done for"), Jesse Jackson ("the smartest guy in the campaign"), and George McGovern ("given a choice I'd vote for George anytime").

Political issues aside, Thompson courted the personal, admitting his propensity for drug use while working. "Beastly, brutal speed is the best... Cocaine is a stupid drug to work on." But all things in moderation, he joked, advising a student planning to pull an all-nighter, "if you must do it, eat speed. But I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't work either."

His most personal gesture was to autograph the t-shirt of a follower who asked him for the favor. He began to sign on the back of the woman's shirt. The audience booed. Thompson signed the front, democratic and responsive citizen that he is.

Aid to El Salvador OKed; jury convicts guardsmen

From Associated Press reports

ZACATECOLUCA, El Salvador — After a 20-hour trial, a jury convicted five former national guardsmen Thursday of killing four American churchwomen whose deaths in 1980 became a rallying point for opposition to U.S. aid to El Salvador.

Meanwhile, in Washington, the House approved \$62 million of emergency military aid for El Salvador today but rejected any more money in this fiscal year for CIA undercover backing of guerrillas fighting the leftist Sandinista government of Nicaragua.

The U.S. Congress had initially withheld a decision on a proposed \$19 million in military aid for the Salvadoran government, waiting for the end of the trial.

In El Salvador, the five-member jury heard 20 hours of testimony and argument broken only by brief recesses. They deliberated for an hour before returning a verdict of guilty on all counts shortly before dawn.

Relatives of the dead women called the conviction a good first step toward learning who ordered the killing and who tried to cover it up. Michael Posner, director of the Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights, said he has been assured there will be an investigation of whether higher authorities were involved.

A U.S. Embassy statement said "the successful prosecution of these murderers shows the Salvadoran criminal justice system can be made to

work."

In Washington, State Department spokesman John Hughes said, "The United States is fully committed to assisting the government of El Salvador in the strengthening of the Salvadoran judicial system."

The Democratic-controlled House approved the Salvadoran assistance by a vote of 267-154 and went on to approve, by a vote of 241-177, an amendment refusing to go along with any emergency appropriation for support of the Nicaraguan rebels.

The vote on El Salvador adopted the full amount approved by the Republican-controlled Senate for urgent assistance to help put down a Marxist-led rebellion

that has gripped the country since the late 1970s.

Rep. Clarence Long, D-Md., chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations, said \$32 million of the amount will be earmarked for repayment of Pentagon funds that Pres. Ronald Reagan diverted to El Salvador without congressional approval. The remaining \$30 million will be available to the Salvadoran armed forces.

Rep. Harold Wolpe, D-Mich., opposing the compromise, praised Salvadoran President-elect Jose Napoleon Duarte but said, "The way we can help him best is by letting his military know that the only way it is going to get its aid is to respect his rule and his programs."