



It wasn't a good spring for wackos. It rained. It rained a lot and it requires sunshine to bring out the lunacy, the high weirdness necessary to leaven the mostly inert dough of society. There was, of course, the truly bad person who told the Oldest Living Member of the VFW that a group called Gay Veterans of Vietnam would be marching in the annual Loyalty Days Parade. Fortunately the OLM had his glycerine pills about him and so survived to discover it was just another of the truly bad person's typically tasteless jokes. But that wasn't enough, something more was needed.

Thus it was with profound gratitude that I heard the bartender begin to explain to a neighboring customer, in detail, how to construct a "Joint Gun". Required materials included: a bent spoon, a mechanical pencil, a motor from a cassette recorder, a piece of plastic tubing, the high "E" string from a guitar and adhesive tape. It didn't sound like something to shoot joints with or from, so I had to ask. "Oh," she replied, "it's a tattoo needle. The guys in the Joint make them all the time." Then she drew a diagram of how to put it together. The damndest thing is it looks as if it would work. Again, I asked. "Sure, works good." She pulled

up a sleeve to reveal a ghastly, smeared squiggle that careful study revealed to be a name. "Merle," it said. "That's the first one I did. It isn't very good but I'm practicing a lot now." "Who do you practice on?" "Frogs, frog bellies." (Pause) "Frog bellies?" "Yeah, I pay the neighbor kids \$2 apiece to catch them for me." Then, lest I think she was being evil to our batrachian brothers, "It doesn't do them any permanent harm. I wipe them off with disinfectant and turn them loose as soon as they heal up. I kind of like to think of somebody catching a frog with 'Merle' tattooed on his belly or maybe a heart with an arrow through it." Now you know.



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