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INSIDE THE OUTSIDE

Growing and Cutting

American Seed Company has gone out of business, overwhelmed by the dishonesty of grade-school children.

It is a sad end indeed for a company that introduced generations of the nation's youth to the ways of free enterprise. In ads featured in every juvenile publication from *Boys Life* to *Batman*, it held out this offer: Sell packs of garden seeds and split the proceeds with the company or win prizes. "For more than 60 years, we are proud to say, selling our garden-tested seeds has become a part of the American way of growing up," this year's catalog introduction says.

To more and more youths, however, the American way was to order the seeds, scurry around the neighborhood selling them at 60 cents a pack, and pocket all the money. The company's idea was for the kids to send back 40 cents a pack or return all the cash and get a prize. This year alone, unreturned money cost American Seed about \$600,000 in sales, or nearly half of what it collected in revenues. That doomed the company to its fifth straight losing year.

Some might call it a disgrace; some, a sign of the times. American Seed decided to call it quits.

— *Wall Street Journal* ¹

Behind the mask, the slave could hide a simple desire to get out of work or gain a reward, along with his enjoyment at the luxury of having put something over on the master. Slaves demonstrated such a lack of finesse in maneuvering a plow that this cumbersome and tiring instrument had to be abandoned, and such was also the case with other work tools. A colonial traveler reported that the Negro seemed unable to adapt himself satisfactorily to either the hoe or the wheelbarrow: "Let a hundred men show him how to hoe, or drive a wheelbarrow, he'll still take the one by the Bottom and the other by the Wheel; and they often die before they can be conquered." So many hoes were "accidentally" broken by slaves that a heavier, and therefore work-slowng, "nigger hoe" had to be substituted. Planters would have been surprised to learn that the hoe was one of the basic tools of West African agriculture.

— *Black Resistance Before the Civil War*, William F. Cheek ²

The gardener, like the gamekeeper, is never a person who will allow you to teach him anything.

— *The Book of a Naturalist*

COMBINE DRIVER • TAD

I got a job with a custom cutter, the people who follow the wheat harvest from Texas on up to North Dakota every summer. The combines we were using were a new model series on loan from International Harvester. A fleet of eight or ten of us went along in a big row through the fields and checked out the new models to see how they were performing.

We were all pretty young, between fourteen and twenty-two, and would rather fuck off than sit on these things for twelve hours a day. Once or twice a week we would slug the combine, which means we'd cause the combine to feed up so much material that it would bind up the cylinder inside the machine. We would shut down two or three machines. Then they would set them aside and take us off the field. International Harvester representatives would come out, tear apart the machines, and try and figure out what the fuck was going on.

We did this intentionally so we could slack off. We got a kick out of these guys with ties and clipboards going over the machine. We thought this was tremendously funny because they seemed very concerned since they had millions of dollars at stake. It was beyond them to think that we would do something like that because, like most employers, they thought their employees were a lot dumber than they really were. I think this is true for most non-unionized, off-the-street labor. They generally assume that you will never pull any stunts. Everybody on the job was in cahoots together. We got to sit around in hotel rooms while they looked over the machines.

GARDENER • WILLIAM

When I got a job at a country club golf course, I thought it was going to be great, because I was hired to do the type of gardening I specialized in: pruning and planting. But the first day I was there, I was mowing lawns and blowing leaves. I had never done either in my life.

After several months, I started to get frustrated because I wasn't doing what I was hired to do. I decided to write some letters to the club's beautification committee. I wanted to show them that I wasn't a mow-and-blow type of gardener. I explained what gardening needed to be done, what plants were planted wrong and why nothing was growing or looking good. The place needed big changes and I made it clear that I wanted to get the work done.

When I finally met with the committee, my plans for the club met with a positive response and we set down certain priorities to get the place looking good. We decided to start on more pruning and to cover the hillsides around the golf course with wildflowers. After that, however, absolutely nothing was done because the person in the middle was my supervisor.

My supervisor thought he was the greatest golf course superintendent in the world. He had a good looking golf course but only because he had an exceptional crew. I don't think he realized this because he thought he did all of the important work. He liked to flex his muscles and show his power over his employees. He

thought if he treated us like shit we'd work harder, and for him to fit in with the club's exclusive membership, he had to show off by making us look like scum.

I started getting the mowing and blowing done as quickly as possible and going off to something creative, like working with the plants. I made the time to do what I wanted to do, but that's when I started to hear shit from my supervisor. He'd ask me what I was doing, yell at me, then make me go blow some more leaves.

I then submitted a detailed report regarding each hole of the golf course to the beautification committee. Again, they liked what I suggested and wanted me to start working on planting beds that would be in full bloom by May twenty-first, when the club was going to host an important golf tournament. I started to feel even more heat from my supervisor because now he felt threatened. The place needed someone like me, who could recognize certain problems and solve them. The committee loved what I was doing but my supervisor hated it because I went over his head. I made suggestions that he should have made, which made him look bad.

Suddenly my supervisor started making me do more pointless tasks. There were at least 8,000 plants that needed planting but I was still forced to mow the lawns and blow the parking lots. I asked him for help but he said everybody was busy and that I'd have to do it all by myself. He knew that I wanted to get the plants done on time but he wanted to put me under as much pressure as possible.

I didn't start planting until May. Because I knew it was his fault, and I knew it would be obvious, I decided to go at my own gardener's pace. I knew I could plant those bedding plants quickly, but I decided to plant them with the utmost care. I planted each one as perfectly as possible. I looked at each plant, unfolded their roots, gently laid them in the ground, then carefully applied the mulch and soil around them. I was definitely being overly efficient. I had been planting for years and could have gone much faster with just as much efficiency. But I decided that I was going to take my time for the entire month. Nothing was in bloom by the time the tournament happened and the club became very aware of how inefficient my supervisor was.

MILLWORKER • CRAWDAD

The Fort Bragg redwood sawmill is owned by Georgia-Pacific, a large company with interests in building materials and chemicals. Workers used to call bomb threats into the company. They waited until 1:00 pm on Fridays, in spring, when it was balmy and glorious. They would call the dispatcher, the same person they called in sick to, and say "I put four charges of plastique in the powerhouse. It goes off at 4:00. Nobody works today!" and hang up. Then they'd get a cold-pack and a gram of hash and drive out to the river. The tactic quit working around July, when it wore out from overuse. The dispatcher was instructed not to tell anybody, and no one looked for the bombs anymore.

The bomb-threat callers only wanted the occasional afternoon off, and took advantage of the political struggle then taking place between ownership, woodworkers and the first wave of reform-minded hippies and political radicals, who made it a point not to



The more that S.O.B. pushes me, the longer I'm going to take, even if it kills me.
— Anonymous millworker

On an orchard farm in the state of Washington a disagreement arose over conditions on the job. A strike took place. The I.W.W. members among the strikers immediately telephoned to the union in the nearest city. When the employer arrived in town looking for a new crew he was rather surprised at his speedy success. Full fare was paid for the men and the railway train was boarded. At the first stop, about two miles from the city, the whole crew deserted the train. They were all members of the union. Returning to the city, the farmer picked up a second crew. He arranged to have them pay their own fare, same to be refunded upon arrival on the farm. This crew went through all right and worked for a while under the farmer's direction. Thinking the strike was successfully broken the employer finally busied himself with other matters for the rest of the day. Next morning upon visiting the work the farmer was surprised to find that 1000 young trees had been planted upside down, their roots waving in the breeze as a mute evidence of solidarity and sabotage. No further argument was needed to convince the farmer of the justice of the demands of the original crew.

— Sabotage, Walker C. Smith, 1913³

We were instructed that there were three kinds of tomatoes in the field: the red ripe, the pinks, and the sunscaled. We were to pick the red ripers and the sunscaled but were to leave the pinks. Everyone takes baskets and puts them out at intervals along their row. As you fill one basket you move on to the next one. The tomatoes in the field were very poor. We were only supposed to pick red ripe ones. Everyone, however, was picking pink ones and rotten ones, more or less anything to fill up the basket."

— Work In Market and Industrial Societies, Herbert Applesbaum⁴

A good nursery manager is cognizant of the fact the most important factor of production relates to the employees. The proper and timely granting of employee rewards can have a major impact upon the success or failure of the business.

— Nursery Management⁵

get jobs in mills or timber.

Another favorite (but rarely successful) tactic is to drop metal and glass into the Hog, a machine which chops wood trimmings and waste into Hog fuel, or chips and dust to be burned for power generation. A metal detector and a full-time worker guard the Hog against such foreign objects, although the odd aluminum soda can will get by, and everyone then enjoys a half-day or so of relaxation while millwrights attend to the damaged blades. The mill loses between \$100 and \$200 per minute while the Hog is broken. Anyone caught intentionally dropping foreign material onto the Hog-feed chain is subject to stern discipline including termination, so it is not done lightly. Equipment breakdowns are fairly common events, and I always enjoyed them to the fullest while bosses got all red-faced and stood around wishing they could fix it with a hammer.

I suppose sabotage also might include hiding between the loads of lumber with three or four buddies and copping a buzz. At least half the workers I know are regular marijuana users, and their motive is to reclaim their minds, or at least to render them useless to the company. It's also a way to relieve the crushing monotony. They've instituted pre-employment urinalysis since my day, and they work harder at propagandizing the smoker against seeking peace through drugs, but let's be honest about this: getting a mill job is the quickest way to get on drugs. Speed is not quite as common as pot, but the effects are more profound and users are truly dedicated. And then there's alcohol.

Acts of sabotage are likely to be appreciated by some workers. Many seem to have no opinion. Others are so much in debt that they find ways to work even when their co-workers are sent home, and they are against sabotage.

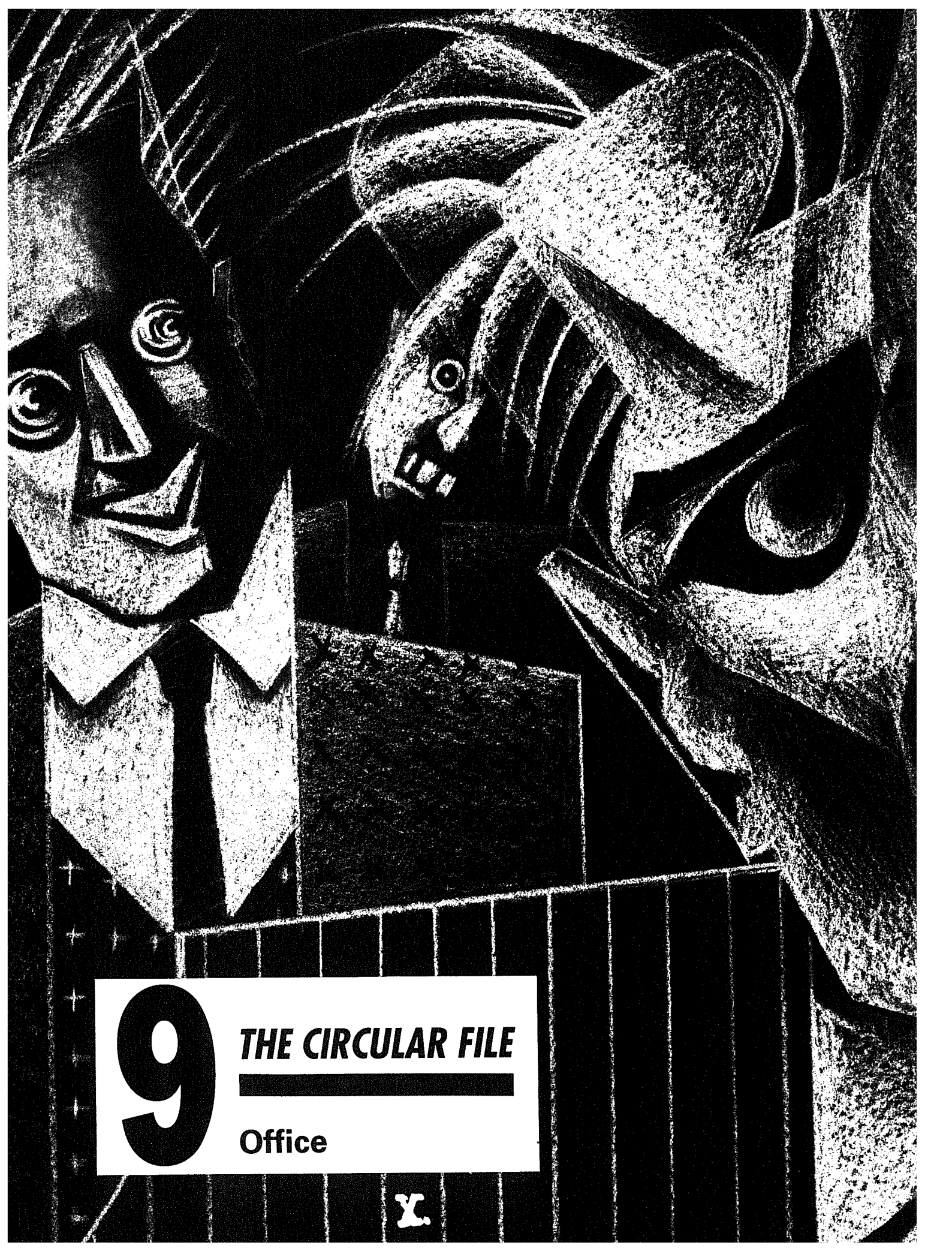
PLANT NURSERY WORKER • RYAN

I was the lowest one on the ladder, so naturally I was treated like dung. My main duties were carryout assistance and plant care — watering and stocking. I was also in charge of spraying very potent weed killer on the wild grass around the outside of the nursery. After having been accused of stealing items from the yard, I became very displeased with my job and my boss.

I knew where the weed killer was kept. Having access to the yard thanks to a section of iron fence that was wide enough to squeeze my ass through, I strolled in one evening and gave the plants a little drink. Starting with the expensive trees, I worked my way down to baskets of seeds, drenching them with that deadly cocktail that would soon take its toll. I used approximately seventy-five gallons of the poison in all. I got fired the next day because the boss said I was "too slow" and "unmotivated."

About a week later I cruised by the nursery to pick up my last check. I noticed that all the plants in the nursery were brown and dead. I also found out that a friend who also worked there had told the boss to fuck off the same day I was fired. Since I left on a good note (no argument or harassment), he was blamed for my deadly deed. Taking one last glance at the yard which was now a foliage cemetery, my heart swelled with hellish triumph.





9

THE CIRCULAR FILE

Office

X

Who first invented work — and tied the free — to this dry drudgery of the desk's dead wood?

— Charles Lamb

There are as many ways to steal from an employer as there are kinds of business.

— Nation's Business¹

Employees are doing the right thing when they report their suspicions because internal theft cannot flourish without the sanction of co-workers. It's extremely rare for large scale theft to occur without others knowing about it or becoming suspicious. Employees who immediately report their suspicions are preventing a small problem from becoming a major one, and this will benefit all employees who work in the company.

— The Peter Berlin Report on Shrinkage Control²

All of us on the insurance company "floor" were continuously aware of the constant surveillance — so aware that we had developed ways of appearing busy when we were actually socializing with our fellow workers. Those of us who had telephones found this easy: we simply used the old call-your-neighbor-on-the-phone trick. Thus both of us looked busy.

— Work in Market and Industrial Society, Herbert Applesbaum³

PARALEGAL • GEORGE

I worked for a personal injury law firm. It was one of those firms that you see advertised on television so there was never a shortage of clients. At any one time, we were handling about 1,100 cases in that office. Compared to the large amount of work, the staff was fairly small: there was the boss, three attorneys and usually ten paralegals.

My particular job was to handle cases from intake all the way through litigation. This means that if someone were in a car accident and hurt their neck, we'd get a hold of the police report and witnesses for them and write to the insurance company on their behalf, demanding money for pain, suffering and inconvenience.

There was a lot of autonomy in the job. When you started out you basically got your own office or a huge desk space. No one seemed to get in your way, which was nice. However, the workload was incredible and the clients were awful. The boss led these clients to believe that they could dictate when their settlements would come and how much they would be. Anything he could get away with he did, and we had to deal with all of the repercussions.

Starting salary was \$7 an hour with a review in six months, but we never got a decent raise. Instead, we got \$7.50 an hour plus twenty hours a week overtime which really makes no sense when you think about it. There's no way anyone could have worked overtime at this job without going nuts.

There was a very high turnover rate. A lot of people would only be there for a week. I worked there for two and a half years and the only way I lasted was by scamming.

We handled our own clients and essentially nobody really saw the cases. We were reviewed occasionally but never consistently. Often, out of the 150 cases we would have, five or so we called M.I.A. These were clients who were missing in action and hadn't been around for three or four years and their case was waiting to be settled. The insurance companies were calling us up wanting us to settle, but we couldn't without the authorization of the clients.

Well, some of us would find the authorization — that is, forge the client's signature, settle the cases, and distribute the money to the doctors and the attorneys who needed to be paid. The remainder went to the paralegals. It was good money. We felt that we had a right to the money. This guy was underpaying us and I really felt that he owed me. Even the born-again Christian woman I shared an office with did this, as did the top paralegals. It was a secret we all shared.

I don't know of anyone being caught. But as long as the doctors and attorneys got paid, why would the boss question anyone? If the client were to resurface, I suspect the boss would know what the paralegal did. He'd know that his business name would be in jeopardy if word got out, so he'd just pay off the client. I don't think that it could ever get out.

Like I said before, it was good money. Too bad I quit. It got to be very stressful. Even though I was only working about five hours

a day and getting paid \$2,300 a month, the lying was very unhealthy. I always had to look over my shoulder to protect myself.

INSURANCE FILE CLERK • RANDALL

One company was in the process of taking over another and needed to convert the old company's files to their system. I was working for a temp agency at the time and was called in with several other people to do the job.

About one-third of the files were people who weren't able to make their insurance payments. In the files I read a lot of letters from people explaining why they weren't able to keep up their payments. Some were pregnant, others couldn't find jobs and they had been sending in letter after letter telling the company that they wanted to keep in touch, and that they didn't want their credit fucked up. Most people *wanted* to pay back the loans, they just needed more time. Yet the company went ahead and put the loans on default. It wasn't like the company was going to fold if some people delayed payments.

Even though I had a boss looking over my shoulder the entire time, it was still pretty easy to let an defaulted insurance policy go on through without being checked. The boss only checked the file numbers, which were the laminated tabs that we were putting on the files, so if those numbers were right he didn't check much further. I started deliberately fucking things up by putting a paper in the wrong file or writing down one wrong number. I targeted the people who were in the most trouble. Once I put the wrong number on a file and it resulted in delaying an entire stack of defaults that were going to be mailed out the next day. What I did might not have helped them in the long run, but at least it gave them some time, and the company some trouble.

A nice fire would have done that place some good, but they had a good sprinkler system.

SECRETARY • ALICE

I worked part-time for a senior sales director at a cosmetic company. I was a secretary, handled the mail, made the bank deposits, ran errands and spent half my day at the copy shop. Some days it was hectic, some days it was slow; it just depended on what time of the month it was.

I worked there five years and the job was okay but towards the end I couldn't wait to get out. I wasn't making any money. The woman I worked for was one of the main directors and she made big bucks. She started me out at \$5 an hour and the first year I got a quarter raise every three months, so I ended up at \$6 an hour after the first year but I never got a raise after that. I was forty-four when I started and I needed a job at the time, so I took it thinking I would gradually get raises. I asked her for them and she always told me that she couldn't afford it. I knew she could afford it because I knew what she was making, I was handling her finances. She would go out and buy beautiful clothes. She just didn't want

A female secretary employed by the True Value chain in Kansas was stealing at a rate of \$1600 in four days. She said she stole a total of \$10,000, but the total was probably more. Her boss says, "If we were a single-store operation, we would have been out of business."

— *Hardware Age*

Women do two-thirds of the world's work ... yet they earn only one-tenth of the world's income and own less than one percent of the world's property. They are among the poorest of the world's poor.

— Barber B. Conable, Jr.,
President, World Bank

One third of the people in the U.S. promote, while the other two-thirds provide.

— Will Rogers, *The Illiterate Digest*

to pay *me* any more.

Into the third year of working there, I realized that it was lame and that I wanted to quit, but I needed the money and I didn't have much confidence. I started leaving early, maybe padding an hour here and there. She was out recruiting most of the time because the more people she had working for her, the more money she made. So I was there by myself most of the time. To me it was just a perk; I thought I deserved something, a little bit more than what I was getting. If there was nothing to do I would leave, which was OK, but I had to keep track of my hours. I would leave at 3:00 pm but say that I worked until 4:00 pm. She never knew the difference.

She offered me a ten percent discount on all cosmetics when I started, but shortly after the first year she took that away, saying she couldn't afford it. I never took anything without paying for it, but I would pay a little bit less for it. She never looked at the sales record. I didn't buy a lot of the stuff she sold because it was expensive and I didn't use that many cosmetics, but for the few things that I did use, I gave myself a discount.

I never really felt resentful towards her. Well, actually there was a period where I *did*, but in the end I figured that was just the type of person she was. She was cheap towards others but very good to herself, and I wasn't worth anything. She was so beautiful and elegant and I felt like a little dud.

I worked hard and these perks made me feel like I was getting something for my work. I did everything I was supposed to, and then some. She definitely took advantage of me and I knew it at the time. I now know that I shouldn't have stayed on as long as I did. I've never done anything like that before. I'm a very honest person but I feel like what I did wasn't wrong.

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT • CHRISTIAN

For ten years I was the executive assistant to the merchandising manager of a Fortune 500 retail corporation in the Midwest. My region included 120 retail stores where I bought and distributed inventory.

I worked really hard. Three months after I started, I was handling the largest volume of stores for the company. I maintained a very high profile and was very vocal. I moved up in the company for the first three years but was never promoted beyond that because there weren't any women in top management positions. That really pissed me off.

About six years ago I decided I wanted to do a publication, and I was trying to think of different ways to do it. Contributors sent me information, which I photocopied with no charge to them, because I had access to this incredibly beautiful photocopier at work. I usually got to the office at 6:00 in the morning — about an hour and a half before my co-workers arrived. I would be standing at the copier, filled with anxiety and thinking that someone was going to catch me. Occasionally the security guards would make their rounds and scare the hell out of me, but they probably thought I was an incredibly hard worker, doing work early. I had a box under my desk where I'd stash all of these papers. I always carried a knapsack to smuggle the stuff out little by little — a total of 8,000

sheets. It took about three weeks to get them all out. I published the magazine for three years. When I stopped, the company couldn't figure out why they all of a sudden had this huge backlog of paper.

I stole anything I could get my hands on and sold it at yard sales — a lot of supplies, an electronic stapler machine. It didn't even have to be anything I needed or wanted. With my extensive background in juvenile delinquency and petty theft, this kind of thing came naturally to me. I've always found it oddly justifiable, something like a company benefit. At times, it was highly profitable.

I didn't feel any guilt about anything I took. I figured out the value of the inventory I was buying and shipping, how much the stores were profiting from one day of my work, and how much I was getting paid. They could have paid me thirty times more for my work and it still wouldn't have come close to how much they profited from me. I never felt any remorse. I think good mischief is well worth the personal effort, especially when people are so incredibly underpaid for their effort.

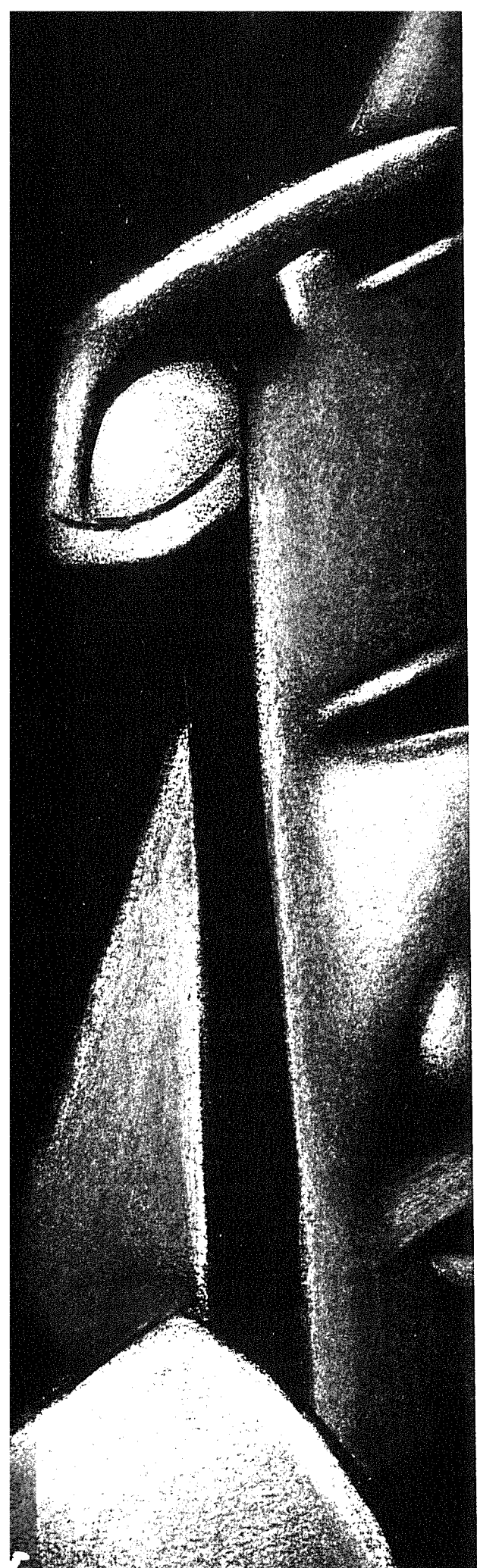
PUBLIC RECORDS RESEARCHER • ALEC

My job doesn't occupy my mind very much but I still find it interesting. I'm asked to extract anything as mundane as a birth or death certificate, or as important as a foreclosure on a house. It always amazes me that people pay me extraordinary sums of money to retrieve this type of information, when they can easily get it themselves.

I don't work in an office, so the company I work for doesn't have any real control over my workday. They beep me and give me job assignments. At the end of the week, I send them all the work that I've done. Since the company has offices all over the world, I get calls from different branches to do the work, so no one really knows what I'm doing unless I tell them. I'm supposed to be cost-effective, productive and efficient. I'm not supposed to have any down time; I'm supposed to account for every fifteen minutes of my time. They don't want anything in writing; they want numbers and categories.

I simply overreport my time. It's based on my mood at the end of the week, when I report. I regularly report thirty-five to forty hours a week of work but I actually only work about twenty. My company is aware that this could happen, and once they sent my supervisor to follow me through a typical day of work. But because I do the job every day and she doesn't, I drew out the search and I took longer than I normally would.

I said that the only real inefficiency was the time I had to spend on the phone talking to the branch office. "If this other office would just behave, I'd be the most productive corporate citizen you have!" As a result, my supervisor directed the office to give me my work in a completely different way. She thought this would save me two hours a day but it actually made my job even easier. My supervisor was content and said I was working hard and doing my job.



At Your Service.

— PG&E slogan

Most importantly, the workers must be made to understand that sabotage is not a blow against corrupt officials or the corporate bank account in New York, but a blow against their personal livelihood and economic welfare. Without worker support, a plan to combat sabotage cannot be successful.

— World Affairs⁵

Just as making coffee has been a symbol of "women's place" in the office, it is seen as a weapon by secretaries. One woman describes how it is used in her office:

"... that's one thing we discuss all of the time. And we told people different ways they can get out of it. Y'know, you throw salt in the coffee so that it tastes so awful they never ask you to make it again. You use three packs of coffee to make it. Y'know, play dumb and they will never ask you to touch it again."

Another describes her position as a secretary who opens mail as an opportunity to gather information about the company that can later be used to her advantage. Still another described several ways in which employees in her company acted together against their bosses. In this case, computer operators patched up windows to make it difficult for supervisors to observe them working. Furthermore, through discussion and experimentation, they learned how to jam the computers so that they had to shut down for short periods of time. Why was this done? "For a lot of reasons. Number one was that they were demoting us. And they didn't tell us. Everybody in the company knew but us. So when we found out we just sabotaged them." This same woman claims that this is common practice: "I found that everywhere I worked somebody knew how to mess them up."

— Organizing Women Office Workers,
Roberta Goldberg⁶

UTILITY FILE CLERK • HARRY

In certain sections of Pacific Gas & Electric people violently hate the company, and it doesn't take much to get people to talk about how much they hate it. In the elevator, people make jokes about going back to the salt mines. Many people have mentioned to me that they know that most of what we do is pointless and wish they could somehow arrange for the company to send them their paychecks at home and never come in. Management are all happy little monkeys committed to the corporate cause, but a lot of the regular workers aren't.

One particular section I worked in was involved in litigation with some of the employees who were either being hassled by the company or trying to get back at them for injury claims. I forget all of the legal jargon but there was a particular notice informing the company lawyers that the court date was on such-and-such day at such-and-such time. If the company didn't get the notice, their lawyer wouldn't show up, they'd forfeit the case and the employee would automatically win. One of my fellow clerks would fill brown bags with these notices. The bags would go out with him when he went on his break and they wouldn't be with him when he came back. They were gone. The guy knew it was all shit.

TELEPHONE SURVEYOR • IRIS

Sometimes the surveys were short and lasted five minutes, and other times they lasted forty-five minutes. We did surveys for political parties, lobby organizations and sometimes even for private businesses who needed to find out people's favorite detergent or hairspray. The surveys went from very menial to very opinionated.

The owner was a total asshole. He seemed to think he was high and mighty. It's almost like he hired younger people just so he could push them around and so he wouldn't have any confrontations on his own level. The job was so trivial and meaningless, but this was his life and livelihood. He felt he was doing something great for society.

It really wasn't very difficult work. Being able to talk and dial a phone were the only job requirements. We would sit at a desk and call people for six hours and fill out the surveys. The company would tell us how many surveys we were supposed to do every hour. Not only did we have to do the interviews, but we had to record if the person hung up and at what time.

Most people didn't do the interviews at all. We would make up names and answers for people we supposedly talked to. If we actually did call someone, we only put in some of their own answers. Sometimes if it was a survey about something that we felt strongly about, we wouldn't ask them certain questions, but just fill in our own answers.

The ironic thing was that with so much fucking around and every survey was so ridiculously wrong, the owner still had this big bulletin board with newspaper clippings of statistics based on

surveys that we had done. We would die laughing, because we knew all of the answers were wrong. They weren't even close to being accurate.

I don't think most people consciously fucked around; most did it because of the environment and the way the business was set up. The job was so tedious and the wages were pathetic. The way I see it, when you're in a situation that's unreasonable from the start, you have to compensate for it. That's just the nature of work. If people were getting what they deserved for working, there would be no need to screw around.

COPY EDITOR • BILLY

My job was to keep track of the word processors' errors and to monitor how much work was going through the system.

The word processors would be given all this work and they'd be under a lot of pressure to get it done quickly. They had to work really fast to keep their jobs, but when they worked faster, their error counts went higher. If their error counts were too high, the supervisors would chastise them for it. The supervisors would constantly threaten the word processors with this standard of productivity.

The management was trying to work both ends at the same time. They wanted them to work really fast, but they wanted their errors to be low, too. It's a completely unnatural expectation and these were just normal human beings. Besides, word processing anywhere is one of the worst jobs. It's the equivalent of piecework in a factory. So the word processors' morale would be low and the supervisors would be pushing them extremely hard, and then they'd ask for that little bit of extra effort.

My colleagues and I managed to sabotage that system by giving the word processors really low error quotients. We'd do it even if they made lots of errors. Everybody on my shift had an unspoken agreement about it. The word processors knew that we were on their side, which helped us when we had to deal with management later. It was always a tight rope situation because we didn't want to lose our own jobs. We had to make sure a reasonable amount of errors got recorded so the supervisors wouldn't realize what we were doing.

We ended up telling the supervisors about what was going on. If we hadn't, they never would have caught on. We explained to them that the system was completely illogical — they were undermining their own attempts to get the work done and forcing the word processors to make more errors than they ordinarily would. They eventually got rid of this system because it was so unmanageable. Because of our efforts, the word processors' jobs became more tolerable.

PARALEGAL • FRANCES

One Friday afternoon a memo was circulated through the law firm where I work. It informed employees that due to escalating health



Work avoidance includes employees hanging out at the water cooler or trying to look busy while not really doing anything

— Fortune Magazine⁷

When a man tells you he got rich through hard work, ask him whose.

— Don Marquis

"People who purposely abuse their paid working time are stealing from their employers, just as they would be if they stole money or products," says Robert Half, the employment expert who first identified — and named — time theft. "And time is a commodity that can never be replaced, replenished or restored."

He also announced the results of a nationwide survey of leading corporations. According to the personnel directors and top management executives who were interviewed, the major types of time theft are, in order:

- 1. Constant socializing with other employees and excessive personal phone calls. The largest form of time theft, by far.*
- 2. Faking illness and claiming unwarranted "sick" days.*
- 3. Inordinately long lunch hours and coffee breaks.*
- 4. Habitual late arrival and/or early departure.*
- 5. Using the company's time and premises to operate another business.*
- 6. Creating the need for overtime by slowing down during normal hours.⁸*

insurance prices, the firm would no longer allow employees to waive their insurance costs and have the \$190 a month premium included in their paychecks. There are 155 employees in the firm and about thirty-five have waived their health insurance. The firm was going to continue paying the insurance costs for those employees who didn't waive it, and those who did would have to enroll in the plan. The company thought that with 100 percent enrollment their premium costs would be lower.

We were all pretty shocked at this idea because many of us had waived the insurance when we began working here. When I was interviewed for the job, I made it clear that I wanted to maintain my private insurance. The company agreed and said they would apply the premium to my paycheck. I felt they had broken my employment contract.

We immediately understood that our salaries would be cut. We were upset, and I don't think any of us worked for the rest of the day. The whole week after the memo was released there was a lot of talk about what we could do to protect ourselves. We wrote up a petition and got about twenty people to sign it. I didn't care that I was spending time on this petition instead of work. I don't care about work, I care about protecting my income. I wasn't doing the work that I was being paid to do, but I said to myself that they were screwing me over and it was tit for tat.

If the company doesn't want to take care of their faithful employees who make their profits, then forget it. I'm not going to feel guilty about what I do. They are only looking to cut costs on the business end; they're not looking out for their employees.

TYPESSETTER • LINA

I've been a typesetter for twelve years and I've never met a typesetter who didn't steal his or her own services from an employer. I've seen it happen when I was working for magazines, advertising firms and commercial print shops. We make anywhere from \$10 to \$15 an hour. Typesetting services are billed to the client at \$75 to \$150 an hour. Every typesetter knows that his or her labor is not being compensated at the rate at which it is being sold.

Over the years, I've produced thousands and thousands of dollars of free work. When I typeset outside jobs, I use the company's equipment to make money for myself. When I typeset my name and address for my mailbox at home, I'm stealing for my own use. I also trade my typesetting for services; I haven't paid for a haircut in over ten years.

Oddly enough, when I had a very high-paying typesetting job, I felt no need to do outside work. In jobs where I've worked at the low end of the scale, I've always wanted to rip off the company. If I feel like somebody's treating me fairly, I don't want to steal from them. "Fairly" means a decent wage for my work and the feeling that I can do my own outside work once I've finished my work for them without having to hide it. If I have to hide it, I just feel more compelled to do it, as a way of saying "Fuck you!" It's human nature. If someone feels like they're not being ripped off, they won't feel compelled to rip off the person they work for.

PHYSICIAN RELATIONS MANAGER BARBARA

I worked for a large inner-city hospital. My job was to increase physician loyalty to the hospital by helping them be more successful and happy with the hospital. Then, they would be encouraged to use it more. I helped solve problems and identify concerns that physicians had with their practices. I was paid a base salary of \$50,000 and a bonus on top of that.

Because I represented the hospital, I had to know everybody in the hospital and how the hospital worked. I not only had to get to know the physicians, but I had to get to know every department head and manager.

I had excellent relations with everyone at the hospital. The only block I had was my boss. She came into the hospital as a high-powered consultant, but had no experience and very poor interpersonal skills. She had never worked at a hospital in a managerial capacity. Instead of developing relationships with other vice presidents, she came in with her master plan and tried to implement it. The other V.P.s resented that.

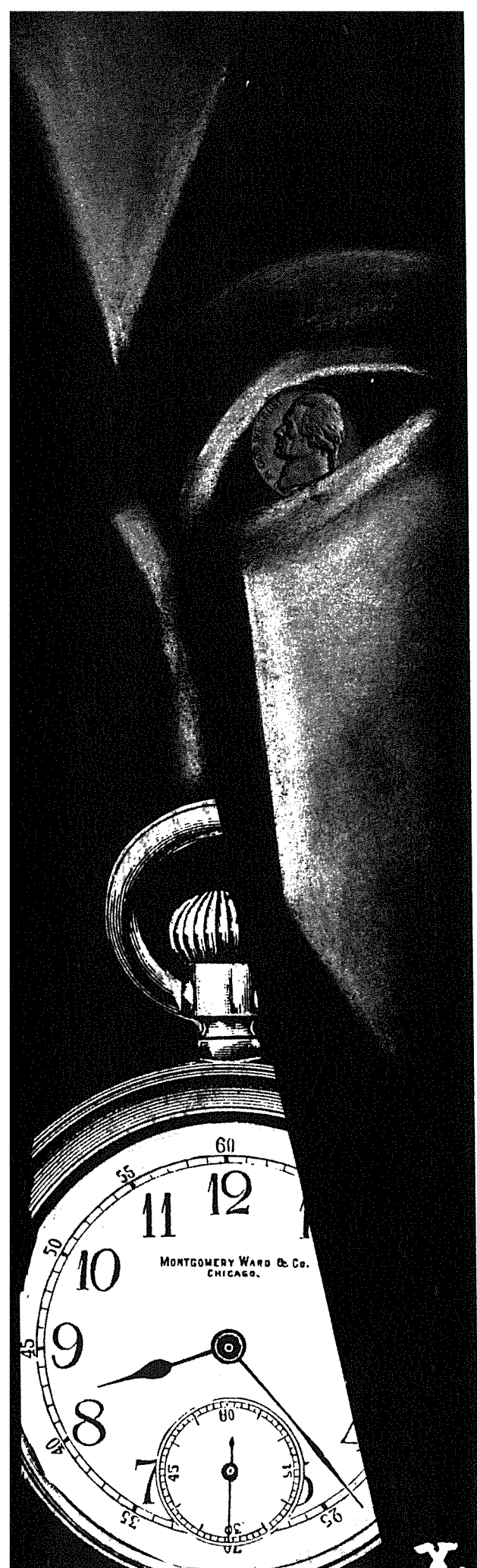
She had conflicts with me because I had developed strong relationships with the department managers. They were all telling her that they liked me, but *she* wasn't getting along with any of them. She knew that people would come to me and talk, but they wouldn't come to her and that bothered her.

Her managerial style was very controlling; I couldn't meet with anybody in the hospital without her approval. But to do my sales job, I needed to have a long leash. Here I was, a very well paid manager, but I was not allowed to talk with any physician or members of the office staff without her prior approval. I wasn't allowed to talk to anyone on the hospital's marketing staff because she didn't like them. I was not even allowed to go to the second floor of my building because that was where their department was located.

After a couple of months of harassment, my boss ended my relationships with the physicians associated with the hospital. She put together a ridiculous sales call list of physicians not on the hospital's staff. She gave me the list to deal with as a way to farm me out. The physicians on the list would take years to get on staff, if I were to get them at all.

I decided that I wasn't going to waste my time doing these bogus sales calls. I drafted up fake sales reports and sat in the office and read all day. I looked up the physicians in the medical society's directory, got all the information I needed, then wrote up various reasons why they weren't good prospects for the hospital. I figured that if she was going to make up a bogus sales call list, I was going to make up bogus sales call reports. I know some people would respond to a situation like this by getting more into their work and blocking it all out, but my response was to do nothing.

She wouldn't let me do the job I was hired to do. At the salary I was being paid, I should have at least been able to make small decisions such as whether or not I wanted to talk to an office



Stumble out of bed
and stumble into the kitchen
pour myself a cup of ambition
and yawn, and stretch
and try to come to life
jump in shower and
the blood starts pumping
out on the street and
the traffic starts jumping
with folks like me on the job from 9 till 5

Working 9 to 5
what a way to make a living
barely getting by
it's all taking and no giving
they just use your mind
and they never give you credit
it's enough to drive you crazy if you let it

9 to 5
for service and devotion
you would think that I would deserve
a fair promotion
want to move ahead
but the boss won't seem to let me
I swear sometimes that man
is out to get me

They let you dream
just to watch them shatter
You're just a step
on the bossman's ladder
But you've got dreams
he'll never take away
You're in the same boat
with a lot of your friends
waiting for the day,
your ship will come in
and the tide is gonna turn
and it's all gonna roll your way

9 to 5
they've got you where they want you
there's a better life
and you think about it, don't you
It's a rich man's game,
no matter what they call it
and you spend your life
putting money in his wallet

— "9 to 5," by Dolly Parton⁹

manager. Because I wasn't allowed to think or do anything on my own, it was obvious that she wanted me to be her glorified secretary. I refuse to feel guilty about not working for someone who doesn't acknowledge me as a fellow human being and a professional.

Yesterday I was a dog. Today I'm a
dog. Tomorrow I'll probably still be a dog.
Sigh. There's so little hope for advance-
ment.

— Snoopy





10 **WHITEWASH**

Maintenance

x.

CONVALESCENT HOME JANITOR • HERB

I had to clean the rooms, scrub toilets, mop floors and empty garbage cans. The place had two wings: one in the front and another in the back. I was always assigned to the front wing, so if I wasn't there, the other two janitors on the shift wouldn't notice unless someone specifically needed me for something. I was virtually unsupervisable.

I actually had to work hard and fast cleaning the wing. It takes a lot longer than you would imagine. The nurses would be yelling at me and all of the patients would be saying, "Get my bed pan!" I just felt like, "Fuck you. I'm sick of this." But the people who lived there were more important to me than the boss. They were all old people who didn't mean any harm, and they paid a lot of money so they wouldn't have to look at shit. They were the ones I felt I had to answer to.

Unfortunately, I couldn't sneak out of the building using the front door because I'd pass the nurses' station and the supervisor's office. This problem was quickly remedied with a bit of cleverness. When the employees' lounge was empty, I would sneak in, take the screen out of the window, jump outside, then put the screen back in the window. Now, the possibilities were endless. Usually I would walk down the street to a nearby dental complex, hang out in the shade for a half-hour or so, then climb back in through the window, punch out, and go home. Usually when I came back from a little stint, people would ask me, "Where were you? We were trying to find you." I would just say, "Oh, I had to go to the bathroom," or some bullshit like that. As far as I know, no one ever missed me.

UNIVERSITY MAINTENANCE WORKER ADAM

We get in and out of the buildings very easily without being questioned. We always look like we belong wherever we may be because we wear work gloves and have a truck with the university insignia on it. The university spans across an entire city in New Jersey, so we can go wherever we want without our supervisors thinking anything of it. This gives us a lot of freedom to do whatever we want. We regularly drive the truck to one co-worker's house and go to sleep for a couple of hours, then we go back and punch out.

The university was renovating an academic building and they put a lot of the furniture, carpet, space heaters and track lights in a warehouse that our department shares with whatever department was being renovated. It was all just piled up and none of it was labeled. I figured no one would miss anything. One day I told my boss we had to work overtime because there was a lot to do. Then three of us loaded up the university truck with two dressers, two desks, three chairs, three beds and some lights. Later I went back and got two carpets. A guy I worked with got two mattresses and track lights.

I took most of the stuff because I was moving into a new

In April 1971, President Nixon told the Republican Governors' Conference at Williamsburg about his thoughts on the rewards of honest toil. "Scrubbing floors and emptying bedpans," he claimed, has "just as much dignity as there is in any work to be done in this country—including my own." In September of the same year, before a joint session of Congress (and three days after a Labor Day statement containing the same theme), he again declared that, "No work is demeaning or beneath a person's dignity if it provides food for his table and clothes and shelter for his children."

*—Where Have All the Robots Gone?
Harold L. Sheppard and
Neal Q. Herrick*

Boredom, after all, is a form of criticism.

—William Phillips

One security professional says: ten percent of the people you hire will never steal; ten percent will steal regardless of what you do; and eighty percent will stay honest if you create an environment that discourages and detects theft. Our job is to keep the first ten percent, to identify and get rid of the second ten percent, and to protect the other eighty percent against themselves.

—Nation's Business²

apartment. I didn't own any furniture and I needed it. It was free and very easy to take; no one questioned us and I don't think anyone even noticed. They were so incredibly disorganized. If they *did* miss the stuff, they probably just chalked it up to the move.

If I had to rationalize doing it, I'd say that there wasn't a revenge motive, just fair give and take.

CEMETERY GROUNDSKEEPER • JERRY

For two years I worked at Sunnyside Cemetery in Long Beach. I did everything from general maintenance to funerals — you know — burying people.

When I first got the job I didn't fuck off much, but then we got a new supervisor. He had been a navy captain for forty years and wanted everything in order just like in the military. Sometimes he would just follow me around, checking up on everything that I did. He made us work when there was no work to be done. We had to cut the grass even if it didn't need it, just to keep busy. He was so gung ho and jumpy that it pissed me off, so I didn't even try to work.

I got tired of breathing the gas fumes from the lawn mower, and found that I could go out to the yard and just pretend that I was mowing the lawn. The yard was a thirteen acre circle so once I got a couple of acres away the supervisor couldn't hear if the mower's engine was running. Usually there were other machines going which helped increase my cover. I never turned the motor on. I just faked it; pulled the line and just walked around. I'd be out there for hours just pushing a switched-off mower around. Sometimes, when it was too hot and I was completely out of the supervisor's sight, I would stash the mower behind a grave marker and climb up into a tree and hide. I'd just sit up there and relax.

I would never fuck with any of the funerals or bodies because that was disrespectful to the families. It would be like doing something to somebody that you didn't know.

GOFER • SPENCER

The place was an old ice house which had been converted to a wholesale furniture and design mart with hundreds of designer showrooms. I was one of the people who worked for the building manager. We had to do things like water the plants and replace lightbulbs; if the tenants of the building needed something, we were there to help them. We were basically gofers. When I first started working there, the manager liked me, but then he realized he had married a monster.

The slimeball manager had this cutesy idea to promote the building. He bought this block of ice every day and stuck it out on this old scale in front of the building, in reference to what the building was originally built for.

I was friends with one of the owners of a small company in the building who had her cocktail every afternoon at 4:00 pm. The ice-making machine that made the party ice was broken and had been for several days. She would call up the office everyday and com-

All will and laziness are weapons that the slave uses to recover a part of his personality stolen by the master; and his ineptitude results from the absolute lack of incentive to develop his intelligence. It is slavery, not nature, that makes the slave.

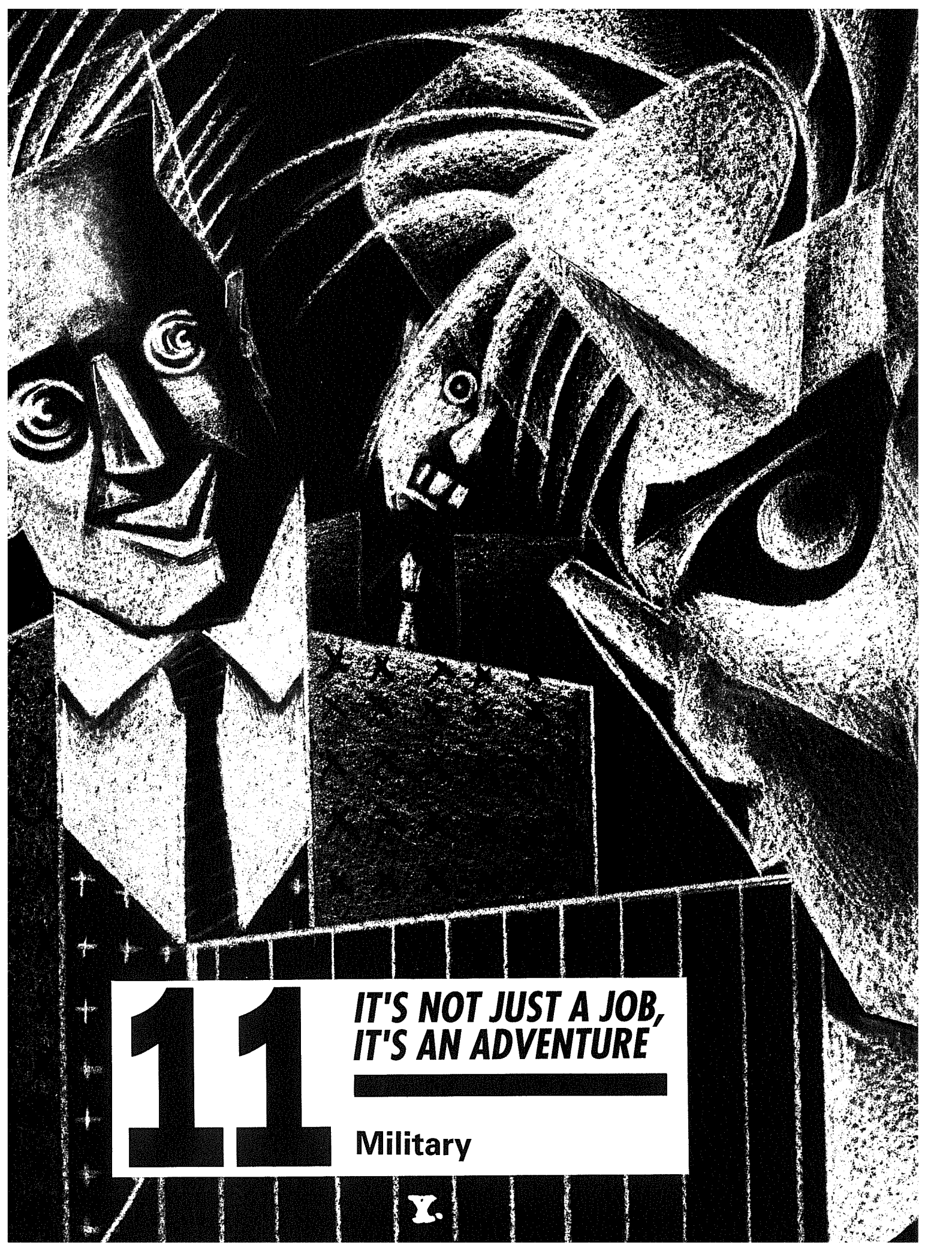
— Pierre Dupont de Nemours³

It is not that the goof-off or goldbrick is lazy. He is not. It is more frequently the case that he gets some sly satisfaction at succeeding in avoiding work.

— Supervisor's Factomatic, Jack Horn⁴

plain, but the boss never did anything about it. This woman got very upset because they didn't keep the ice machine in good repair. As you can imagine, not having ice can seriously hamper the beginning of cocktail hour. So she had me paged and sent up to her showroom. She said, "You gotta do something about this ice." I said, "No problem, be back in a moment." I figured we weren't meeting our commitment to the building's tenants; the cocktail hour isn't happening; cocktail hour must happen. I grabbed a sledgehammer and, with one of my other goofball gofers, went down to the block of ice and smashed it into two million pieces. We picked up as much party-sized ice as we could, delivered it to the showroom, and proceeded to have cocktails with the owner.





11

***IT'S NOT JUST A JOB,
IT'S AN ADVENTURE***

Military



INFANTRYMAN • JACK

Labor is discovered to be grand conqueror, enriching and building up nations more surely than the proudest battles.

— *War, William Everly Channing*

1.8 million gallons of airplane fuel at the huge American supply base at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, blew up in the night on May 24th. Military authorities were quick to attribute the mysterious incident to a declining level of carefulness and the rise in drug use among US soldiers, even though no contact was made with the enemy commandos and no US losses were reported. Officers were unable to give an account of the enemy's methods in attacking the fuel storage area, but simply stated that "they obviously got past someone who should have spotted them." They are either not aware of what's going on around them or they have chosen to cover up what is most obvious to us: that this action was carried out by resisters inside the army.

— *RITA (Resisters Inside the Armed Forces) Newsletter¹*

In August 1977, Lieutenant Colonel Lindsay L. Baird, Jr. (USA ret.) told a Senate subcommittee that while he was provost-marshal of the United States Second Division, Korean criminals, military people, politicians and police conspired with United States Army enlisted men to manipulate the Army's inventory of supplies in Taegu. The thefts occurred in the early 1970s; they involved Schneider-like deception, and cost the United States government \$28 million a year.

— *Controlling White Collar Crime, John M. Carroll²*

I didn't really have any special outlook on life. I hadn't gone to college, I didn't have any skills or job interests, and I'd been arrested. When I finally got the draft notice that had been hanging over my head, it sort of came as a relief. I wouldn't have to worry about a job or car payments.

Because of my blue collar background, I didn't resist the draft. I realized that everybody was going and it didn't occur to me to not go. I figured my only options would be to go to jail or to Canada. I didn't know anybody who went to Canada, and I had been to jail myself and knew what that option was like. Getting drafted just seemed kind of exciting because at that point I had a really dull life. I didn't really think they would send me to Vietnam and I didn't think they would put me in the Infantry because I thought that I was a pretty smart guy. I thought they would give me some special job to do in Germany.

By my first or second day in the Army I wasn't too pleased with my situation. I didn't do well for the same reason that I didn't do well in school: I don't like being told what to do. I didn't like the people I had to deal with and my frustration just built up more and more. Before long I was in Vietnam.

My job description was to walk to the top of a hill and dig a hole. Through the night I would sit in that hole or sleep by it. I would get up at dawn and walk to another hill and dig another hole. If I ever saw anybody who didn't dress like me I was supposed to kill him.

As with most of my peers, sabotage was part of the daily routine. Some of this sabotage was malicious, much of it to relieve the tedium of life on the battlefield or to ameliorate the effects of drudgery, exposure and exhaustion. Some of it was done for profit. Some of it was homicidal.

When I first got there, I threw away a lot of food, ammo and explosive devices because I was so overburdened with equipment I couldn't carry it all. I would dismantle incendiary devices to use the plastic C4 explosive as a source of heat to stay warm or as a way to cook food. When I was on guard duty, out of boredom I dismantled fifty caliber tracer shells to make fireworks. We just destroyed stuff out of boredom.

I put a huge rock in a friend's pack when he wasn't looking so he would strain himself to delirium on the march, just so we could laugh. When we were sent out at night to pull an ambush, we found a place to hide instead so we could sleep. I fell asleep on guard duty because I was too tired to stay awake, but I got caught for that. I refused to take anti-malaria pills in the hopes I would get malaria and be evacuated out of the bush. I jogged in place with a full pack in noonday sun in a brush fire in an attempt to get heat prostration. I disobeyed direct orders from an officer on the battlefield. I challenged my platoon sergeant to a fight. I was caught smoking pot. I allowed my weapon to become rusty and caked with mud, gambled when I was supposed to clean my weapon and slept when I was supposed to be packing up my gear. When I walked point I went really fast so the company would get hot and tired and pissed off. Sometimes I would lead the squad to a place where there was no

likelihood at all of running into the enemy. Why look for trouble? Once while on a march I fell to the back of the company, planning to blow my brains out; another soldier changed my mind.

In the end, I vowed to never forget what those bastards made me do. I still haven't.

CORPSMAN • RAMIRO

Talk about a bureaucratic nightmare — the military wastes millions of dollars just in paperwork and the manpower to manage it. It is so bogged down with numbers and rules that nobody really knows what is going on. It is so easy to screw up the process — just add numbers here and there. I entertained myself by causing as much confusion as possible.

I was a quiet sort of guy who kept to himself. The thing I enjoyed most was destroying important documents. Whenever I found one, I would crumple it up and flush it down the toilet. Because I was senior corpsman, I was trusted and had access to military records. I found the executive officer's health record and threw the whole thing away. He had to be re-immunized because he had no medical record. He was really pissed.

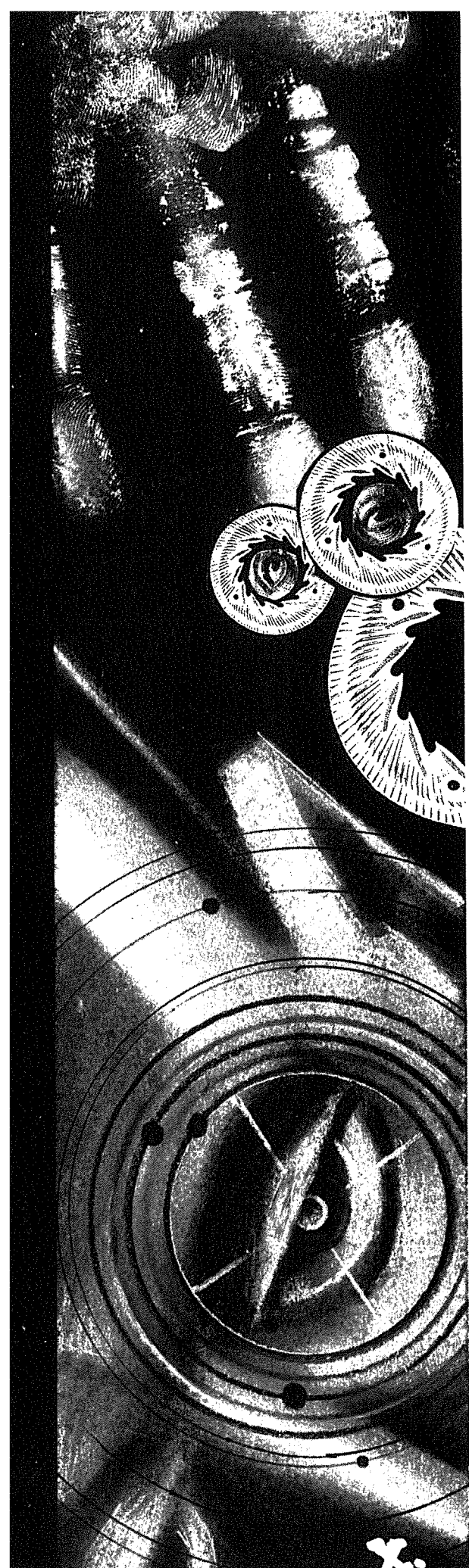
I was also in charge of ordering supplies. Once I ordered some bandages and added some extra numbers on the form to see what would happen. A generator for a ship had the same exact number I used and this stirred up a lot of problems. I made sure that everything was wrong. There was no way to check on my work. There was so much to check, who would take the time to do it?

SONAR TECHNICIAN • MICHAEL

In 1978 the USS Cook pulled into Hunter's Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco. A few crew members and one officer frequented the Mabuhay Gardens during that period, catching Negative Trend, Crime, the Nuns, Dead Kennedys and many other bands. The core of this crew became colorful proponents of punk on board the Cook. The officer quickly found the subculture at odds with his Naval career. He resigned his commission, but not after bringing some members of Magister Ludi onboard for supper in the wardroom, the inner sanctuary of "gentlemen officers" on board ships.

At that time Jim Williams began recording his own music in LAPS, the space that contained the generator that powered the Cook's sonar system. Coincidentally, most of the ship's punks were sonar men. LAPS became their focus. The space's unique closed air system allowed them to get high without fear of getting caught. A powerful vent sucked any offending smoke into the system. Roaches were disposed of in the same way, never to be seen except during monthly filter cleaning in which the sonar men recycled their reefer during "dry times" at sea.

For me the Navy was a job, an unpleasant one. I tried to escape, but got arrested on the highways for hitchhiking. I arrived onboard the Cook as a deserter, having gone AWOL three months before. I was brought to the ship in handcuffs with another Cook runaway,



John S., who introduced me to the other Cook punks. Being a sonar man myself, I eagerly became a member of this group of outcasts.

A few months later, when John S. claimed to be bisexual, he became the first Cook outcast to be cast out. He was discharged under less than honorable conditions. Disgust and hatred towards us from the rest of the crew grew precipitously after John's discharge. Alienated and increasingly out of touch with punk subculture in general, we hunkered down in LAPS getting stoned, listening to whatever music we could get and recording our own bare-bones music.

During a long overseas cruise, bigotry against us reached its zenith. One guy was constantly harassed and attacked, especially after he carved FTN (fuck the Navy) in his forearm. I found myself in trouble constantly, going before the captain three times in as many months.

After spending two months off the coast of Iran during the hostage crisis, the Cook got its order to head home. Somewhere along the way Jim W. and I decided we were going to put out a fanzine for punk gobs (slang word for sailors). Late at night, with keys borrowed from friends, we snuck into the personnel office and used their typewriters and xerox machines to produce the first issue of *PDL* (Punk Dialogue).

Soon after *PDL* came out, Jim was discharged. We tried to get another issue out, but the command discovered our use of government property and stopped us from putting out another "anti-Navy magazine of a subversive nature." It would have included a guest editorial from Mike H. about his recent bust and harassment for having one marijuana seed in his pocket, among other things. Then Mike was discharged. Dispirited, all of my co-conspirators gone and Darby Crash dead, I became depressed and dove headfirst into my own nightmares.

I spent the rest of my naval career being just about the only person into punk onboard. The Navy began cracking down on drugs and issued random and frequent piss tests. I straightened up, didn't get into too much trouble, and became the division's supply petty officer. In that position for nearly two years, I was able to order notebooks, pens, staplers, stationery and other tools to be used after my eventual discharge.

MECHANIC • A.J.

The military claims to have a big concern for safety. They were always telling us, "Be safe. It saves lives." The side effect is that when an accident occurs, there's usually a lot more damage to the machine than to people. People are cheap, machines are expensive. The military is concerned with keeping things intact machinery-wise because that's what costs money.

When I was sent to a base in Germany, it was my job to help keep the equipment in running order. Most of the equipment was manufactured in the 1940s and was really poor quality or jerry-rigged to work. The stuff had seen years and years of neglect because of a military tradition: inefficiency. If we could get away without fixing something, we would. If we could get away with

Two former Air Force base security policemen who pleaded guilty to stealing three fighter jet engines worth nearly \$10 million were sentenced in Salt Lake City to federal prison terms. The case grew from a two year Pentagon investigation of thefts from bases in the West and Southwest that resulted in charges against nearly three dozen military personnel and civilians.

— *LA Times*³

When you have no control over a job, then besides the various withdrawals from work such as absenteeism and sickness we are likely also to find sabotage — "the conscious act of mutilation or destruction" that reduces tension and frustration.

— *Cheats at Work, Gerald Mars**

destroying something, we would. The army was like any other job: you did what you had to do and got away with as much as you could.

The sabotage I did was intentional. I covered my ass by pretending I fucked up. Every chance I got, I fucked something up. I found out that if I put grease in the bearings of a truck, it destroyed the whole axle system. I was supposed to check the oil in the trucks, but why should I? I would purposely run it 'til it died. I would sit under the truck, smoke cigarettes, and enjoy the day. If someone came by, I would pick up a wrench and pretend I was working.

You can find out what deadlines a truck. There's criteria, like if the brakes are out, you can't use the vehicle. If you don't drain it, it fills up with water. So, of course, I would never drain the tanks and they would fill up with water so the brakes wouldn't work. It would be deadlined and I wouldn't have to drive it.

I figured I didn't want to deadline where it'll be fixed in three days. I wanted months and months of delay. We had this generator that ran on gas and we put diesel in it. It took them three weeks to run the exhaust system clean and then it never really worked right again. They have these panel switches: if you don't turn them off, current runs through it and it drains the battery. It's really cold in Germany during winter and power drains real fast. So you leave it on, and the battery's dead. When I left the Army, it was still dead. They said they didn't have any batteries, because they're items that they couldn't just replace, they had to trade them in. So first we had to get the battery, send it, wait for it to come back and then they put it in and we would break it again.

CORPSMAN • HARALD

I joined the military in 1967 to get away from high school and my parents. I ended up at Great Lakes Naval Training Camp and became hospital corpsman so I wouldn't have to fight in any war. The ironic part was that I didn't even know there was a war going on at the time. When I got to the hospital corps school I met this man and he told me that he was getting the hell out of the place. I asked why and he said, "There's a war going on in Vietnam and if you're a hospital corpsman that's where you're going to go." I hadn't even heard of Vietnam so I stuck it out and stayed there. I didn't really do anything but finish at the bottom of my class. I don't think it was because I was stupid, but more just that I wasn't interested in doing a lot of homework.

Later on I ended up at Little Creek Amphibious Base where I worked in a dispensary. By this time I was frustrated with the military because they controlled my time and work habits. I got orders for Field Medical School at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. I spent a month there learning jungle training and how to take care of patients who had been blown apart. Then I spent five months on a ship in the Caribbean, three weeks of that in Panama. It was 1968 and there were a lot of demonstrations going on and a lot of alternative scenes started growing. Even though I was in North Carolina, I could see, through the media, what was happening. When I was in Panama I realized that I might die, so at that point I decided I was going to resist.

I became involved with radical politics. I admired people like Ho Chi Minh, Malcolm X, Huey Newton, and Karl Marx, and put pictures of them in my locker on the base. We had an inspection and everyone had all of their clothing laid out on their beds. I had given my uniform away so I had none. When the inspecting officers came to me, I opened my locker and they saw all of these photographs. Everyone went totally bananas. They stopped the inspection with me. They didn't look at any more people, beds, lockers or anything. That afternoon I had liberty, and when I came back, I found out that everyone who had associated with me was being interrogated to find out if I was trying to convert them to Communism.

I used a lot of drugs, never dressed properly and always tried to get away with not getting a haircut. These actions may seem insufficient to a lot of people, but in the military, not having a haircut is the ultimate form of rebellion. You can make a major or general's face turn red just because your hair is an eighth of an inch too long.

I guess it finally came down to the fact that after spending two years getting ready to go to Vietnam, I knew my number was going to happen and I knew I had to take a more direct stance against the war. I ended up deserting a number of times, the longest time being a month. When I came back I demanded a court martial. Reluctantly, they gave me one. I spent a month in the brig. It was a horrifying experience. I witnessed a person getting beat to death by the guards. After I came out, I went AWOL a few more times. I spent another two months in the brig and when I came out, that was it, my military career was over. They finally gave me a psychological discharge.

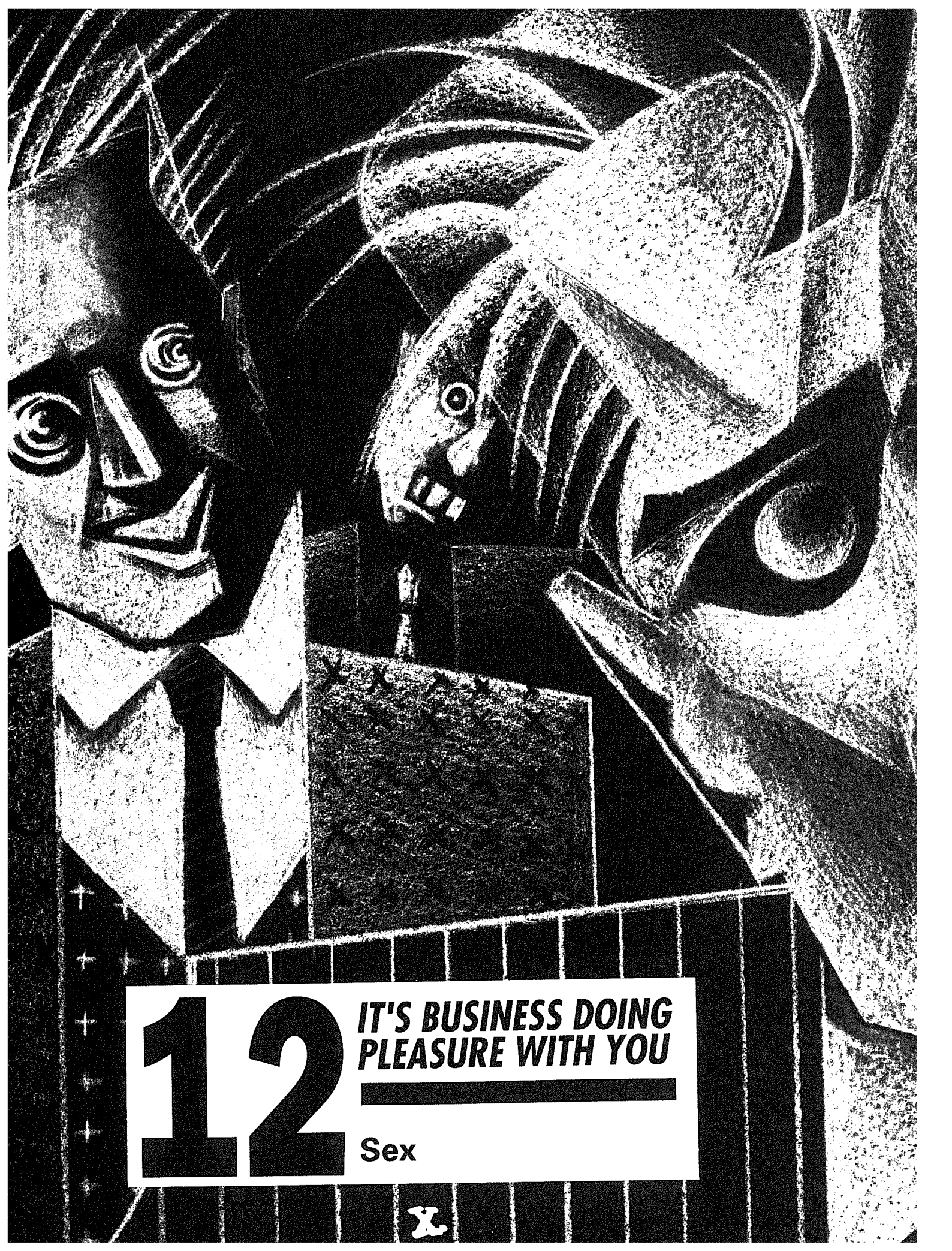
The soldier's body becomes a stock of accessories that are not his property.

— Antoine de Saint-Exupery,
Flight to Arras

Most of us are on the verge of revolt a good deal of the time, but we don't do anything because we're too tightly harnessed.

— William Feather, *The Business Life*





12

**IT'S BUSINESS DOING
PLEASURE WITH YOU**

Sex

X

PROSTITUTE • JANE

I slept with men for money. I worked in a brothel that was advertised as a massage parlor with five other women on an eight-hour shift. The majority of customers were just married, middle class men. Some guys were disabled and had a hard time finding someone to be with, so it was easier for them to pay for it. The owner was this 700-pound deadhead man who was really friendly and had a deadhead wife. He never messed with any of the women who worked there, and didn't treat us differently than if we were working at any other job.

The owner got tired of the business so he took on this new partner. This new guy couldn't handle things and stopped coming into the parlor except to pick up the money at the end of each night. So, we got to manage ourselves. We were in charge of all the money, but our rent, bills and the cops were all still paid by the owner, which was the best part.

The men would come in and pick the girl they wanted. When we got them in the room alone, we would find out what they wanted. The guys would pay \$25 for a half-hour, and everything else went to us except for our room fee, \$10 per customer. We got paid average to what women in other brothels were getting paid.

We were making pretty good money — but then we decided to up our rates. It was supposed to be \$60 for a hand job, \$70 for a blow job and \$80 for a full service, which is what we called sex. We started charging \$80, \$90 and \$100. The customers couldn't really argue with us because we could do practically whatever we wanted. Sometimes we kept the place open later or opened up earlier than we were supposed to. Everybody was supposed to do three customers a day; that was the average. The owners didn't know how many customers came in on a night or how much each one was charged.

Each night we picked a woman to run the books. She would keep track of the money that came in, the room fees, and if a customer used a credit card. The woman doing the books would document most of the customers but leave out three a night, which would total about \$60 that she got to keep. Each night we took our turn doing the books. We all agreed to it and it worked out great. We worked really well with each other and all became friends.

This gave us the feeling of being more than just prostitutes, because we had control over our bodies and what we were doing. I think we all deserved the extra money. For sleeping with someone, you should get all the money you can.

STRIPPER • DAISY

I've been working in the sex industry for the past nine years. I started out working as a street prostitute. When I turned eighteen, I started dancing as a stripper. For the next few years I worked sometimes as a dancer or stripper, and sometimes as a call girl. For the past four years I've pretty much been dancing steadily, working as a stripper at clubs or at bachelor parties where an agency sets me up.

In San Francisco, most of the strip clubs are run and owned by

In this prostituting society, we all have to hustle, and I'd rather suck cock than kiss ass!

— Margo St. James, Founder, COYOTE
(Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics)

What he really wanted to do was watch two women make love, and then he wanted to have sex with me ... Of course, we faked it, the woman and me. The ethic was: You don't participate in a sexual act with another woman if a trick is watching. You always fake it. You're putting something over on him and he's paying for something he didn't really get. That's the only way you can keep any sense of self-respect. The call girl ethic is very strong. You were the lowest of the low if you allowed yourself to feel anything with a trick. The bed puts you on their level. The way you maintain your integrity is by acting all the way through.
(Roberta Victor interview)

— Working Studs Terkel¹

A whore is a woman who takes more than she gives. A man who takes more than he gives is called a businessman.

— Charles Bukowski

A little theft is good for morale.

— Psychology Today²

Money talks, bullshit walks, and we don't have to put up with anything we don't want.

— Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry, Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander, eds.³

men. At the one where I work, the men always want the women to do more for less money. The word will come down and quite often the women will simply disregard it. There's not a lot the owners can do. If they want us to do a particular show we don't want to do, it just doesn't get done. If they don't want to pay for something we charge for, we simply won't do it unless we figure out ways to do it and get paid for it. We get away with it because they're not there during every interaction with a paying customer.

Where I work, the customers pay the club to get in the door. If they want to see private shows, like table dances or an individual girl dancing in a peep show situation, they have to tip the girl extra. We basically call the shots when we're in private. There's nothing they can do about it. They want us to give certain kinds of shows away for free. They try to orchestrate it so that we do it and it simply fails because we just don't do it. The women charge anyway.

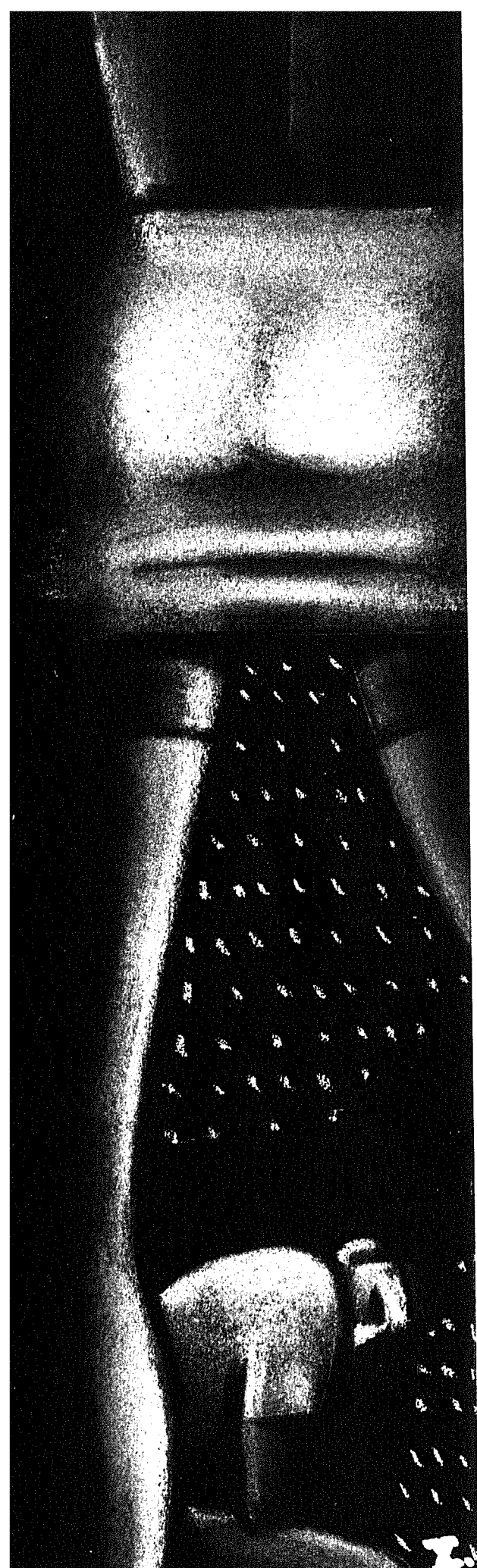
Most of the women I know fake it all the time. Even if you're just a dancer, men will ask you if you get off onstage. I say, "I'm a dancer. I dance all day." That's part of the job, faking it. We're actresses, acting like we're sexually turned on all the time. We're in an entertainment industry. They come there to be sexually turned on and entertained that way, so that's how we act.

A lot of the time, call girl or bachelor party agencies that send strippers out on calls will try and get them to go places that they don't want to go. They'll try and get you to go somewhere where the guy isn't going to pay you all the money that you want to get paid, or that's too far away. They'll threaten you with not giving you any more calls or parties. Sometimes you'll talk to the customers on the phone and it won't feel right; it doesn't feel safe. If you don't have a good feeling about something, you don't want to put yourself into a situation that could be dangerous. Out calls and even bachelor parties, which I do now, can be dangerous, even with a male escort. Sometimes you really have to argue with the agency you're working for, and you have to be willing to simply tell them no. Even if they try to blackmail you into going somewhere you don't feel comfortable, you know that you can get work elsewhere. All kinds of agencies will try to get you to take parties and go on calls that you don't feel comfortable doing, because they're going to get their fee. The sabotage there is just refusing, or going along with your instincts, setting your boundaries and your price, and sticking to that.

EROTIC DANCER • RICO

The place was a small, dark, gay adult theater. It catered mostly to tourists and businessmen. They had four or five shows a day; I never did more than two shows daily. The money was good. I got \$35 for the show and then tips, so sometimes I would walk out with \$50 for fifteen minutes of work.

My "official" job description was erotic performer, but they called us jack-off artists. We'd get on stage and do a little erotic dance, take our clothes off, get hard, then jack off and hopefully have an orgasm on stage. The owner had this rule that we had to go down into the audience and let these men feel us up and stuff dollars in our socks. They weren't allowed to touch our genitals or



ass, but everything else went. It wasn't very pleasant and I never felt too good about that.

I didn't like the owner to begin with, and I didn't like how he operated the place. He fired people all the time, often without paying them for their last show.

One night I went on, did my show, collected my tips, went backstage and as I was getting dressed, the owner came back. He said, "You didn't open the curtain." (There was a curtain that blocked off the movie screen when we were dancing, and we were supposed to open it up when we were through.) But I *had* opened it. He said, "Go out and open the curtain," so I went out on the stage. He came out and said, "That's not far enough," but it was all the way open and wasn't blocking the screen at all. He kept saying to open it up more. He was being very demeaning. I went backstage and he came back and said he didn't appreciate my attitude and that he didn't need me around anymore. I knew he was pulling the same shit that he had pulled on the other people but I thought I'd make it harder for him by making a scene. For show, I begged him to work just another week. He turned around and said, "I don't know why I hired you in the first place and no, I'm not going to need you anymore."

I got right up in his face and said, "You're the biggest piece of shit that I've ever laid eyes on. You can't get away with degrading people and tossing them aside the way you do. I don't know what kind of power trip you're on, but it's not going to work with me!"

He slapped my face. I had my motorcycle helmet in my hand and after he did that, I started pounding him with it. He turned around to leave and I grabbed him by the back of the collar and punched him in the face a couple of times. I threw him down on the floor and kicked him really hard in the side, then I went out to the audience and yelled, "I want everybody in this room to know that this man just struck me backstage."

He came out holding his side, and tried to make me shut up. He said, "You'd better get out of here or I'm going to call the cops."

When he mentioned the cops, a few people in the audience got up and left. I said I wouldn't leave until I got paid. I went to the front of the theater, where the cash register was, to get my money. The owner told the guy at the cash register not to pay me. He said he had called the police and they were coming and I said, "Fine, let them come." I told him I was going to go to the Health Department to tell them that he makes me go down into the audience where guys who have come all over their hands stick their fingers up my ass. I knew the Health Department wouldn't be too happy about that, and would close him down in two seconds.

After a few more threats, he finally gave me the money and told me to leave before the police came. I thought, "Fuck that; I'm going to wait to tell my side of the story." When the cops came, I told them what I had threatened to tell the Health Department; they believed my story and the owner never pressed charges.

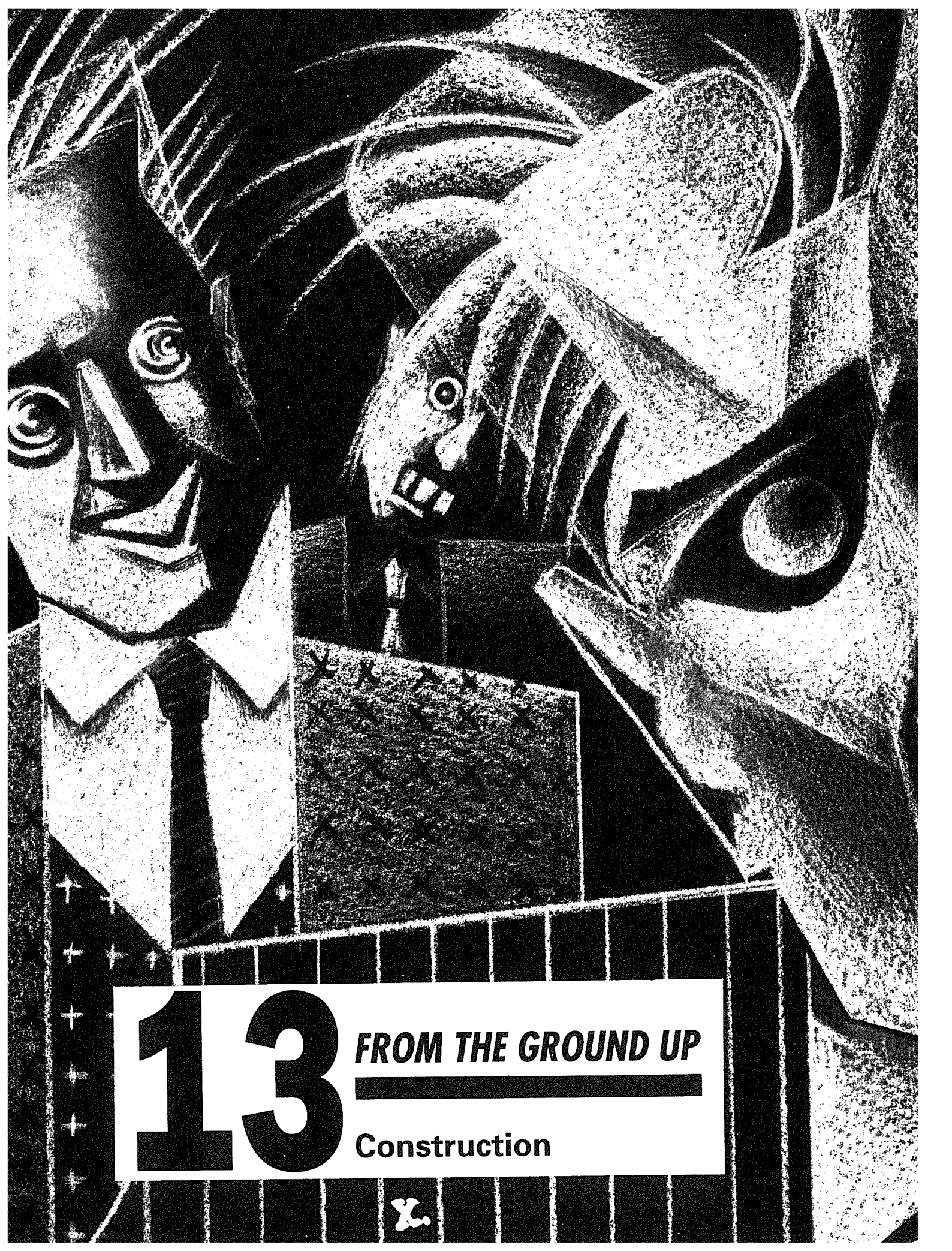
To succeed in business you must learn how to get people to do what you want them to do.

— B.C. Forbes

Violence suits those who have nothing to lose.

— Jean-Paul Sartre





13

FROM THE GROUND UP

Construction



DEMOLITION WORKER • ANTHONY

The wicked New England winter had set in. There was no more work haying fields or picking apples. There was food from our livestock and from what we could put away from our garden, but no money for anything else. My friends and I drove our beat-up station wagon to the nearby "city," population 5,000. We went to apply for food stamps and possibly general assistance. The case-worker wouldn't hear of it: "There's plenty of work in this town. I know for a fact that they're hiring workers across town at the old grain mill."

We bundled ourselves against the bitter cold and went over to the hulking remains of an enormous grain mill that was now in a state of disrepair. We found the boss in his little warming shack relaxing next to his diesel space heater. "Sure I need more men, can't pay the going rate, but it's work. It's payin' buck-fifty an hour." This guy was in cahoots with the state and he wasn't even paying minimum wage. We took the job.

Our job was to tear apart the huge grain mill and strip the parts into piles, so he could sell the bits and pieces. The planks from the hardwood floors, the electrical equipment, the I-beams and metal work, the plumbing fixtures — all this would be resold, plus he would get paid for the demolition itself. He sent us out with crowbars, hammers and little else.

We were working on subflooring on the top of a three-story building. The roof had already been removed so we were totally exposed to the snow and howling wind. The floorboards were frozen and difficult to budge with crowbars. We attacked them with hammers and catspaws. We were in danger of freezing to death or slipping on the icy walkways and falling to our deaths. We worked all day while the boss huddled inside with his jet powered space heater. We went home bitter with cold. We returned day after day in search of that elusive paycheck. Some days it wouldn't climb above zero degrees, and we'd be out sawing flooring apart, disassembling metal conduit or cutting I-beams with cutter torches, watching them fall perilously below. At lunch time, we would munch on our cheese sandwiches in the comfort of the warming shack, while the boss would stand by watching the clock. We were perhaps twenty, all young men, most with wives and new babies. The wives would come around at lunchtime to bring sack lunches and show the baby to their freezing husbands. There was a sick, desperate feeling most of the time, as this miserable work was the only way to escape the bitter impoverishment winter brings to small towns.

At the end of the day, on payday, we waited for our checks. The boss looked sheepish. "Look boys, see that pile of hardwood there? I expect to have your checks as soon as I sell that pile. Then there'll be plenty of money. Tomorrow, no doubt." We stood around and stared in disbelief. The next day came and still no money. A week passed with all of us sawing boards, tearing down walls, chainsawing through subflooring, sparks flying as we hit nails below. The anger was building.

Finally, one morning, we threw our tools down. Gathering all

But the record of sabotage is held by the masons, who since 1906 have used it abundantly. For instance, the case is not rare when, after a six-story building is complete, it is found out that the chimneys do not draw. They are inspected, and it is found out that they are obstructed more or less accidentally; a trowel full of mortar has fallen in the smoke shaft.

— *Sabotage, Emile Pouget, 1912*¹

Internal thieves steal anything that is not tied down, and almost anything that is.

— *American Journal of Political and Social Science*²

The man who gives me employment, which I must have or suffer, that man is my master, let me call him what I will.

— *Henry George*

around, stomping our heavy boots trying to warm our feet, we plotted our retaliation for working several weeks with only promises of a paycheck. We knew he had in fact sold much of the material, and had even bought a new pick-up truck a few days ago. We picked up our crowbars, stomped down the remains of the stairs and barged into his office, the twenty of us prominently displaying our crowbars. We demanded our money. He swore he didn't have any. We said we'd have to pay ourselves then.

We left the warming shack and fanned out over the plant, grabbing anything of value. We brought our vehicles up close to the gate and started filling them with anything we could possibly resell — the tools, chain saws, materials, electrical equipment, anything and everything. The boss just stood by nervously, not even bothering to call the police as the five or so cops in town wouldn't mess with the twenty of us with crowbars. When we were satisfied with our booty, we waved our bars at him, called him the scumbag he was and drove away. Never heard from him again.

ROOFER • FRANK

I worked for Artcraft Strauss, a big sign company in New York City. They own all the large lighted signs and rent them out to companies like Coca Cola, Panasonic and Fuji. They're in Times Square and all over New York. It's run by a family who have pretty much tied up all of the leases for forty to fifty years.

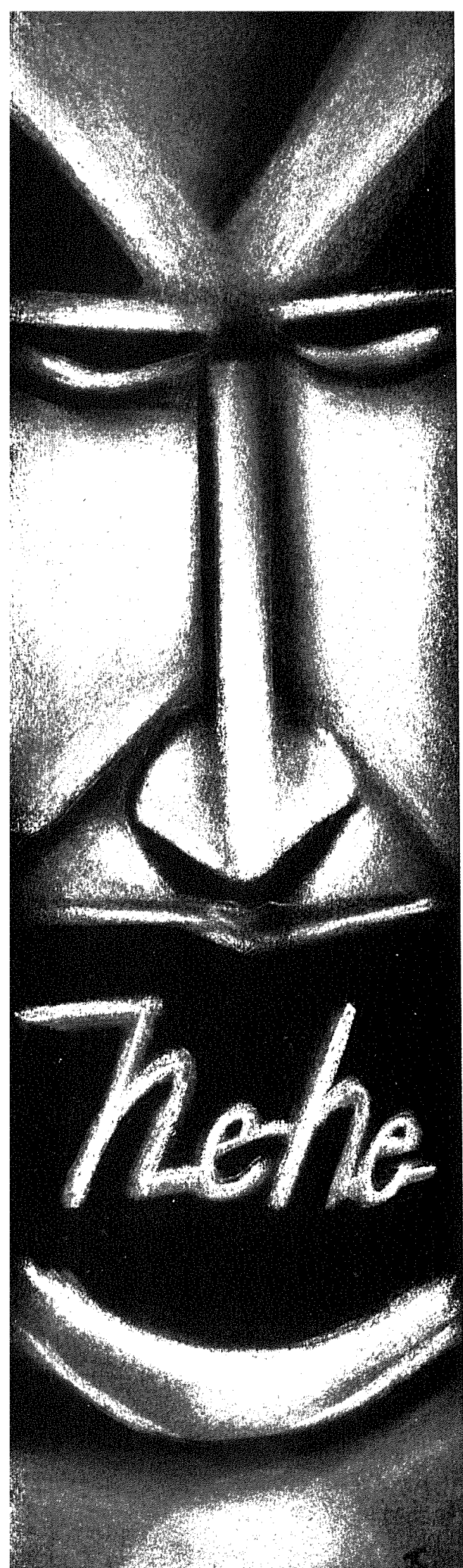
First I re-roofed their whole headquarters. I worked with three other guys who didn't know how to do roofing, and they put me under a supervisor who also didn't know how to do roofing. He did a roof like it was a piece of cement, because that was his trade. So we did it wrong and it was fucked up, and I'm sure right now it's leaking.

When we finished the roof, the company had me sweeping the floors of the workshop because they were too incompetent to get me started on the next roofing job. The company had a supervisor give a new excuse every week. After a while, I just got fed up the situation because I was hired to do roofing, not sweeping.

One day when I was sweeping in the workshop, I banged the broom into a new sign that was being built for Times Square. I busted a couple of the sign's neon lightbulbs. I did it completely by accident but it gave me an interesting idea.

When I came in the next day the lightbulbs had been replaced and the sign was ready to be trucked out to Times Square the next morning. Most workers had already gone home, and I was just hanging out in the shop with my broom. When I was sure that no one was around, I grabbed a screwdriver and opened up the sign. I fiddled around with the wires inside and pulled out some electrical stuff and threw it in the garbage. I closed it up and left it looking exactly how it was minutes earlier.

The next day they put the sign on the truck and took it away. After installing it up on the building, they went to turn it on and one entire section of the sign didn't light up. They had to take down that section and bring it back to the shop for repair. That sign was dark for at least a month, which meant the company



So advanced...it's simple.

— Canon slogan

*A plumber is an adventurer who traces
leaky pipes to their source.*

— Arthur Baer

*We can't get away from this fact —
that when the enemy fights he fights to
do damage to his opponent, and when I
fight I shall not be such a fool as not to
damage mine. I do not countenance in-
jury to human life, but I do not hold prop-
erty of the enemy sacred.*

— Daily Herald, August 16, 1913³

couldn't collect rent on it.

It was the big Canon sign; you see it in movies sometimes. Every time I see it I laugh to myself.

PLUMBER • PEDRO

Like my father, I've been doing plumbing pretty much my whole life. Our family was kind of poor, so I worked through high school. I was a cook for two years, but I knew that the money that I was making cooking was a lot less than what I could make plumbing.

I was mostly self-taught. If you're mechanical, you can pick up plumbing really quickly. There are smart people who aren't mechanical. My neighbor's a lawyer, and he calls me over to help him change a lightbulb because he can't figure out which way to screw it.

A friend and I had a job where we were doing the plumbing for a house under construction. It was a side job, working directly for the owner. We had done all of the copper pipes that go underneath the concrete floor of the house. The concrete had been poured over the pipes, which had been looped up through the floor to hook up to the fixtures. It was at this stage when the owner started going back on his word. He said, after the job had been done, that the quote that we agreed on was too much. He said, "I can't pay you for this and I'll only pay you for that." Then he said something like, "You're not even licensed, so I might not pay you at all." The guy thought he could save money and finish it himself.

We immediately got bad attitudes. We packed the water pipes full of nails. We didn't do all of the pipes, but we put enough nails in there so he would have a problem. We could have used a high pressure hose to blow the nails out if we knew we were going to finish the job, but it never happened, so we left them in there.

He came back to us later because every time he turned on the faucets in his brand new house he heard all of this rattling. What he didn't know was that not only was he going to have the noises, but in time the nails would rust up, wrecking the washers in the faucets.

We definitely got more satisfaction than guilt from what we did. We didn't have anything to lose. I still think we got fucked because we didn't get paid, but he got fucked too. You gotta cover your ass any way that you can. If they fuck you, you gotta fuck them back.

WATERPROOFER • DON

I'm a sub-contractor. The contractors that hire me are my bosses because they have financial control over me. It's a typical boss-worker relationship without the benefits; sub-contractors don't have a lot of recourse if they don't get paid by a contractor.

There's an extreme amount of pressure in my job. I can get sued if someone before me does the job wrong or someone behind me fucks up what I did, even though I may not be guilty of anything. You only need to make one mistake to screw yourself out of the business. Luckily, I haven't made any mistakes in 4,000 jobs.

We had one contractor that wouldn't pay us. It was a hundred

You don't have to be rude or angry. In fact, you'll have a lot more success if you're courteous. You must be persistent, though. The client with an unpaid bill is going to hope you've forgotten or have written off the charges.

— *How to Succeed With Your Own Construction Business,*
Stephen and Janelle Diller⁴

Powerless rage can work miracles.
— Stanislaw J. Lec

There are few jobs in the industrial world which are inherently interesting: there are reports that even wine samplers, selectors of beautiful models, and private detectives become bored with their tasks.

— *Why Men Work,* Alexander
Richard Heron⁵

and some odd bucks, not a very large amount. He tried to shield himself from us with a lawyer. He didn't want to talk to us, but I made it clear to him that the money he owed was such a small amount that I could easily make it cost him a lot more not to pay us. He ignored everything I said and wouldn't return my calls. One day, I went over to his office and filled the locks to all three of his doors with Loc-tite. We got paid very soon after that.

One contractor owed me \$500 for two years. I did some work for him and he didn't pay me. I went and locked the gate to his house with a really strong bicycle lock, so come Monday morning he wouldn't be able to get out of his house. Sure enough, he had to call a locksmith because guys like him generally don't have tools. I'm still working on collecting from him. Before the Christmas holidays I go out in front of his house and spraypaint on the street that he's a thief. I make the message really big and bright so his neighbors and relatives see it when they drive up to his house.

The pressures and difficulties of my job make me even more determined to get money from the people who owe it to me, no matter how small an amount. It always seems that the most fucked jobs, the worst ones, are where the guys will screw you. It just burns my ass when somebody screws me.

MODEL MAKER • DENNIS

I was working for Bechtel, which is a major engineering contractor. Their main job is to design and act as general contractor for very large engineering projects. When I was there they were working on several nuclear power plants, coal fire power plants, oil refineries, and on military technology for separation of plutonium from fuel rods taken from power plants. They were working on the international airport in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. They also worked on mass transportation systems, like the one from San Diego to the Mexican border. They're a private corporation — there's no public stock in it — owned by the Bechtel family.

When I was there it wasn't a bad place to work at all. We only reported to our own foreman in the model shop. We were allowed to dress down and we could be in two or three different places at once, so people had a hard time keeping track of us. The general rule in the model shop was that if you could wrap it up in paper, you could take it home. There were thousands of dollars worth of Plexiglas that went out of that office. Everyone did it — the bosses, the workers. It was great.

To avoid mistakes with large engineering projects, all designs are built to scale and checked off before they're actually put on a final drawing and sent to the field for construction. A model maker's job is partly to create a model and partly inspection and checking. You have to be aware of the American Mechanical Engineering standards for piping, electrical conduits, steel and the like. If you see a mistake, you call it to the attention of a designer or engineer, and at that point have the drawing changed.

I worked primarily on Coal Strip Unit Three, which was a coal-fired power plant in Coal Strip, Montana. The model for Coal Strip was done on a scale of three-quarter inches to the foot, so it was

thirty-five feet long by five feet wide and probably five feet tall. The model took over five years to build and cost over five million dollars in time and materials. It was a large model. We worked on this model in an office in a skyscraper downtown. We also had a model shop a few blocks away which had all the power tools and machine tools. We worked back and forth between the shop and the design floor, where the actual designers, engineers and support services were.

Things started to tighten up on the design floor while I was there. The foreman, a guy named Bob, started getting pushy and arrogant. He was trying to make it into management and they were sending him to management training school. Once a week he'd go to these seminars and come back with paperwork he would lock in his desk. We would stick a big screwdriver in the top drawer and strike upward on the handle and open the file drawer. We'd get out his notebook from last week and read all the company policies. We were especially interested in policies about absenteeism, discipline, and giving information to potential employers if you were changing jobs. We learned what management could and couldn't do to us, and what we could get away with. We ran it off on the Xerox machine and passed copies around to everyone so they knew what was going on. As time went on and people got mad at Bob, things would happen to him. He would find his safety glasses glued to the base of the model. We glued his toolbox shut and generally tormented the guy as much as possible.

We were a bit of an uncontrollable crowd, which made it fun. We built really ridiculous fake equipment and installed it in the model to see how long it would take for some engineer or designer to notice. We had to glue different pieces of plastic on the model base to indicate spaces that had to be kept open for specific reasons. For example, a piece of orange plastic indicated a pull space, where equipment has to be pulled out. I would use a completely ridiculous color that wasn't being used for anything, like purple Plexiglas, and label it "Space reserved for future nonexistent equipment" — and see how long it took for someone to see it.

One of my buddies was working on the Hope Creek Nuclear Reactor project, on the reactor core. As a joke he started modifying some of the drawings, and then initialing them, which meant they were signed off on an intermediate design check. Over a period of a few weeks he put a run of piping going from one place to another on a complicated course all the way around the reactor core and attached the end of the pipe to the beginning of the pipe. So the pipe began and ended nowhere, and just ran around the core. I don't know how many weeks it took for someone to finally notice, scream and have someone take it out of the model. There's a chance something like that could get onto the final model and even get out in the field and be partially built before somebody notices it.

TRUSS AND TIE ROD WORKER • JOHN

I had to climb up into the roof of a newly framed house and put ninety degree clips into the 2x4's that made up the roof's trusses.

Academic authorities have at times pointed out that work sometimes offers less opportunity for self-expression than might be considered desirable. However, workers sometimes find their own ways to express their thoughts and feelings on the job, to exercise their own creativity.

— *Common Sense for Hard Times*,
Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello⁶

There is no doubt that crime exists in every society. Criminal behavior is so pervasive that some social theorists have asserted for various reasons that crime is actually "normal."

— *Security Management Magazine*⁷

They were called hurricane clips and they reinforced the roof under extreme weather.

I did the job really well because I was small. I scurried in and out of the trusses and bashed the clips in with my hammer. I had never done construction work before but I think I got the job because the other guys got tired of bumping their heads.

The guy I worked for was a fly-by-night contractor. He was always behind in his bills and never had enough equipment to do the job right. At the time, new construction was booming in Florida, so it was easy for even a disorganized guy like him to have fifteen houses going up at once.

As far as I was concerned, he was an idiot. All of the guys who worked for him would bitch and moan constantly because he owed all of them back pay. He didn't treat me very good either. One day he docked me for half of a day's pay because I was sitting down on the job. It was a perfect way to make someone a disgruntled employee.

The long 2x4's used to make trusses are very expensive. I met this guy whose dad did construction. I asked him if I could get my hands on some brand new 2x4's, would he buy them from me? He said, "Sure."

From then on, when I put the clips into the trusses, I wouldn't nail them in correctly. I only put in only two nails instead of a bunch so the clips would be very easy to take out. As early as an hour after I left work, the guy who wanted the 2x4's and I would come back and just fuckin' steal 'em. I'd climb up to the trusses, take them apart and put the wood in the guy's truck.

We did this about twenty times. Sometimes we stole 2x4's three times from the same roof. I'd come in the next morning and the first thing I would do is put in new 2x4's to replace what I had stolen the day before. There were always a lot of people working on a house so no one knew what the fuck was going on. Even the boss never caught on.

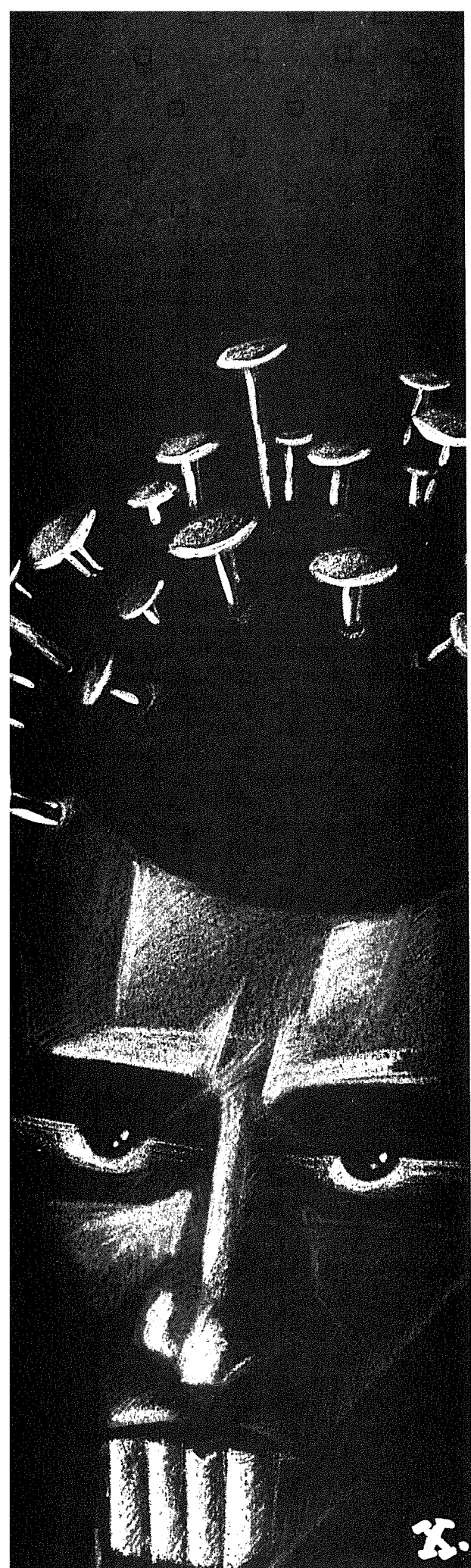
ROOFER • JEFF

I became unemployed when the shipyard where I worked shut down. I was married and I had a little boy so I needed to get a job. My brother-in-law asked me to come work for his roofing company. I was the third employee hired so I got in on the ground floor and learned everything that I needed to know within a year.

I became the company's first foreman. My initial crew consisted of about seven guys who became the nucleus of the boss' company. I trained them in every aspect of roofing they know today and eventually *they* all became foremen.

The boss promised that once the company started growing, I would become the vice president. But when that time came he hired someone else, someone completely new to the company. I had been with the company for four years, listening to the boss' promises, and then I was treated like shit.

At first I took it in stride but then it started coming home with me. Like I said, my boss was my brother-in-law, so my wife was caught in the middle. I was bringing home the money that fed and



People ... may engage in destructiveness so as to feel a sense of mastery and control over their environment which they cannot achieve through conventional, non-violent means. Sabotage, therefore, may be a symbolic way of telling oneself that one is not at the mercy of management.

— *Journal of Business Ethics*⁸

clothed her and bought her all of the nice things she wanted, yet her brother was employing me. I wasn't getting any support at home so I knew I had to do something at work to relieve the tension and keep from going nuts.

The first thing I did was slow down my work pace. When I was expected to take off thirty squares a day, I'd back it up to twenty. I'd encourage the people I was working with to go slower and my bad attitude carried over to them. When they saw how I was getting shit on they didn't want to work either. There was no room for advancement if a guy like me wasn't getting it.

I purposely laid a roof that would leak. It was a ballasted roof, which is made up of a layer of insulation and a big sheet of rubber on top, and all weighted down with stones. The only thing protecting the building from Mother Nature is the one thin ply of rubber. All I did was make a little hole where the water would pond the most, and covered it back up with stones. It's almost impossible to find a leak on a roof like that. The roof started leaking after about eight months, ceilings were caving in, all kinds of good stuff. Including the internal damage to the building, it cost the company \$50,000 to fix.

My stepfather told me about how he once put Prestone Radiator Flush in somebody's gas tank; it takes a long time before it starts affecting the car. That's exactly what I was looking for. I did this to three brand new trucks that were going for \$17,000 when the company got them. It was a slow breakdown but it messed up every system in the trucks. They started stalling out at lights. Soon you couldn't pass on highways and I swear to God, we'd be riding down the road, and the radio would come on by itself. The first time one of the trucks completely broke down, we went into the office and tried to explain what happened. I said, "Well, the radio came on, we couldn't turn it off, the heater came on and we couldn't turn it off so I got on the cigarette lighter and called you." I was the only one that got any chuckles out of that one. Eventually all three trucks had to have new motors installed, all their lines had to be flushed out and the electrical work had to be redone. The company ended up spending \$9,000 to repair each vehicle.

To this day, my boss hasn't found out a damn thing. I eventually got fired for having a bad attitude. But the thing is, I didn't have one going in, I got it by being shit on by my boss.

Revenge is sounding especially sweet these days, and managers must prepare for it.

— *New York Times*⁹





14

RETURN TO SENDER

Mail

x.

MAIL HANDLER • JUDI

The Washington Bulk Mail Center is one of twenty-one centers in the United States. I worked there from 1976 to 1980. They spent lots of money and put together factories that just plain didn't work. These computer nerds design factories and they've never seen one in their whole lives. They didn't want to admit that it didn't work. They set an efficiency rate for the factory but since the machinery didn't work, they couldn't achieve that rate. Instead of hiring more employees and admitting it was a failure, they forced us to work overtime. We worked at least sixty hours a week, and in December they would work us eighty-four. A major problem was that we worked all the time, and started to go crazy.

Overtime was the main issue, but accidents and industrial injuries were two other ones. General harassment was a problem too — they give a ten point preference to veterans, so everyone thinks they're still in the army. The real army ass-kissers rise to supervisor. Since you don't have to make a profit in the post office, it lacks the semblance of reason you get in capitalism. In the post office it didn't matter how much money was wasted.

I unloaded and sometimes loaded trucks. It was supposedly all mechanized. We had these great big things called extended conveyor belts that went into the trucks. We froze our butts off in the winter and roasted in the summer.

Parcels and sacks were unloaded and sorted separately, but the machine was always jamming up. The best way to break up the jam was to throw some sacks on the parcel system because they were heavier and would push the jam through. This of course meant that they'd be landing on the parcels and squashing them to bits. That was a kind of sabotage that was actually endorsed by management because they wanted us to work faster.

There's no back-up system in the plant. If there's a tangle somewhere, the whole line shuts down. When the non-zip chute backed up, everything we wanted to know the zip code of would shoot back up, and everything going to that place stopped. For every piece, you had to have a non-zip option, so if the non-zip chute closed down, the whole line closed down. We'd key everything in as non-zip, and the system would overload. All the red lights came on and everything went down. When New York was in a wildcat strike, we keyed everything to New York.

As we began to feel our collective power, people got more obvious and flippant. We started doing little things like sending things to the wrong place and deliberately shutting things down. But as we got to be more organized, one of the games we played when we were bored was to deliberately break the machinery and make a bet on how long it would take the mechanic to figure out what was wrong. We'd try to break it in a bizarre manner. One of our favorite things to do was to turn off emergency stops to see how long the mechanic would take to figure out which one it was. We would take turns banging on the sides of the trucks while we were unloading them. The supervisors would get very upset and run back and forth trying to figure out who was doing it.

Eventually we began to do really organized things. When they ordered us to work overtime on Thanksgiving, everybody left. We

There is dignity in work only when it is work freely accepted.

— Albert Camus

Most people would feel insulted if it were proposed to employ them in throwing stones over a wall, and then in throwing them back merely that they might earn their wages. But many are no more worthily employed now.

— *Life Without Principle*, Thoreau

Triviality and drudgery may not have the same family name, but they are twins at birth.

— *Work, Workers and Work Measurement, Adam Abruzzi*¹

were real proud of that one. Another time, we did a sick-out, where a lot of people went home sick at the same time.

We weren't allowed to strike. We met between the two shifts — there was an hour break in between — and I stood up on a table and gave a speech in the cafeteria. We drew up a committee of twelve and a list of demands, and eighty of us did a walk-in (since we couldn't do a walk-out) to our supervisor's office and gave her our list. Her reaction was to put locks on the door between the plant and the administration office so you couldn't get in. You had to have a computer card and a combination and all of that. Short of going on strike, the culmination of our action was the trash-in. They were famous for losing our paychecks on the night shift. The forklift drivers would drive around and tell everyone that they lost our checks again. We'd cause machines to wreck (which was pretty easy), the forklift drivers would drop pallets everywhere, and everyone keyed everything non-zip. One night we brought the place to a standstill. We trashed everything that came in.

The unions were very corrupt and the overtime didn't decrease in most of the country. But we won. They stopped giving us overtime. As we did such a horrible job on the parcels, people started using UPS more and the post office less. The volume started to go down, so the trashings and overtime and accidents went down. The safety conditions improved. After a year, when we did the wildcat strike, the union crumbled and fell into our hands. We ended up taking over the union and I became the Chief Shop Steward (the highest position in that plant) and began to expedite grievances. They got rid of the worst of the supervisors and brought in new ones specifically to appease us.

Everyone makes jokes about postal workers smashing up mail because they think they don't care. But postal workers don't like the fact that we can't do a good job no matter how hard we try.

LETTER CARRIER • OTIS

I've been a letter carrier for eleven years, which isn't really that long. Contrary to popular belief, the work is not that strenuous. You get to be by yourself and work outdoors. It's one of those kind of jobs that once you get it, you keep it for life.


I've got around 230 deliveries on my current route, which is considered small, but it befits a man of my seniority. When you've been around a long time, you get to choose the route you want, and only fools pick long routes if they've been around a long time. The way I see it, the less work, the better for me.

I take a lot of liberties when I deliver mail. A lot of the time I play god as far as deciding what mail is important and what's not. I'll go out of my way to deliver any letter or postcard. I'll handle checks with kid gloves. I don't consider bills important, and junk mail is definitely not a priority. Magazines are a low priority because I usually want to read them first.

On my route there are a lot of houses on hills that aren't that easy to get to. If there's just a bill and nothing else for one of those houses, I'll usually decide they don't want it that day. I'll deliver it the next day when they get more mail. I think most carriers will skip houses if it doesn't seem worth their time or effort.

Not snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.

— *Motto of the U.S. Postal Service*



I'm supposed to work eight hours a day but my job usually doesn't take that long. I go in at 6:30 in the morning, sort the mail for my route, which takes about three hours, and then I deliver, which is supposed to take about five hours. If we get done with our routes early, we're supposed to sort whatever mail came in that afternoon, which is usually just junk mail.

Most carriers finish their routes in three hours and don't go back early, because if they do, the supervisors will add deliveries to their routes. Some carriers pace themselves so their route takes five hours, but I'm not very good at pacing myself. I usually finish mine in three hours so I just do whatever I want to do. I like my route because it has a park on it, so I can sit there for a couple of hours and read, sleep or listen to music.

When I first started the job, this old guy gave me a portion of his route to do. He told me, "Don't come back early." I wanted to show him up and prove that I was a good worker. I finished the route early and when I came back, I could tell right away that the old guy was real pissed because I made him look bad. Another time, I did a whole route in three hours. When I came back the supervisor said, "Yeah, that's the way it's supposed to be done," then gave me more work to do. It got back to the carrier whose route it was and I'm sure he was pissed off, too. After about a month, I got my own route and quickly learned that it's in my best interest to set my own pace. You err on your own side if you want to last as a carrier for thirty years.

MAILROOM CLERK • REGGIE

I worked at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think-tank on Capitol Hill. It's a group of attorneys, columnists, whatever, who crank out — daily or weekly or whatever — information. It's printed downstairs, in the xerox room, and distributed to senators, congressmen, and other influential people. In a couple of cases I delivered packages addressed to Ed Meese. That gives you an idea of what kind of people work there. My basic duties were to collect mail in the mornings from the post office, sort it, distribute it, and so on. I pretty much did everything myself and I had a lot of responsibility.

I got the job right after high school. I had never heard of the organization, and just found the job through the newspaper. When I was working there, I would occasionally glance at what they were putting out; the more I read, the more I thought about it and realized they were doing fucked-up things, like defending business practices in South Africa and U.S. investments there.

They have a big fundraising deal, and when they sent out fundraising requests, people would mail in checks. Sometimes they'd be huge amounts, and sometimes they were piddling. Checks came in from individuals as well as companies. So I'd randomly take an envelope, open it, see how much it was for, and throw it in the shredder. I started doing it more and more. I could tell if it was a check by holding it to the light. If so, I'd toss it, dump it or shred it.

MAIL CLERK • DOLORES

Sabotage will also be used in places where the union organization controls negotiations and official demands, but not the forms of actions used on the shop floor to win immediate concessions.

— *Sabotage in Industry, Pierre Dubois²*

In order to gain certain demands, without losing their jobs, the Austrian postal workers strictly observed the rule that all mail matter must be weighed to see if the proper postage was affixed. Formerly they had passed without weighing all those letters and parcels which were clearly under weight, thus living up to the spirit of regulation but not to its exact wording. By taking each separate piece of mail matter to the scales, carefully weighing same and then returning it to its proper place, the postal workers had the office congested with unweighed mail on the second day. This method is more effective than striking, especially when used on a large scale.

— *Sabotage, Walker C. Smith, 1913³*

Huge mail sorting facilities were built by the Postal Service during the seventies to house obsolete junk machinery which our great nation paid billions to acquire in kickback boondoggles with mega-corporations like Burroughs and Pitney-Bowes. The Burroughs Corporation manufactured the Edsel-like white elephant junker known as the LSM (Letter Sorting Machine). It takes twenty clerks and a mechanic to run one, and a building the length of a football field to house one. There are thirteen of them in the biggest sorting facility in Los Angeles, which is a building bigger than ten football fields.

A big sorting factory runs around the clock, but most clerks are on the swing or graveyard shifts, when the mail collected from mailboxes comes in. There might be 500 to 2000 employees in these big, windowless warehouses. With gigantic sack-sorting machines, LSM's, flat sorters, canceling machines and conveyor belts all running at once, the continuous noise level is 83 decibels. OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, allows 90 decibels and Cal-OSHA allows 85. Hearing loss occurs at 55 or less. In short, you cannot communicate with another human being on the workroom floor without yelling. Most clerks wear Walkman-type headphone sets. The union fought a hard battle for those. Clerks get two ten-minute breaks and a half-hour for lunch. You must clock in within 120 seconds of your scheduled reporting time or face disciplinary action for "tardiness."

Mail is transported in large steel containers, called OTR's ("over-the-road" containers). They are stupidly designed, ill-maintained, invariably in bad repair and extremely dangerous. But someone in the American Can Corporation made plenty of money selling them to the Postal Service, so there they are and there they will stay. Scores of OTR's were easily incapacitated by cutting a very simple cable-spring mechanism, making it impossible to release the doors to get mail in and out of them.

A powerful magnet was used to suck the computerized "brains" out of some giant LSM's, sending thousands of letters to the "zero bin" and shutting down the machines for days while baffled management scratched their heads figuring out what had gone terribly wrong and calculating the major expense required to repair it.

"Big Joe" was management's name for a large, hydraulic lift used to load and unload containers and other items off of trucks. Mail handlers and dock clerks became intimately familiar with Big Joe. One early morning, when no one was working, someone reached underneath it and cut the thick electrical cable that powered Big Joe from its deepest, darkest underside. No one in the area got much mail the next day, and it was probably pretty hard for the special mechanics they called in to repair it. They had to use another lift to raise Big Joe to a level where they could see, reach and fix the problem, because there was no way Big Joe could lift itself anymore.

Wadded up balls of soft paper products will plug up a toilet, and

I don't know of anything that can be applied that will bring as much satisfaction to you and as much anguish to the boss as a little sabotage in the right place at the right time.

— Bill Haywood, Industrial Workers of the World

management's seemed to get plugged quite a bit, necessitating their use of the employees' restrooms. There, besides the distastefulness of having to eliminate their bodily wastes alongside the lower classes, they might encounter themselves personified in obscene graffiti. They had separate restrooms for the different echelons of management: supervisors and middle management had theirs, right on up to the postmaster who had his own very private restroom. When his shitter overflowed one day, the supervisors started locking all the bathrooms — except ours, of course!

In the big facilities the front offices are usually glassed-in, plushly carpeted affairs where top management passes the time with one another, happily oblivious to the conditions in the windowless, deafening hell of the workroom floor. They "work" between 9:00 and 5:00 — no time clocks for them! That made nights a particularly good time to do things like drive by with a high-powered rifle and shoot out the glass walls of a particularly odious top level manager or spray graffiti on exterior walls.

By far the most effective and powerful sabotage of respect for management resulted from our crude but uncompromising Local newsletters, distributed to employees and mailed to other Locals which would reprint cartoons or other stuff ridiculing management. A network of these union "zines" was in constant circulation among the 250,000 members of the Postal Workers Union across the country. Ours was the best and most radical. I think it was the real reason I got fired, effectively busting our Local.





15

PLAYING THE RINGMASTER

Entertainment



CARNY • DINO

I ran the games, the "joints," for an independent concessionaire with Ray Kamick Carnivals. We were with the unit which travels through Missouri out to California and up to Canada. I was an agent, a concessionaire.

My boss, Ed, didn't like me much. He'd shave off the money that I made and tell me that I made less than I did, so I wasn't even making enough money to stay in a hotel. (We were paid a twenty-five percent commission.) After a while I got tired of it because I wasn't making enough money to keep myself clean. Usually we'd chip in and one guy would get a hotel room and everyone else would clean up there. But it wasn't working out because we were hitting dead spots like the border towns in Texas and New Mexico. We weren't even making enough money to go over to Mexico and get a hotel.

The boss was dogging me all the time. It turned out that his bosses were ragging on him because I was the only one there with long hair and a beard. I was only fourteen years old when I first went into this place. I had my dad sign a piece of paper saying that I could travel with the carnival, so Ed took responsibility for me and acted as my guardian. He couldn't fire me, so he just didn't pay me. I worked for thirteen or fourteen hours a day, so I started pocketing some of the money that came in so I could eat. He never caught on to that.

To get more customers I'd hire a "stick," a kid to walk around the carnival with a big stuffed animal to tell people he'd won it at my place. That way, I was making more money than anyone else on the whole midway. I took this one Indian guy for his whole check on the bushel-basket game. He was real mad and came back with his wife and kid and said he was going to get kicked out of his place. I felt real bad about it and I didn't want to see him out on the street. But when he came back, my boss was there, so I couldn't give him back his money. If he had come earlier, I would have given it back.

Another guy came in and I started working him out of money by doing this con called "double up and catch up." I got about \$400 out of him and he got real mad and complained to the carnival owner that I was ripping him off. We had to call a "patch," who takes fifty percent of everything you make and patches things up with customers who have been beaten really bad. The patch didn't work and the guy came back real irate. So I told him that to straighten things out, I'd sell him the rollercoaster. He really liked that idea because he said he owned some closed-down movie theater and could run the rollercoaster right there. It was the last night we were in town. I made up a bill of sale and for an extra \$200 plus the \$400 I took him for, I gave him the deed to the rollercoaster. From this money I was able to pay the Indian guy his money. The guy who bought the rollercoaster came back later that night and everyone was gone, including the rollercoaster. The whole carnival had split and gone to another town. He followed us to the next town, which was out of the state. When I found out that the guy was in town, I left.

The guy who bought the rollercoaster got back to my boss and got him in a lot of trouble. It ultimately came out of my boss'

All the world's a stage, but most of us are stagehands.

— *Anonymous*

Ben Guffey, director of loss prevention for Richman-Gordman Stores of Omaha, says: "The majority of people are honest. The main thing you have to do is create a climate of fairness and honesty. Send your people a clear message that while temptation is normal, honesty is normal, too, and the normal person won't steal."

— *Nation's Business*

Revenge is the only debt people wish to pay promptly.

— *Max Galnick*

pocket, because the guy started really ragging on the owner of the rollercoaster, and showed him a bill of sale with serial numbers and this name on it that nobody recognized. My boss had to pay the guy who had the bill of sale \$250 out of his own pocket.

MOVIE THEATER WORKER • BEN

After I got out of drug treatment, my first job was selling candy at a movie theater. After I had been there awhile, I occasionally worked in the ticket booth, or as a doorman. I was working for the GCC Corporation, which has gotta be the greediest, shittiest company on the face of the earth.

Luckily, most of the people I worked with were pretty cool and I quickly found out that \$3.50 an hour wasn't the only thing I could get out of the company. At GCC theaters, they figure out how much popcorn and soda has been sold by counting how many cups and popcorn buckets have been used. If fifty popcorn buckets are gone since the last count, fifty must have been sold. That is, unless you grab the buckets and cups that people have thrown in the trash, wash them out and resell them. This provided a nice little profit for peons like me. It's debatable whether or not this was a clean, hygienic practice — I doubt it — but nobody really cared since most of the customers who came in were complete assholes anyway.

For some reason, people who come into movie theaters seem to think they have the right to vent all their frustrations on the employees. I can't tell you how many times I've listened to some fat, slobbering, white bread cunt whine to me about the price of a fucking box of Goobers. Whenever I resold something, I always tried to make sure it was to a whiny asshole who obviously deserved whatever germs the previous owner of the bucket of popcorn had left behind.

Of course, you always had to be careful that the manager didn't come down and bust you for pulling a scam, but my manager spent most of his time in his upstairs office, probably trying to figure out why he was slaving his ass off for \$12,000 a year.

Eventually, a friend clued me in to a great scam. Movie theater tickets are attached to each other in huge rolls, which are fed through a machine that pops them out through a slot to the customer. All the tickets are numbered, in order, and at the beginning and end of each shift, we figured out how many tickets we sold by subtracting the ending from the beginning number. On a busy night, a hell of a lot of people will hand the doorman their ticket and keep on walking without waiting for the stub. Thus, if I went about my work at a slower than usual pace, it was extremely easy to end up with a fistful of unripped tickets which I gave back to the ticket seller who resold them. At \$5.50 to \$6.00 a pop, we turned a sizable profit on a weekend night.

DRUG DEALER GUARD • PETER

I was employed as a guard and doorman at a drugstore of an illicit nature. It sold primarily low-grade hallucinogens such as mari-

Theatre operators and projectionists secured a new two-year contract and 15% rise in wages by unofficial campaign which had startled audiences with films shown upside down, alarming noises from sound machinery, mixed reels from other films, and films projected onto the ceiling instead of the screen.

— *Manchester Guardian*,
March 6, 1948

Charlie Chaplin's relationship to the workplace shifts during the course of "The Pawnshop." All his actions undermine work as productive labor. Work is often play: cleaning the balls from the pawnshop symbol, he bounces them off the head of his co-worker, and when he sweeps, he sweeps a piece of string into a straight line and walks on it as if it were a tightrope. Many of Charlie's actions are destructive: He demolishes a bass fiddle with his head; later, through "carelessness" or well concealed intent, he destroys his duster by dusting the fan and letting the blades cut the feathers down to stubble, making it impossible to continue his task.

— *Resisting Images: Essays on Cinema and History*, Robert Sklar and Charles Musses, eds.²

I find it rather easy to portray a business man. Being bland, rather cruel and incompetent comes naturally to me.

— *John Cleese*

juana, hashish and mushrooms. My duties entailed greeting people who came to the door and answering the telephone. I screened people to see if they were customers of long standing and a respectful nature, or if they were intruders who had to be forcibly removed from the premises. I also rolled marijuana cigarettes for customers so they could make a choice as to what to buy. I was to prepare the various samples, as well as engage in pleasant conversation and make the customers feel wanted. I passed the time most amiably while the dealer sat there and raked in the money, which really began to irk me.

I noticed that many consumers, unlike the previous generation of pot smokers, were really reactionary. Their drug consumption was no longer a political statement, but rather commodity fetishism. I began to engage in a method of subliminal sabotage against the customer and my employer. I began to make very unpleasant conversation with the customers. I no longer felt I could give them the social interaction necessary to make them feel validated.

A social worker came in on a Friday afternoon and was complaining that his clientele, welfare recipients, were self-defeating, that they reinforced their own misery and would never get off welfare and that it was their own fault. This guy was disgusted with the situation and wanted to buy some high-power sinsemilla to forget the misery of dealing with this fucking trash day in and day out. I got in an argument with him about class and made him aware of the contradictions in his attitudes.

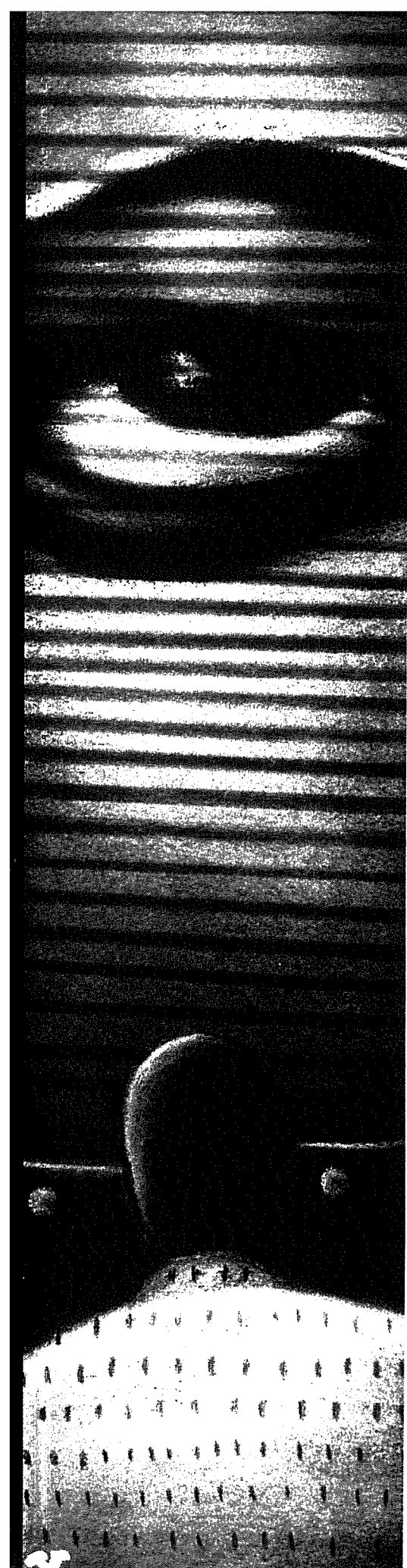
In the days and weeks ahead I engaged in more conversations where I questioned the consumer's very presence at the drugstore. As time went on, my employer began to receive complaints about my behavior and I noticed his supply of customers was dwindling by a good twenty to thirty percent. My employer couldn't keep me on in this capacity because I was destroying the clientele that he had assiduously built up over the years. At the time this was the best job that I'd ever had: I was making \$13.50 an hour, yet my growing disgust and revulsion ended with my termination.

VIDEO DATING SALES MANAGER NANCY

I've been working for a large video dating service for about four years. I started as a member, but they were short-handed so I got a job. The work isn't really that hard. I mean, it's a great idea, and if people who are ready to do it come in, they just do it. I don't have to push too hard to sell a membership.

I work for a nut. If he can't have his way, he throws temper tantrums. He makes up rules for work as he goes along. It's just ridiculous. He's always out of his mind and takes his temper out on all of his employees. You just don't know what he's going to be like one day to the next. It's really hard to work with somebody who's nuts. Everybody always feels tense and stressed out. I just go in and close my door and pretend he's not even there. The only reason I've lasted as long as I have is that I work part time.

To ease the tension we do petty things that make us feel better. We use the stamp machine whenever we want. People have mailed



Acts of praise should be few and far between, otherwise it cheapens the value of the praise and dulls that little sharp needle of dissatisfaction. Keep them guessing as to whether you are going to praise them or shoot them down. Guessing keeps them on their toes.

— Supervisor's Factomatic, Jack Horn³

Luck, of course, has always been a lady. In the ancient world, Egyptian gamblers were supposed to get their good fortune from a deity called Nut and the Greeks from Tyche, both of whom were females. "When a player wins," psychologist Samuel Janus says, "in his unconscious mind he has 'conquered' Lady Luck, made her his own. Winning is a symbolic orgasm."

— Gamblers World⁴

all their Christmas cards with the stamp machine. We use the copy machine, the fax machine and, of course, the telephone for long distance calls.

None of us are supposed to date the clients because the company doesn't want the people using the service to think that they have the salespeople to compete with as well as the other people using the service, but we all do anyway. Several of our consultants have gotten married to clients. We have first pick. If our boss caught us, he would fire us, but we all see it as a perk.

We don't feel any remorse because we feel that he's technically wrong for treating us the way he does. If he were ethical, he would do nice things for us, but he does stuff like give us a Christmas party and then say, "Oh, by the way, you're not getting any bonuses because I had to use them to pay for the party." That's really typical.

CASINO POKER DEALER • PEGGY

I saw an ad in the paper that said "Deal blackjack on weekends. No experience necessary. \$10 an hour." I answered the ad and was put into dealer school. They set up an audition when they thought I was ready to work.

I got a job at a casino that had over a hundred tables. After dealing a couple months of pan, I started dealing poker: draw, seven card stud, lowball and a few others. You could work your way up to different levels of tables and make more money as you went. Every dealer got minimum wage but the tips increased as you moved up to the higher-betting tables.

When I was in dealer school it was explained to me that a dealer had to be tough, you couldn't let customers upset you. They were going to take it out on you if they weren't making money. It didn't help if someone won; they sorta blamed that on you, too, by saying "You're my lucky dealer. Here, have an extra tip." Then the other eight people at the table resented you more. When you get started in a casino, the bosses make it clear that you can't talk back to a customer, no matter what the situation may be. You have to smile, take it all and of course keep the game going no matter what the customers say to you. I had customers tell me that I was the reason the machine gun was invented. People told me they were going to beat me up outside after I got off work. Some threatened to break my hands so I couldn't deal anymore. If someone physically assaults you or is about to, the casino security steps in. It's not for *your* protection, it's because if a dealer gets knocked to the ground, they can't keep dealing hands every minute, and therefore the casino loses.

Sometimes the pressure from dealing with the customers built up inside of me until I had to start kicking myself so I wouldn't yell, "Fuck you!" It got so bad in one game that I couldn't deal another hand. I laid out the deck in front of me and said, "I'm not dealing another hand to you people until my half-hour shift at this table is over." That made all of the customers really mad. It also made the floor manager mad. He took me aside and told me to never, ever do that again.

A nationwide search was launched yesterday for a ballpark concession manager suspected of making off with \$700,000 in cash receipts from food and beverage sales at the Oakland Coliseum, authorities said.

"It's the largest cash loss in Oakland history. I think it's probably going to be the largest cash loss in Northern California," Oakland police Lieutenant William Gillespie said.

The concession manager, Thomas E. Hagins, twenty-nine, was one of the only three people working at the coliseum who knew the combination to the Volume Service Co. safe where the money was kept, Gillespie said.

"He had keys and access to the area. Through a process of elimination, we were able to single out the suspect," police Lieutenant Larry Eade said.

Eade characterized the robbery as a "well-thought-out plan by a fairly intelligent person" who was blessed with an incredible opportunity.

— San Francisco Chronicle *

The ant is knowing and wise but doesn't know enough to take a vacation.

— Clarence Day

The affluent society has made everyone dislike work, and come to think of idleness as the happiest life.

— Geoffrey Klynes

You're expected to keep the action going and deal an average of thirty hands every half hour. It's to the dealer's advantage to work fast because you get more tips, but if a customer was giving me a hard time, it felt good to deal the cards like I was underwater. I used to slow down the pace of the game a lot by dealing the initial hands out slower than usual.

I used to fuck up people's winning hands by touching them with the muck pile. Once any card touches the muck pile, it no longer counts. When all of the players show their hands at the end of the game, I could quickly put everything in the muck pile and no matter what the player said, it wouldn't matter. One time I did this and the player called the floor manager over. The manager found the man's winning hand in the muck pile, but explained that it had touched the muck pile and that he couldn't do anything about it because of the rules of the game.

I used to deliberately misdeal by giving out too many cards to a person or messing up the order of the cards, in which case you have to deal a whole new hand. The customers hate this because they just want to get their cards and play poker. They don't want any interruptions.

Giving a tip back to a customer was another big no-no. No matter how big or small the tip was, you were supposed to smile and say, "Thank you sir." You're even taught this in dealer school. Sometimes the size of the tip can be an insult but you still have to take it with a smile, no matter what. One time I threw a quarter tip back at the customer. The only reason why I got away with it was because I did it on the night that I quit.

I eventually left, because more and more the customers got to me. I actually liked dealing cards, but it got to the point where I was crying every time I went to work, on my breaks, and on my way to a new table. I couldn't bring myself to work there anymore. I wish I could have done more to the place and the customers.





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**THE CUSTOMER IS
ALWAYS RIGHT**

Retail



DISCOUNT CHAIN STORE STOCK CLERK KARL

Working at Kmart was your typical teenage shit job. The job was boring. Everyone who worked there hated being there; it was drudgery. The aspect that was really depressing was seeing people who had families work there, making the same amount as a teenager. It was sad to see people support their kids on shit wages. I don't think any employee, except for upper management, made more than \$15,000 a year.

The day after Christmas, 1979, the store laid off a lot of people, even people who had been working there longer than I had. To get even with the company, I started stealing.

The first things I took were two music cassettes that were in the stock room. I stuck them in my sock and walked out. When I got into the appliance department I gave my friends discounts on batteries and cassette tapes. Everything was minor until I was moved into the camera and jewelry department where I was under a lot of pressure. I couldn't take it anymore. I knew that other people were taking stuff but everyone was really quiet about it. I had a friend come in and I gave him a shopping bag filled with six Minolta and Pentax cameras — about \$400 each — and a couple cases of film. I charged him \$1.99, which was the price of some batteries. I made sure that I stapled a long receipt onto his bag. Then two security guards walked up and we engaged them in a twenty minute discussion about shoplifting. Later, my friend walked out the front door. After that, it was easy.

I was transferred to building materials, where I had access to a large garage door. My friend had a big car and we loaded it up with garage door openers and ceiling fans. At Kmart they only went by department sales — they didn't have I.D. numbers like other big stores — so they didn't know what item was being sold. We could sell a load of plywood and the company would think we had sold a load of garage door openers. My friend would go out and sell the stuff and we would split the profit. We did this three or four times a week. I think we stole close to \$100,000 worth of merchandise. We wouldn't give a second thought to leaving the shelf empty, and when we ran out we would order more. I told some of the people who worked there what I was doing and most would say, "I couldn't do that." Then one day I saw my friend going outside with a huge box filled with about \$20,000 worth of stuff, everything from gold chains to stereos.

In 1981, Kmart 3399 had the worst yearly inventory of any Kmart in the country. The store had \$500,000 in invisible waste. That year we fudged the inventory: instead of marking one ceiling fan we would mark five. The same people who were stealing were doing the inventory, so we were able to cover our asses real good, but it made us wonder who was taking the rest of the stuff. In reality, the store probably had lost between \$750,000 and \$1,000,000 to invisible waste.

An ironic story is that one Christmas I took four cases of Atari games and gave them out as presents at the store's Christmas party. I later found out that security was taking stuff too. The person in

Most people in big companies are administered, not led. They are treated as personnel, not people.

— Robert Townsend

We've got it good.

— Kmart slogan

Retailers looking to cut their theft losses would do well to leave the customers alone and keep a wary eye on their own employees, according to a new survey.

— San Francisco Chronicle¹

Working in Loss Prevention today is like being in an Iraqi bunker during Desert Storm. You're being bombarded constantly and not getting much support from headquarters.

— Armand Rumayer, Former Vice President-Loss Prevention, Saks Fifth Avenue²