



MEANWHILE,
IN NEWPORT

Seven thirty on a bright morning standing among the soul-sick lineup at the bar.

"I know what I am," she says. "I'm a drunk. I'm an alcoholic. So what?" Then, as casually as if speaking of a cat that didn't come home last night: "I missed my last two periods."

"Have you been to a doctor?" It's cool enough this morning for the warmth from the coffee cup to feel good on my hands.

"No, what for? He'd just tell me to quit drinking."

"What would you do with a baby?" She lives by cadging a few dollars a day from the men she goes to bed with, not even confident enough to demand the money up front and rise to the level of hooker.

"I wouldn't do anything with a baby. Nothing. I'd give it to her daddy to raise like I had to raise Christi."

Christi is her daughter. She went to her high school graduation a week or so ago, or says she did. I imagine her standing at the back of the hall during the ceremony, dressed as she now is, too ashamed to acknowledge or be acknowledged. "What's she going to do now?" I want to ask, maybe to validate my image. I don't ask.

A man walks in and her eyes light up then go dead as she sees the woman following.

"That sonofabitch." She doesn't sound angry, not even hurt. The word is a confirmation, the penetration of a masquerade rather than a curse. Then the hurt comes.

"He knew I'd be in here. Why did he have to bring her?"

The man buys a pitcher of beer. He and the woman move to a table.

"I been with him more than a week. Why would he do that to me? I'm not a bad person, am I? You don't think I'm a bad person, do you?"

"Of course not."

Then, depersonalizing, moving from intimate to abstract: "Why do people act like that? Oh well, I guess I'll never understand."

"You going? Hey, can you let me have a couple bucks? I gotta have some more beer this morning."

"Sure."



Ask Uncle Mike

Dear Uncle Mike,

I feel silly asking for advice, but I'm having a real problem with my husband's mother. We've had a good relationship until now but, since my son Dylan turned five, things have gone to hell. For his birthday, Dylan got a kiddie harness from a girlfriend of mine. He looks cute as a bug in it, and it's a great help when I go shopping. Alice, my mother-in-law, has all but stopped speaking. She says only dogs have leashes. I say she's out of touch. What do you think?

Tina in Newport

Dear Tina,

Uncle Mike thinks you need professional help. If, at the age of five, your son needs to be leashed, you might think about putting either him or you to sleep.

Uncle Mike finds it chillingly curious that your husband, old what's his name, doesn't figure into the debate. So you and Alice are duking it out to see if your apprentice man's first memories involve being led around on a leash by the woman he trusts.

If you're worried about your child straying at the mall, Uncle Mike suggests you hold his hand. Or teach him to come when you whistle.

Dear Uncle Twit,

In last month's Upper Left, you made a big deal about not owning a car. What does this make you, holy? You ecocreeps make me puke.

Marv in Taft

Dear Marv,

Sorry you're not feeling well. Let Uncle Mike tell you a story once told to Werner Heisenberg, the physicist.

A westerner, touring the Orient, comes upon an old Buddhist peasant toiling in his fields. Amused, the tourist asks the rube if, heh heh, he's never heard of machines.

"I have heard my teacher say," the old man answered, "that whoever uses machines does all his work like a machine. He who does his work like a machine grows a heart like a machine, and he who carries a heart of a machine in his breast loses his simplicity. He who loses his simplicity becomes unsure in the strivings of his soul. Uncertainty in the strivings of the soul is something which does not agree with honest sense. It is not that I do not know of such things; I am ashamed to use them."

As for holiness, Uncle Mike prefers hollowness. He does, however, love to walk.

Dear Uncle Mike,

My girlfriend and I just moved in together and want to get a pet. Cats and dogs are a little common and we're anything but. We think it would be way cool to get something different. We've decided on a snake. My question is this: if we got something exotic and poisonous, could we train it not to bite?

Kyle and Chrissy
Beaverton

Dear Idiots,

Listen to Uncle Mike very carefully. You are about to make the biggest, and perhaps last, mistake of your life.

Herpophiles (a diagnostic term for anyone sick enough to live with a snake) will tell you these nightmares of the wild kingdom are smart as whips and friendly to a fault. To the even nearly normal, these are not selling points.

If you decide to go through with this madness, don't plan on entertaining. Or, if your snake is a large constrictor or a pit viper of any size, to sleep.

Old snake hands, and there aren't that many, agree on this: the trick with serpents is to relentlessly overfeed them and never put down your machete.

Whatever you do, don't let your snake lull you into a false sense of interspecies bonding. Regardless how friendly your puff adder seems, when push comes to shove (and it will), things turn ugly very fast.

No On Hate/Portland-Metro PAC



is jubilant that the OCA did not collect enough valid signatures to get their anti-gay initiative on Portland's May ballot. Join us, with your time and money, to stop them from amending Oregon's Constitution.

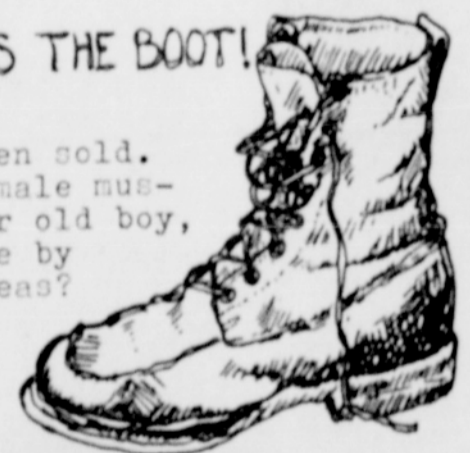
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FANATICISM CONSISTS OF
REDOUBLING YOUR EFFORT WHEN
YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN YOUR AIM.
SANTAYANA

UPPER LEFT GETS THE BOOT!

Our house has been sold. We (three adult male musicians, a 12 year old boy, 2 dogs) must move by July 12. Any ideas? 436-1923



HELP CLOSE TROJANI

It's time we close the dangerous Trojan Nuclear Power Plant.

- 440 tons of radioactive waste on the banks of the Columbia River!
- Subject to earthquakes it can't withstand!
- 20% of its steam generator tubes cracked and plugged!
- Recipient of millions of your tax dollars in subsidies!

Let's close this menace. Please sign the Do-It-Yourself Committee's "Close Trojan" petition and call toll-free 1-800-752-2233 to volunteer today. A safe, sane, energy efficient future depends on you!

...Continued from front cover

to hate each other and fear the world. It'd be different if we could afford the twisted luxury of racism and homophobia. It'd be different if we had time for kids to be casualties while men and women make war instead of love.

But we don't. We probably never did have and certainly never will again.

Codependents snivel about not being loved. Interdependents love. In a relativistic universe, there's nothing tricky about the Golden Rule. We get what we give whether we believe in magic or not.

Want to change the world?

If you see somebody who's hungry, make them a sandwich. If you see someone crying, give them a hug. If someone's broke, give them a buck. Smile at strangers, especially if their skin is a different color. Be a friend to your lover. Be an adult to a kid.

And, next time anybody tells you it's a dog eat dog world where nice guys not only finish last but get eaten, lick their face until they giggle.

For that, we've got time.