

SERVICEMAN, THIS IS YOUR PERSONAL PROPERTY, IT CANNOT LEGALLY BE TAKEN AWAY FROM YOU UNLESS YOU SWIPED IT

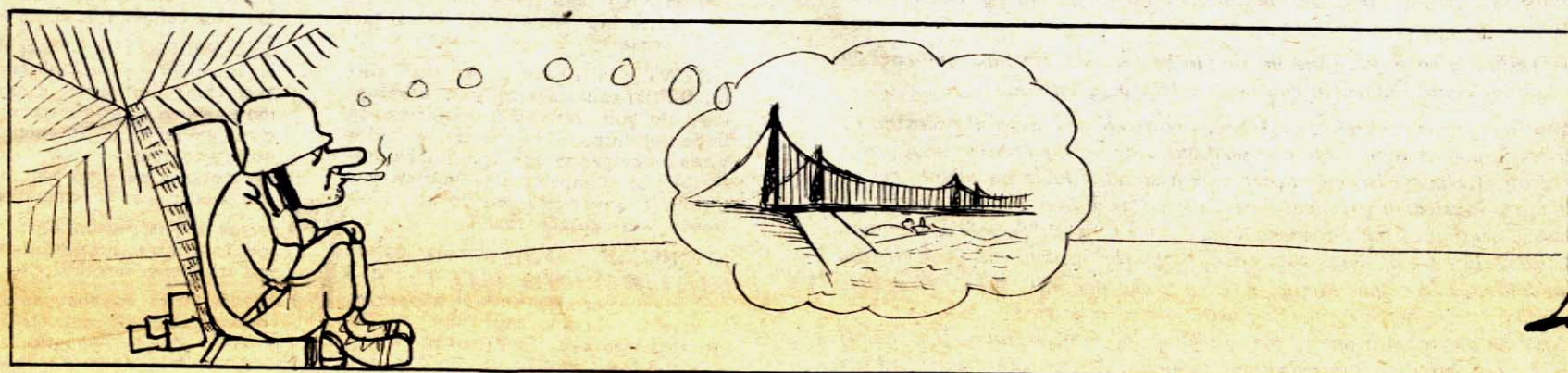


GRUNT FREE PRESS

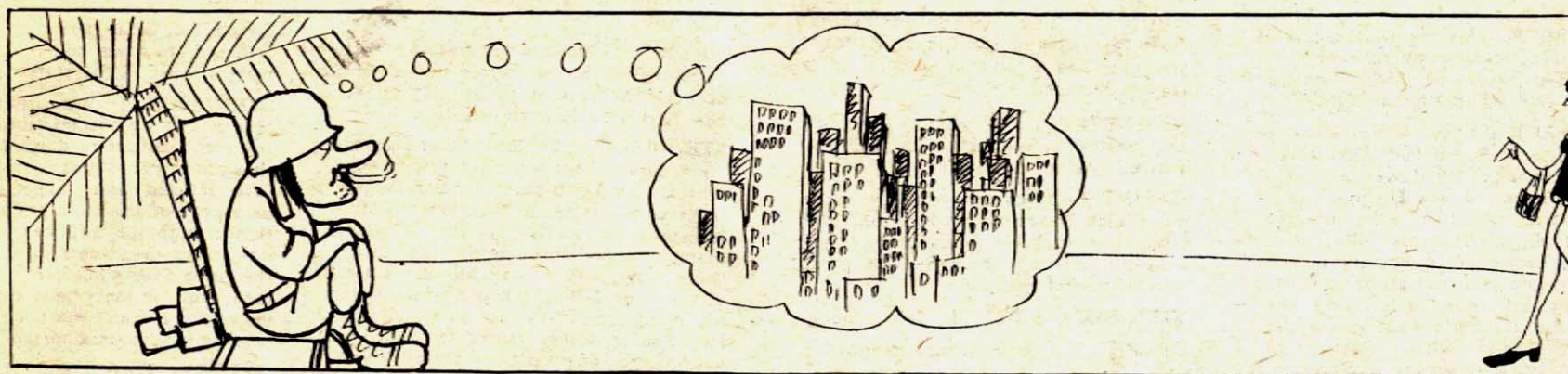
JULY 1970 — Vol. II, No. 4

ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO SHOVE

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GRUNT INTERVIEWS

John Steinbeck IV

a young man with many views on many subjects tells it all to GRUNT

John Steinbeck IV, better known as John Steinbeck Jr., explained in the interview that he frequently loses himself within Vietnam for days at a time. He is difficult to find.

John IV did not receive the news of his famous father's death until it was too late to return to the United States for the funeral. He said this: «My father didn't like funerals, and neither do I. I would like to have seen him again before he died, but nothing would be gained by a visit after his death.

«My father is gone now, and he should be cheered. He has gone back to the beginning. Now, the world can mourn him best with joy.»

John lived in a sparsely furnished, two-room pad near the center of downtown Saigon. A long table occupied one side of the front room, with a few straight chairs. In one corner was a smaller table on which rested a 16 stringed musical instrument he identified as a Don Tranh, which is a Vietnamese version of the Japanese Koto. John's frequent female companion, Miss Crystal Erhart of San Francisco, plays the instrument proficiently. John took breaks from our taping to listen to the primitive music flow into the bedroom through the connecting wall. He also paused on occasion to make his own music with one of his collections of bamboo flutes. His sounds seemed to be melodic improvisations which, at the time, satisfied his senses.

GRUNT : You first arrived with the Army in June of 1966. You started out as a private, I assume, but where did you end up?

STEINBECK : I achieved the rank of Spec 4... a nice anonymous rank.
GRUNT : Were you in a combat group? Did you see much action?

STEINBECK : I was involved with Armed Forces Radio and Television in a news capacity. I had been doing that sort of work in San Diego when I was drafted, so they gave me that kind of job in the Army. When I came over here there were only 14 men in the whole unit, so all of us ended up in the field quite a lot. I've seen people die, if that's what you're asking, and I know what it is to be under fire. But I ended up in Saigon. I like Saigon very much.

GRUNT : How did you dig Army life? You obviously survived it.

STEINBECK : Well... I have a whole lot of friends who don't want to go into the Army, and that's just perfect. And the Army, if you want to think of it in today's war and peace reference, is a very bad scene. My contemporaries have no interest in it whatsoever. «As for me, I rather like dealing with people or just being around them, because through them I get a much better understanding of myself... or, you know of man. But these weren't my intentions to begin with, when I was drafted. I didn't think I was launching some kind of study. I was very upset. It didn't cross my mind to fight being drafted; as a matter-of-fact at that time I was rather hawkish.

GRUNT : Let's go back for a minute. What area of the United States do you think of as home?

STEINBECK : I was brought up in New York City, but my parents moved a lot. I haven't been in a home it seems now... oh, four or five years.

GRUNT : You mentioned once that you've always been broke.

STEINBECK : Pretty much.

GRUNT : Never even a winning day at the races?

STEINBECK : Oh, sure.

GRUNT : You mentioned having worked in radio in San Diego. Haven't you ever had a job that paid... let's say, one hundred a week?

STEINBECK : No, never. Probably the greatest salary I ever earned was while I was in the Army.

GRUNT : Of course you are only 23. Which brings me to education. You have a remarkable vocabulary, but couldn't possibly have had a great deal of formal education.

STEINBECK : No... I left school.

GRUNT : A high school dropout?

STEINBECK : Maybe more than that. I just literally left, when I was I guess 16 or 17.

GRUNT : The second year of high school?

STEINBECK : Yes, I can't really recall. I don't relate well to the academic world, and I don't have a very developed picture even of how old I was.

GRUNT : Did you start to read and study after you left school... or did that come later?

STEINBECK : Because I didn't like school at all, one of my main escapes was through reading. But now, actually, I've become kind of a post-literate. I don't read much at all.

GRUNT : What sort of things do you read?

STEINBECK : Mostly psychology, but of a more spiritual nature. I'm more-or-less obsessed with this organism man, because he's a very unusual phenomenon. Contained in him are all phenomena.

GRUNT : Do you study metaphysics?

STEINBECK : A great deal. But only to laugh. By that I mean there are problems involved in getting into metaphysics seriously. The heart of

all metaphysics is the single point that man does not understand anything. So when you get into an involved understanding of how little man understands... you have to hold your every concept very delicately lest you take yourself too seriously, and think you actually do understand something. Does that make sense?

GRUNT : I'll have to let that sink in. But, at this stage of your development do you feel you're acquiring an understanding of yourself? Has Vietnam helped in any way? Obviously the war is important to you or you wouldn't have returned to it. How would you explain that?

STEINBECK : My particular nature needs a lot of things going on. In a nice quiet spot with nothing happening I have to create confusion to be satisfied mentally. In Vietnam, where it is the bundle of confusion for the globe, I can relax... because I don't have to do the work myself.

GRUNT : What sort of confusion would you manufacture when you're in a nice quiet spot?

STEINBECK : Well, this marijuana in Vietnam thing. I'm often identified with that.

GRUNT : I believe you stated that 75 percent of the servicemen in Vietnam between the ages of 19 and 23 smoke pot. Is that an accurate quote?

STEINBECK : I think those figures are accurate. That was never important. I was trying to paint a much larger paradox of heroes in Southeast Asia, becoming criminals in the United States. If they were doing the same thing how could any of us make distinctions? But I had no intention of being extremely accurate. To a larger sense, I just wanted to shake up a whole lot of people... whether it was true or wasn't true was not my point. It was to get them to inspect what they were doing a little closer. I don't worry about accuracy as far as any reputation I've developed.

GRUNT : Yet it is your conviction that great numbers of servicemen do smoke pot?

STEINBECK : Oh, yes.

GRUNT : But wouldn't there be large numbers of men who haven't had exposure to it... in headquarters bases and the like?

STEINBECK : See, this is what I'm saying. Everyone has their own opinion, and none is more accurate than another's. Though I was trying to sound... did sound... and was... authoritative on the subject, I won't argue with anybody about the figures. My statements were like the end product of this article. The article was not on marijuana, but on war...

GRUNT : I had a conversation the other day with a guy who claimed his entire life opened up when he started smoking marijuana, that this was responsible for the opening of many new mental doors; that he hadn't started to live before the experience. Do you believe this claim is valid?

STEINBECK : All marijuana does is intensify your observations of everything. But since every thing is more-or-less a manifestation of your own psychology... it intensifies your ability to observe your own psyche, the working of your own mind. If you can accept that... seeing what your

personality is putting out... then you could say it was a rewarding experience, and it's done something for your life. Anyone who is that serious about observing himself, and detached enough to avoid moral hangups when doing it... can certainly go to the same place. Marijuana has done it for an entire generation, and many members of their parents' generation have decided to take it up. But we can't even talk about marijuana, you know what I mean? It's like an argument over whether sugar or salt makes melons sweeter.

GRUNT : What about the stigmas attached to grass and the laws that make its use in the states illegal?

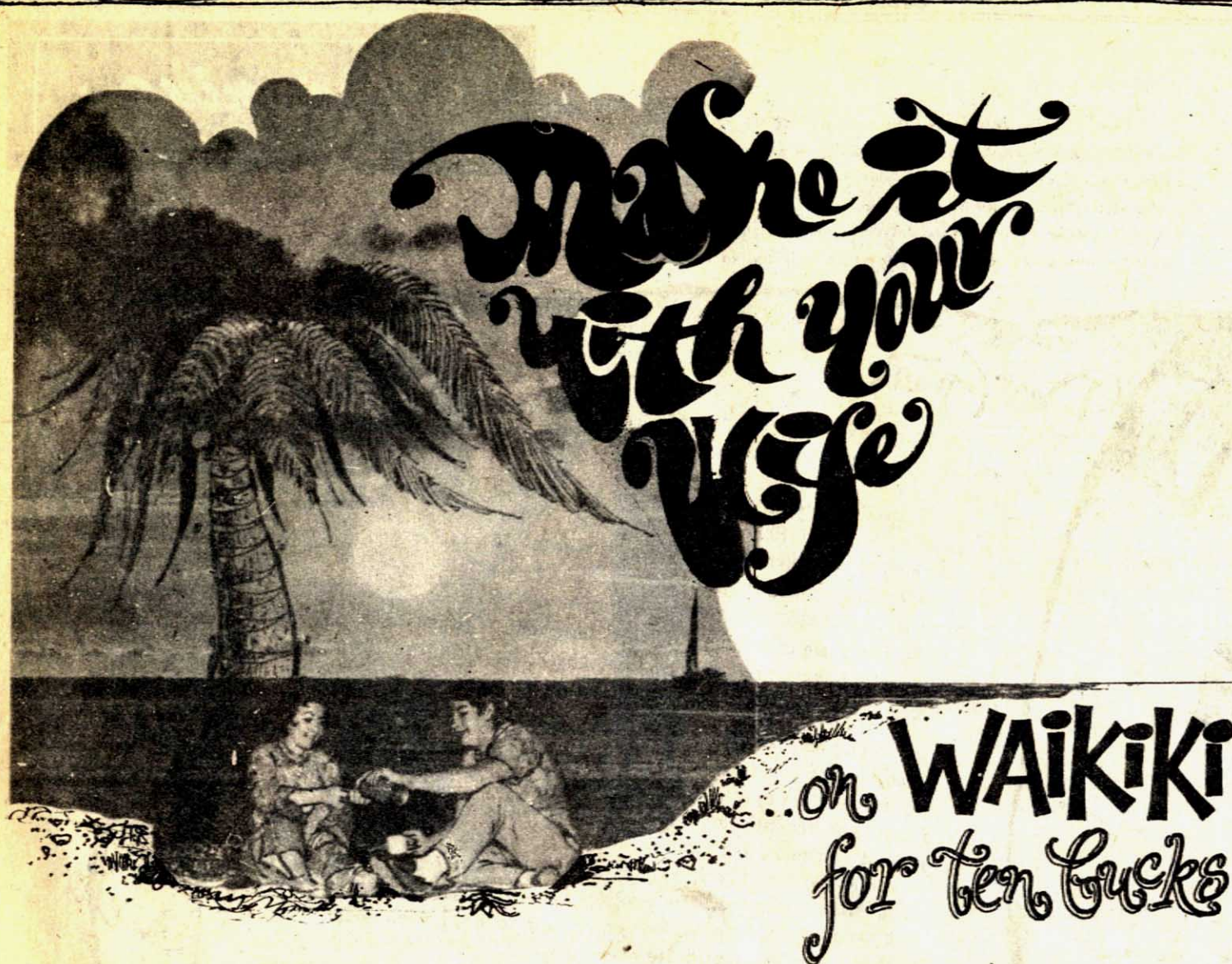
STEINBECK : It's interviews like this, and it's preoccupation with the subject... like we're doing right now... that create the stigmas. If everybody just relaxed and forgot about it... because, God knows, it's not important... things might be different. In my book I try more than anything else to make the point that whatever I say about marijuana is only my own point of view, and it hurts me even to write it because it's so unimportant.

GRUNT : What about the so-called psychedelic or mind-expanding drugs; where do you stand on this subject?

STEINBECK : Well, drugs are drugs. They've been around for thousands of years, and they're going to stay around. If anybody wanted to

Continued on page 18





You're a married grunt in Hawaii on R & R. You've got a few bucks saved from your pay during the six months in Nam. The biggest of your savings you've sent to your wife to buy her roundtrip ticket from home to Honolulu. You've also sent her dough to pay for the baby-sitter she's hired for the 10 days she'll be gone.

What's left won't go far in Waikiki if you follow the mob to the expensive spots. So maybe you've got enough for a night or two of big-time celebration on that second honeymoon. But comes the time near the end of the too-short leave when you've got to economize.

Would you believe a night in Waikiki on less than 10 bucks a couple? Here's how it can be done by a couple more intested in each other than in fancy surroundings, cover charges and tips. And doing it, they'll enjoy all the travel-brochure lures to Waikiki.

You start at the Ilikai Hotel at about 6 p.m. with a drink at the outdoor bar facing the sea where you watch the sunset in splendor behind the clouds out to sea toward the Wainai Mountain Range. If you avoid the mai-tai (which you've had anyway, to celebrate that first big evening, you can get by for a buck-a-drink and a two-bit tip.

At 6:30 you walk a short distance to the nearby inner of the Ilikai where the free evening performance of good Hawaiian music is presented. The show opens with the sounding of conch shells by a truly virtuoso conch blower. With the aid of two young Hawaiian boys he makes a circuit of the court, lighting the tiki torch as dusk falls. Then follows an hour of authentic music by a trio of lovely Hawaiians — if a bit on the heavy side.

When darkness is complete the Ilikai presents its dancing fountains, a water and light show that entrances with its constantly changing colors and shapes, and provides the perfect setting for a color shot of you and your wife enjoying the good life in Hawaii.

Now you're ready for dinner,

and a short stroll away is Kalakaua Avenue, the main drag of Waikiki. Here are numerous restaurants where you can fill up for about three bucks apiece. One that we can recommend highly, both for food and decor is Pedro's, a Mexican restaurant at 2165 Kalakaua. Here you can be served indoors at candle-lit tables close to a mariachi trio of authentic Mexicans imported to provide true Mexican music. Or you can sit outside at a tiki-torch-lighted table where a wandering guitarist heightens your romantic mood.

After dinner, you walk up Kalakaua to the International Market-Place, window shopping as you go, people-watching all the way. Inside the market place, you head for The Factory Ice Cream Parlor where you pick up an ice-cream-cone dessert, and continue wandering through the colorful area, watching the people and looking over the fascinating displays of Polynesian goods, authentic and otherwise, offered for sale. Here and there the sweet scent of pot will fill your nostrils as you pass a group of «free-souls» getting a little help from their friend.

It's about 9 p.m. now and you

cross Kalakaua to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel to catch the Ed Kenney show. You're going to have a bit of brandy and coffee while you listen to the music of «The Voice of Hawaii» and his fellow entertainers. But you're not going to pay the \$4.50 cover charge to hear the show — and you're not really going to see it, but you'll have what we consider a more choice seat than any occupied by the tourists inside the Monarch Room of the hotel.

You've had the foresight to fill a small thermos with brandy-laced coffee before you left your hotel for the evening. And you're carrying your Monarch Room seats with you: They're the straw beach mats you picked up on your first day of leave (Everyone does pick up these buck-apiece mats and many, many persons carry them along during an evening so that a look at the moon from the Waikiki Beach won't mean sand on milady's newly-purchased mumuu).

You walk through the Royal Hawaii lobby, turning left as you enter from Kalakaua and going straight through to the beach where you spread your mat, sit down, and pour the coffee as you gaze out upon a moonlit sea and listen

to Ed Kenney's mellifluous voice serenading you from only fifty-feet behind.

With the Ed Kenney show, over at about 10, you take off your shoes and stockings and stroll through the curling waves at the edge of the beach toward Diamond Head, past the Surfrider, stopping briefly to listen to more Hawaiian music coming from its beachfront terrace.

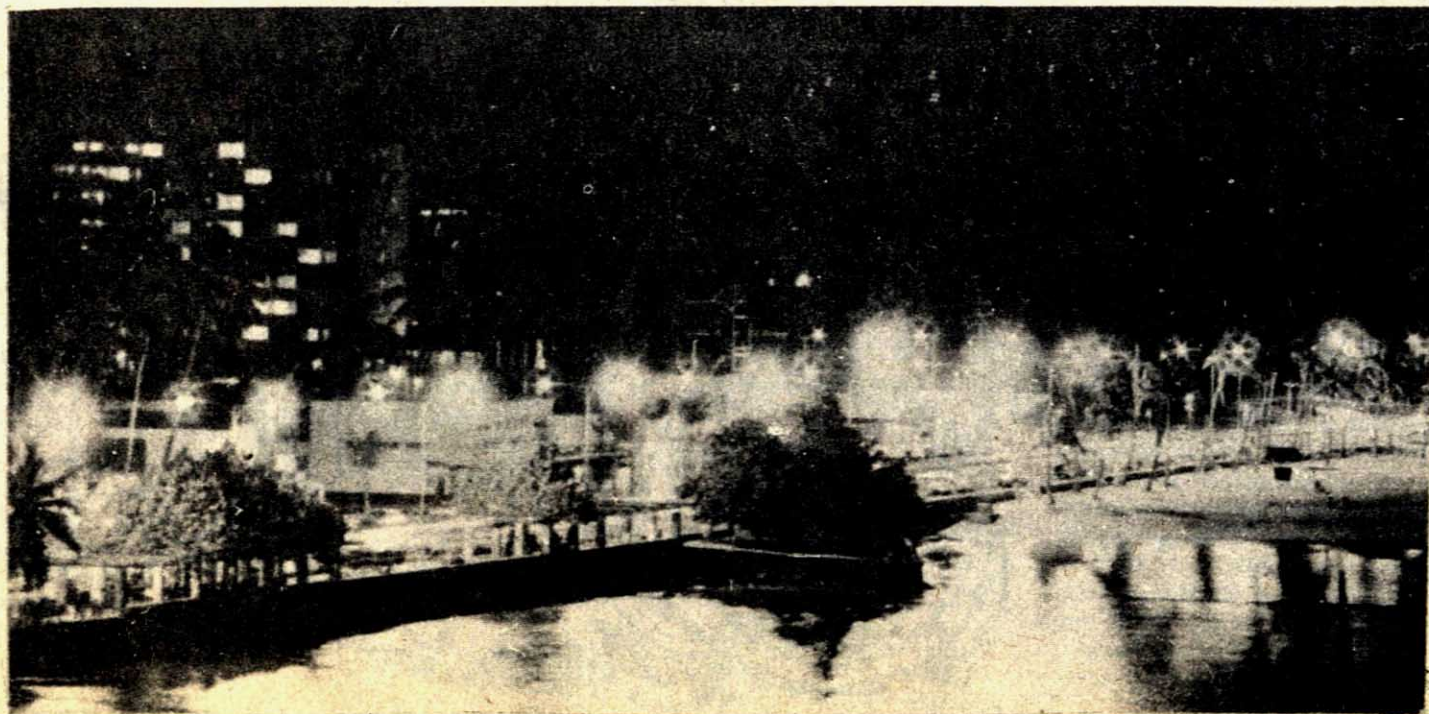
You pass other couples romantically intertwined on the now semi-deserted beach; you stop to rap a bit with a hippie-type who has just emerged from the surf after a swim, blue denims and all. He tells you the water is «fine, man,» and he'll drip dry.

Then you come to the Banyan Court of the Moana Hotel. You sit on a bench, separated from the buck-and-a-half drinks by only a hedge of flowers. You listen to the music of a dance band coming from a stand inside the court and you want to dance. So you walk through the court, under the banyan tree, to the small dance floor and take her in your arms and float out onto the dance floor. The spirit of Aloha being what it is, no one will bother you if you dance a set without being a paying customer. No one will really know you're not.

The dance set is finished, and you head back to the beach and walk through the court of the Moana Surfrider, through Captain Cook's Galley to a bench inside the lobby just beyond. Here you pause, like any other hotel guest might, and listen for a while to the most fabulous ukulele you'll hear anywhere in the world. Inside the Galley, but only a few feet from you, Mark Gordon plays pre-Bach madrigals and other esoteric music on an instrument most widely known for «Little Grass Shack» stuff.

Then it's back to the velvety soft night on Kalakaua and back to the International Market Place (all this excursion has covered, incidentally, only about six or eight blocks of walking). At the entrance to the market place you join other young impecunious couples seated on the benches outside Gauguin's and listen to a musical nightcap provided by one of the best rock groups on the Island, playing inside the wide open Gauguin's.

By now, it's getting close to midnight, and this may be your last night before it's back to Nam. So, who needs a guide to direct your steps to the finale of this night on Waikiki at a price you can afford?





GRUNT

Speaks out

There's an old Chinese proverb about a stiff wick having no conscience. You might say it hasn't got «security consciousness» either. The subject is too delicate for the security posters to talk about and it can't appear in unit bulletins, but it needs to be said. Let's face it, a guy is never more vulnerable than when he's intimately involved with a female, or rather, just before, he's intimate. It's the old bit about «blow in my ear and I'll follow you anywhere». Let's say the girl in the piece is Viet Cong agent, and chances of this being so are high. She's got something you want real bad and she knows how to tease you to near desperation. In those last taunting minutes before she plops into bed, she could be casually asking questions that you normally wouldn't answer, but security doesn't get top priority in times like this. And believe us, the girl knows this better than anyone.

It starts out casually. «What time you go to work tomorrow?» «You work Danang?» «You Marine or you Air Force?» «What company you work for?» «Danang number one. I work in PX there before». All this, of course, is mixed in with a casual kiss, a stroke through your hair, a playful pat, anything to keep you thinking this is normal pre-love talk.

The specifics get thrown in, the real probes. «You can come see me Thursday?»

«No»

«Why not? Thursday my day off».

«Sorry, we'll be gone?»

«Where you go?» The soft hands are probing along with the hard mind.

«On an operation».

«You can come Thursday. I want to see you then».

«No, honey, we leave tomorrow and we'll be gone all week. I'll see you when I get back».

This goes on and when everything is finished. The unsuspecting grunt has paid a lot more than a thousand pee for that piece. He's told the girl what unit he's with, when they're going on an operation, the type of operation, where it will be, how big it will be. The VC in the target area will get the warning they need.

For the most part, GIs in Vietnam are hep to these security probes and learn to clam up in time. But the chances of a slip are greatest when a man's mind is on something else. May be there's some slogan or poster that will get the message across and not offend sensibilities. Something like a discreetly nude couple on a bed with the warning, «Keep your mouth shut. She's not worth your life», or «Loose Lips are Like Radar Blips. Your quips are enemy tips». Wish we could say, «Don't lose your head over a piece of tail».

The following letter wins the annual GRUNT prize for length, digression and abstruseness. It is also damn well written. But in its entirety would take a page-and-a-half of type. We have boiled it down to the nitty-gritty, which is tantamount to calling us a bunch of racists. Please, dear Su... this we are not. We wish we could get more material from Grunts of every color, but we are limited to our mail pull.

Dear Grunt

I just received your newspaper in a rather dubious manner (wrapping for a birthday gift), nevertheless it was read in due time.

I found it interesting to note that your article, "Oriental Girls VS American Roundeyes," mentions "The and worst mistake you can make in appraising Oriental women is to consider them as a group," and then follows up with a seven-group listing of Oriental women—Safety in numbers?

The same article contains the statement, "Oriental women generally have fewer hangups about sex." Isn't this a little incongruous with the "Dear John" bit on the next page?

Being an American girl (i.e. 'Roundeye') (although they're actually more of an oval shape of my eyes, nor can I see how the shape of my eyes affects the shape of my personality. If a man is to honestly love a woman, it should be on the basis of what woman is like inside.

Since your publication uses the words Free Press as part of its title, I was led to believe (perhaps erroneously) that it is by young people for young people. (By young, I mean under thirty; not to say that those over thirty are thereby considered ancient).

I would hope that a publication of that nature would show the dreams particular to that market age-group. I cannot believe that the hopes of our generation lie in continuing the inanities of racism. Having begun the conquest of space, we must begin to think of ourselves on a world level. To cling to the petty prejudices induced by variant skin color and/or eye shape is pure folly. To promote such prejudice is pure stupidity.

Your article could have been so interesting. Perhaps you could try again... I realize you are probably thinking "just who the hell does she think she is, telling us how to run our paper?" But page six gives me permission to "rap" to you... so I'm rappin'.

It is, of course true that Vietnamese (as well as other Orientals) are different from American women. But why? The important issue is not what different men think about Oriental women, because there will be different opinions from each individual. An in-depth report of the cultural differences would not only be of interest to the parties involved, but also enlightening in some ways... If you are interested in getting the G.I.'s opinions of Oriental women, why not get the Oriental woman's opinion of G.I.s. In short, you have here the meat of several fantastic articles—which are both newsworthy and important to the furtherance of international relations.

I hope I haven't annoyed you in some way by my letter, although in all honesty, my life won't suddenly take a turn for the worse if I have. Mostly, I hope I've made sense, and in some small way was heard.

Miss Su Hedley
9836 McKnight NE
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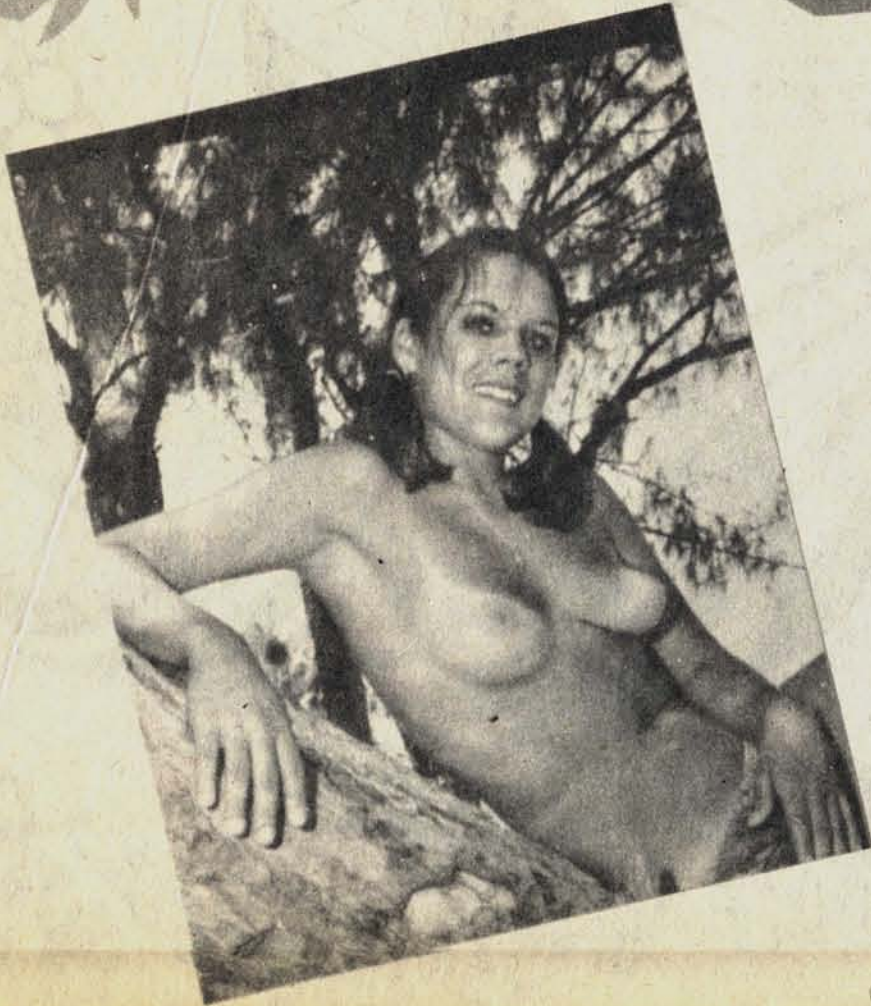
(You have not annoyed us in any way, but we do think you (being an "oval" eyed American) have missed the tone of the article. Bet the Grunts would like to see a picture of you).

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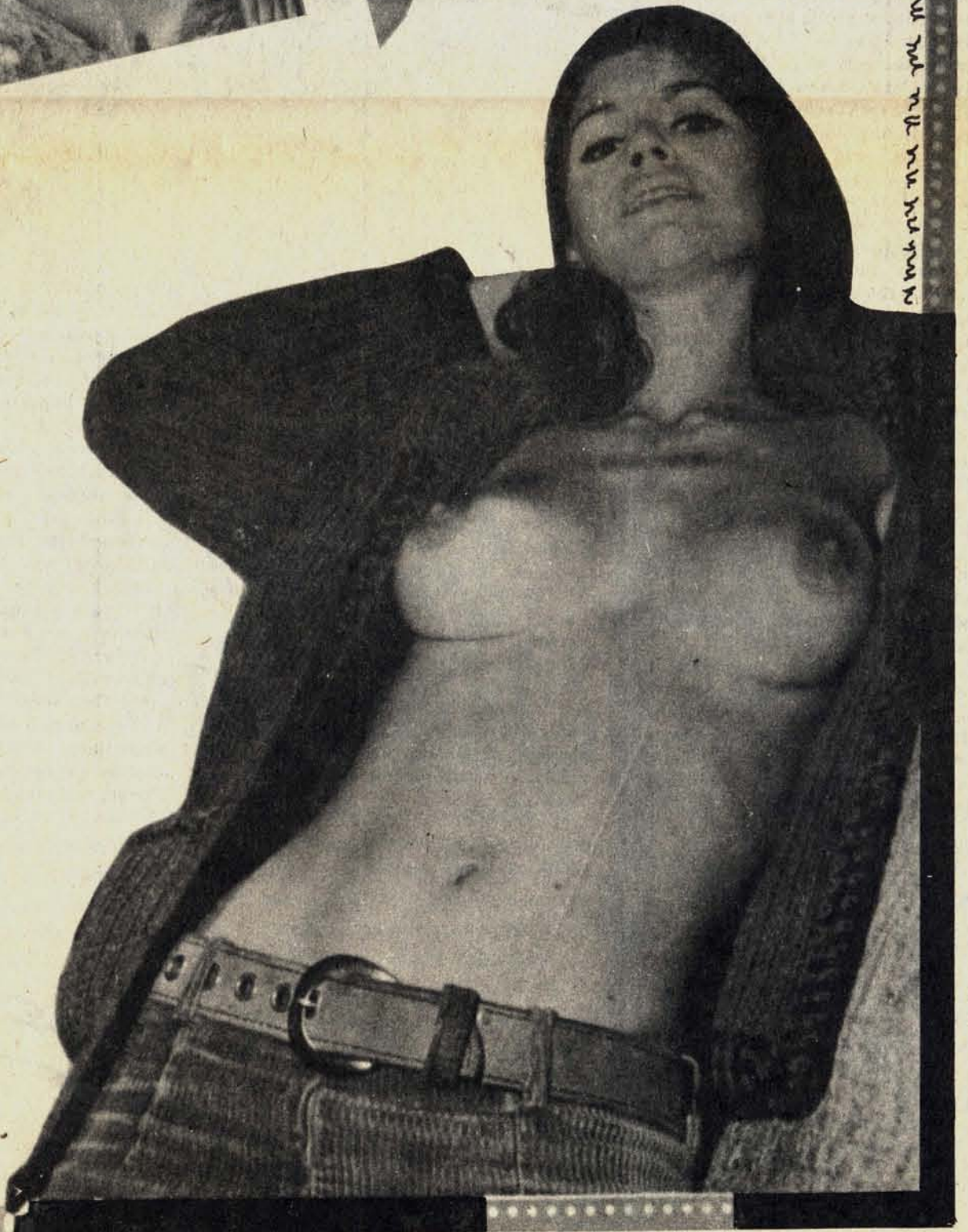
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MANAGING EDITOR
ART DIRECTOR

Doug Warren
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NUDE



4 You don't see the lions in Africa if you fly over them at 35,000 feet in a jet airliner. And it's the same thing with the bare-breasted beauties bathing in the rice paddies of Thailand. So what do you do? You take the train from Bangkok to Udorn.

Jim Bracht tells us the study of the bathing habits on the beauties in the paddies, is a field of study as important as bird watching. And it takes a lot of expertise.

«You take the 6:30 p.m. sleeper from Bangkok -- make sure you get the bottom rack where the window is -- have the five-baht dinner and a bottle of beer; then hit the sack right after they make-up your bunk. You want a good night's sleep so you'll be wide awake at 5 a.m. when you might see the action.

About an hour-and-a-half out of Udorn at daybreak, you'll start passing some incredibly beautiful countryside: bright green rice fields; forests and canals and streams framed by a beautiful gold and orange sunrise.

Ignore all this and concentrate on your goal. You might occasionally find a bare-breasted bather near the tracks but it's rare. Look ahead for the tiny villages set back about 400 yards from the railroad. Concentrate on the fields around them. After that, it's up to you and your binoculars.»

I followed Bracht's advice, and the fellow passengers and the whole scene was great, but that's another story.

Five sharp I was wide awake, stirred into action by my wrist watch alarm. Then, like any devoted early morning bird watcher, I began my search, training the powerful binoculars on possible targets in every direction. Every house, every cluster of huts, every lonely paddy, underwent my careful scrutiny. There were interesting sights in the early morning sunlight, but not the one I was after. I saw dozens of men, women and children in various pursuits: cooking over open fires, riding water buffalo, fishing, steering canoes, and a surprisingly large number doing their morning ablutions. Nude children were bathing in some of the canals but there was no trace of a genuine bathing beauty.

Somehow -- and it's hard to explain -- the search became frantic and obsessive. I suppose fierce big game hunters and gentle bird watchers all have that same feeling of excitement and anticipation that I felt. It wasn't a question of just seeing a pair of boobies. Those can be observed almost anywhere nowadays with the permissive society dropping taboos all over the place. No, mine was a ro-

mantic search, not a sexual thing. It isn't often in a man's lifetime that he can observe in real life that scene made famous in so many great paintings: a beautiful native girl in an unspoiled rural setting, bathing unashamedly in the buff. Gauguin saw it in Tahiti, of course, and it used to be common in Bali and Africa, but generation after generation of missionaries have almost made the species extinct. I just had to see it. That's all there was to it.

An hour had gone by and the sun had risen well above the horizon but my determination became great-

IN SEARCH OF

TROPICAL NUDE BATHER

er. Twice I saw nude bodies in the water, but on both occasions, they were men engaged in pursuit of some kind of marine life in the bottom of the canals.

As the train neared Udorn, there was a lot of noise and movement outside my bunk from the other passengers, more interested in breakfast than the scenery. The attendant pulled my curtains apart and indicated he'd like to make up the bed.

That was it. My one-and-one-half hour vigil had not paid off. No primeval paradise observation. No glimpse of what gave Gauguin his inspiration.

No lovely maiden with her long black hair hanging loose to her hips standing naked in the water, doing a natural thing in a natural setting.

I rationalized: you win some, you lose some, but I was let down. I really wanted to see that scene, and the desire was a hell of a lot greater by this time than before.

Then it happened.

I saw her. A real genuine long black-haired beauty bathing with her upper half naked in a pool of water outside a rather large bungalow not far from the station. It happened after I got off the train at Udorn. I saw it from the taxi. It was just 7 a.m. The girl stood there with a towel drying off her shoulders and back and completely oblivious to the world outside. She was beautiful and built like a statue. The scene had everything. And I caught it without benefit of binoculars. Then to my amazement another girl appeared, removed her blouse, and stepped into the water.

Then two more. The girls shed their clothes and walked into the water. Three more came and four after that. They all peeled and bathed; each more beautiful than the other.

I had the taxi pull over and the driver grinned. «Number one massage girls,» he said.

«Massage girls?» I looked at the building behind the pool. Even with the neon lights out, I could read, «Starlight Bath and Massage». The girls were not native outdoors types, but masseuses. Then I found out from the driver that there was a breakdown in the water service that night and the water was cut off all over town. The poor girls were forced to bathe outside because of necessity.

As I suspected, my friend Jim Bracht was not impressed with my discovery of this harem of naked bathers. He dismissed my case as, «Commercial. Nothing to do with the search. Forget it. Now if you try the train from Bangkok to Chiang Mai, you might have better luck.»

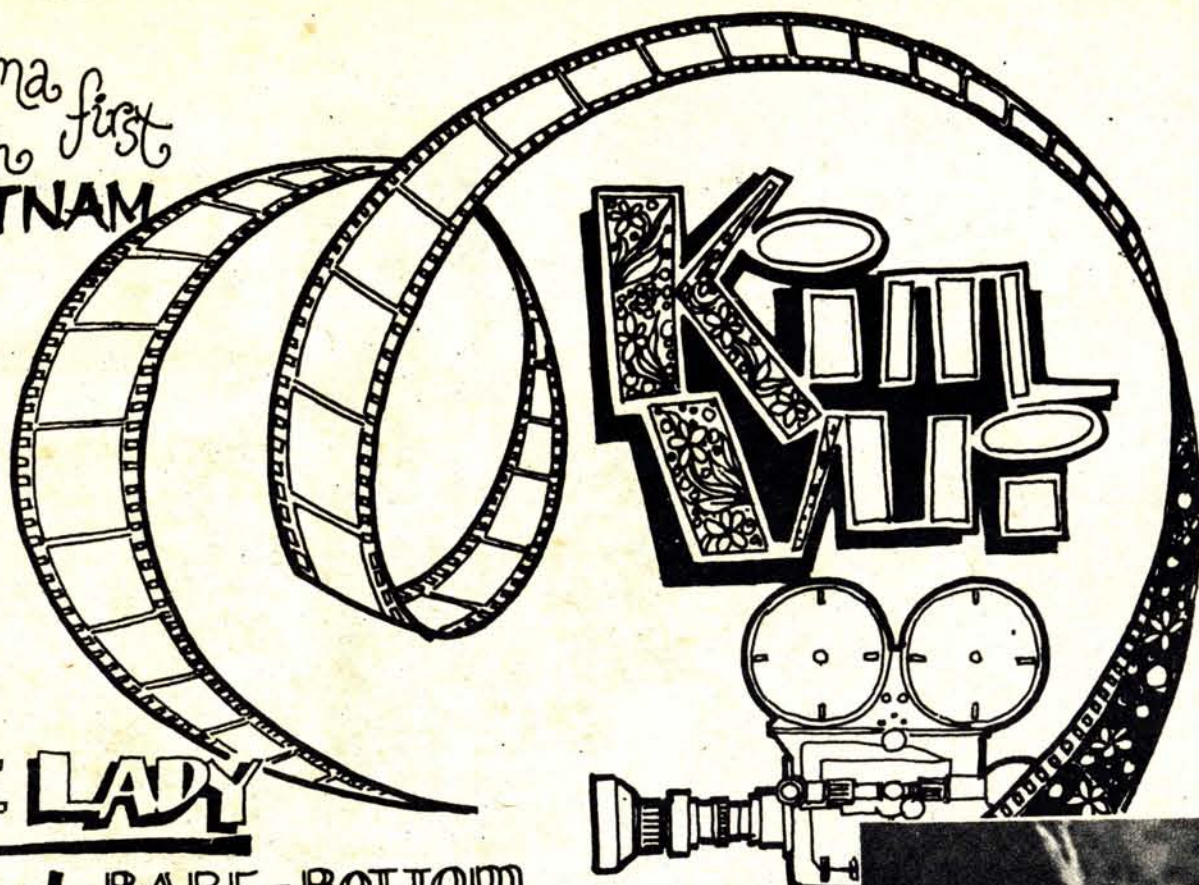
I didn't take Bracht's advice. I wasn't going to risk failure twice. It was quite a shock to go out looking for one nude bather in a natural setting and then find only a dozen nudes bathing in a commercial setting. No, I decided. Enough of that. Next time, I'll search for something just as difficult to find, and you don't have to leave the city to find it. That's a Bangkok taxi with its meter running.





a cinema first
in
VIETNAM

THE MOVIE LADY



BARE-BOTTOM
wide screen
MOUTH-TO-MOUTH

Happening

Politics pervade all levels of life in sunny Vietnam, and many say Kim Vui deserved the honor bestowed by President Thieu that tells who is really number one among the country's film beauties. She came in second best, however, to another lovely named Kieu Chinh... but wait 'til next year.



The lovely singer-actress will have something riding with her this year that none of her competitors can boast: it is the war film titled, «Violet Horizon.» It will be (1) The first wide-screen-color film ever made in Viet nam. (2) It will mark the first time a pair of movie lovers have kissed mouth-to-mouth. (3) It will be the first film where lovers have been brazen enough to do their smooching in bed in the altogether (delicately, of course). AND (4) Violet Horizon will break all puritan barriers by showing a film darling in a real honest-to-belly button nude scene.

In the latter sequence Kim is posing for an artist, quite naked, and if imagination may be required to get the full scope of her bodily charms, the painting he is seen working on is not exactly something out of the Rembrandt era. It is sensual at the very least. Having the vanity deserving such a celebrity, Miss Vui hired one of Vietnam's top artists (with her own piasters) to make the eyepleasing piece of art work.

There is a slight difference in the movie star syndrome in this underdeveloped country. For years the French kind of pushed the industry under the rug; they had their own films to import. Then with all the years of war, there was little development in the national film industry. The government produced a few propaganda type dramas, but that left something to be desired by the participants. Most of the «something» being hard cash.

The smiling, talkative, and down-to-earth movie star said she had to pay her own hotel bills on locations such as Vung Tau, and by the time the film was finished it had actually cost her money.

She was finished with films at this unprofitable juncture. She doesn't particularly like the fish-bowl existence of a celebrity anyway. And she does very nicely as a nightclub singer.

But when Lien Anh Company (consisting of seven men-- two of them magazine publishers) was formed the monetary value of film making increased. This, needless to say, helped inspire Miss Vui to give the flicks another try.

As it turns out Kim Vui will have earned more than any Vietnamese actress for a single movie role: 500,00 piasters or about \$4,250 U.S. Not enough to buy a yawn from Liz Taylor, but by local standards, that's bread.

Each night of her life Miss Vui performs in her sultry, sexy style at three clubs. First she does her thing at the fifth floor bar at the Majestic Hotel; next she makes a quick change to do a few more tunes at the upstairs bar at Maxims, and after another change, she diddly-bops downstairs to lay on a few more of her ballads in the main dining room. Then she goes by chauffeured Toyota to a spot near the Central Market named the



Van Canh. That's where she croaks out her final love songs of the evening. By this time, she admits she is very much bushed.

Still, she prefers this routine to film making. She says she is tired of the myriad accusations a film star receives. She is constantly the object of untrue gossip, and fans even manage to slip notes under the gate of her Saigon home. Some say she likes Americans better than her own people, some call her very unsavory names, others criticize her for no particular reason at all. In all, she receives from 200 to 800 letters a week.

An interesting sidelight or two on the famous beauty include the fact that her sexy voice is the result of a tonsilectomy. Prior to this improper surgery, she was a trained soprano. Now, she is a cross between Marlene Dietrich and Andy Devine, but coming out of her it sounds good. And no one questions her ability to sell. Another facet of her secret life lies in her promising artistic skills. She would like to give up films and singing and make a living by painting.

Her home in Saigon is comfortable, but certainly unpretentious. She owns another large home with acreage in Dalat, where many family members hole-up. She loves the mountain paradise of Viet-Nam, but rarely can afford to take the time to go there.

She wants to marry someday in the not too distant future to a man she has yet to meet. «He can be a butterfly,» she said. «As long as I don't find out about it. I'm terribly jealous but understanding. I must respect this man thoroughly,» she added, «and I will gladly walk in his shadow.» .. (CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)





Americans

in

More than two-and-a-half million Americans have made extended visits to Southeast Asia in the past six years. Most spent a year in Vietnam, scattered throughout the country, doing their thing in a war unlike any America ever fought before. But they weren't all warriors, not by a long shot. Some were there to build bridges, repair radios, entertain troops, sell airplane parts, run service clubs and PXs, write and photograph news stories, teach school, fly planes, perform surgery, guard prisons and a thousand other tasks. But they have one thing in common. They're all Americans, brought by circumstance to the Asian land mass, learning new tricks, taking exotic pictures, sampling strange delights and risking their necks every day.

Most of these Americans are very young men, trained to carry and fire a rifle, fly or service an airplane, or sail ships that supply and fight. Others are civilians--businessmen, diplomats, civil servants, contractors, entertainers, spies. For understandable reasons, only a few are tourists. They're a cross section of America, to use the old cliché. They're the silent majority, the vocal minority, hawk, dove, rich, poor, north, south, black, white, farm, ghetto. Some came for adventure, some because they were ordered, some for promotion and honor, some for money. Most are serving their country in a task that all their countrymen don't approve of. And they're doing it the best they can.

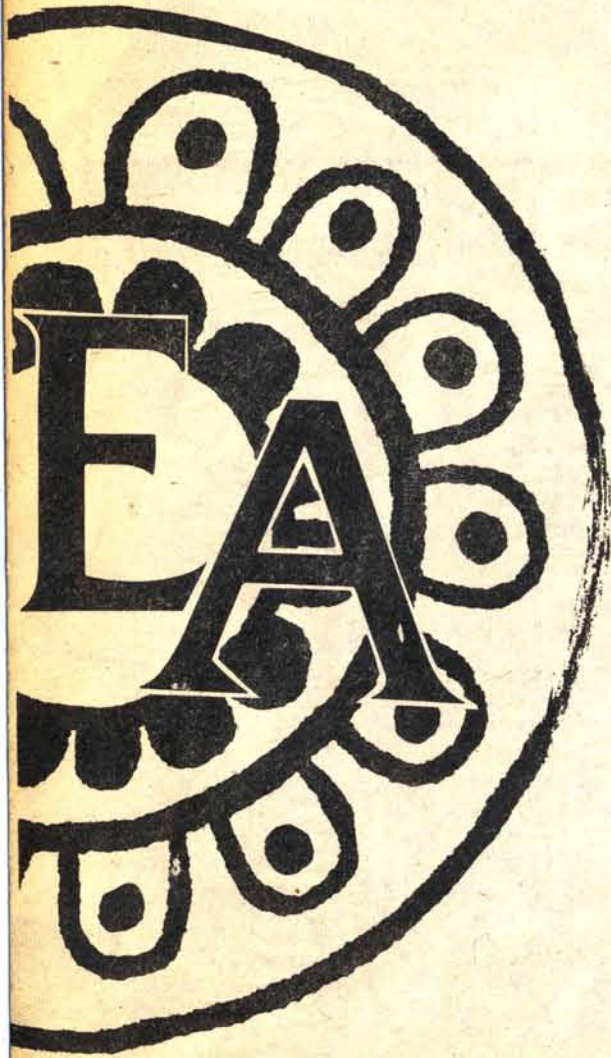
What they're doing in terms of representing America and its goals in Asia is a matter of record. Newspapers, TV and magazines for years have had the spotlight on this group of Americans, telling their story. Just as important is what Southeast Asia is doing to them. That will come later. The bars and living rooms and college corridors for years to come will echo with stories of the Nam. Millions of color slide photos will be flashed on walls and screens to bored relatives and friends who will listen to one man's interpretation of one of the big events of this century. But these will be superficial impressions. What really counts is the mark left with the man himself - the man who was a part of history.

Each man has his own story and he releases only part of it. He doesn't even know what's stored up in that complex memory-think box made up of gray matter. But it's there and it will be there for the rest of his life.

This issue of GRUNT taps the minds of one American soldier. We'd like to tap the impressions of others in later issues. Maybe you have something to say. Let us know.

A NOTE TO SUBSCRIBERS...

Due to our rapidly expanding subscription list GRUNT has had to succumb to the fate of the establishment. We have turned to computers to expedite the handling of your monthly newspaper. Since machines have been known to make a mistake or two, we ask all subscribers to notify us if any delivery discrepancies occur. Like, if you don't get your monthly GRUNT, give us a quick rap.



A true encounter by Doug Warren

one american



The Pleiku Airfield had been closed during the massive communist offensive, but was finally operating on a limited basis. The terminal - if you could call it that - was jammed with military personnel.

I casually noticed the rifleman next to me. His jungle fatigues, his hair, and skin were crusted with the red dust of the Central Highlands. His nervousness was accented by busy hands. They would drum on the bench, and alternately rub his reddish stubble of beard. He smoked in a steady chain.

More than an hour passed before he spoke. «Guess I better get used to talking,» he said. «I used to do a lot of it home.»

He began slowly, but before long there was a flush of verbiage. As he spoke, flight after flight passed him by. He paused only when the standby numbers were called over the loud-speaker.

«I figured Pleiku would be like, an R & R,» he said. After 11 months in Dakto, anything seemed good. He laughed derisively. «I'd have been better off up there.»

He explained he had been sent to Pleiku to await orders to fly to Cam Ranh, and then homeward to Detroit. But fate intervened. The big 1968 Tet offensives broke out and this Grunt named Paul was again issued an M-16. For five nights he manned a perimeter post and was under constant fire. His days were spent setting trip-flares and filling sand bags. His stay in Pleiku was no rest cure.

This was Paul's third day at the airport; but his number had not been called. «I gotta get out today!» he said making a fist. «I'll be damned if I'll go back to that stinkin' camp. I'm short, man.... I'm going home.»

He calmed with a deep sigh. «Nobody knows about war,» he said. «You can read words, but you gotta be there to know. Funny... this guy moves into my tent, see. For three days I wouldn't give him a word. He tries getting friendly and I shut him off. He finally asks me what I'm sore at, and I'm stuck. How do you explain a thing like that?»

When asked for an explanation, he continued: «How do you explain you don't want to make friends with a guy, because if you do... you'll sure as hell lose him.»

«You lost some buddies?»

He laughed at first, but then tensed. «Every damn one of 'em. You get a pal - you depend on him, and wham - he gets zapped. I lost four... four damn good buddies. So you see, I couldn't afford this new guy's friendship, and he couldn't afford mine. I never tried to explain it to him. He was too much a virgin to understand.»

In the growing purge of memories the Spec. 4 described the aching miseries of the infantryman: how he fights by night and works by day; how he blows up on pot; gets drunk whenever he can; how he hates all brass, and anybody else who isn't in the line of fire.

«The battalion commander shows up,» he gave as an example. «You kind of expect a pat on the back. Man, that's funny. All you ever get is bitching and complaint. You never satisfy those bastards.»

He lit a fresh cigarette from his working butt, and reverted to the subject of marijuana. «Sure you blow-up when you can. Otherwise you go psycho. I won't touch the shit when I get home with my wife - I won't need it then. But most of us lean on it here. And you can get it as easy as these Camels.»

Mud, blood, rain, dust, a weed or two.

The breath of death constantly over your shoulder.

Is this a way to spend a year?

It was the daily for this young American in Southeast Asia, and for many others - many, many others.

He explained how the men control each other. «You see a guy bombing out continually, and you kick his ass. He either straightens up or we do it for him. When your life's at stake you don't overdo anything like that. Not if you got any sense.»

Over the long hours of waiting, the conversation drifted over myriad aspects of the war. He was finally asked if he felt guilty because he made it, and his pals were killed.

He pointed to a small scar at the lower right side of his neck. He said the surgeon told him a half-inch to the left and he would have been killed, but he quickly switched his narrative: «I got MEDEVACED out, and was kept in the hospital five days. When I got back to my outfit, two of my buddies were dead. If I had been there, maybe I could have helped them.»

He had more to say on the subject, but he suddenly hushed as the loudspeaker blasted. He closed eyes and fists as though in prayer as the list of stand-by numbers were called out. Suddenly he jumped to his feet with an uninhibited wail of joy. «That's me... that's me!» he shouted, showing me his first full grin. He grabbed my hand with both his, and pumped furiously.

«Thanks... thanks a lot for letting me blow off steam. But now I gotta go. I'm goin' home, man - I'm goin' home to my wife!»

I had known for several hours that Paul was only 20, but now - for the first time - he actually looked it.



(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)



Kim
Vui

She designs all her gowns and even does much of seamstress work. They all look like Fifth Avenue products.

Filming in Nam has its peculiarities too. The final scenes of Violet Horizon were shot several months ago but then the raw film was sent to Tokyo for processing. When it is returned cut, edited and ready to go, the really hard work begins. Every word of every character in every scene has to be dubbed against the

finished film. In other words, the cast reassembles in a Vietnam studio, the film runs, and the actors have to synchronize their voices to the action on screen. If that sounds easy, try lip-synching a record sometime. It's extremely tricky, and it is said that the Vietnamese have become masters in this tedious art.

Because there are no modern film studios in Vietnam, sound-on-film cannot be made. The words are spoken when the shooting takes place, but the voices are actually recorded long after the film is finished.

Kim Vui is not temperamental, nor prima donnaish. The film actors and actresses haven't been spoiled

to that degree. But she does have her own strong ideas, and doesn't mind expressing them. Perhaps at those prices, she should not be blamed. And, as she says, she earns far more money as a singer.

But Violet Horizons will present many firsts, and should make Kim Vui a famous personality the world over. It is scheduled for international distribution.

Perhaps if Hollywood comes up with even a modest offer, the popular young artist might give film retirement a second delay. There are bit players in Hollywood who earn a great deal more than the highest paid female star in S. Vietnam.





If you can
write your
name, you
can write for

GRUNT

send any
contribution
to:

BOX 1164
REDLANDS, CALIF
92373

It's a crazy world when a hundred thousand Americans march against the war and Hanoi sends its congratulations and urges them on.

We are not flagwaving and we don't object to the right to dissent, but our real interest is the troops serving in Vietnam today, getting shot at, and killed. They deserve something better.

How do you think a guy feels going into battle when he reads that Hanoi is backing a protest march by Americans in the U.S. to bring him home? It's not a good feeling.

It's human nature to want to believe that your task is appreciated by the people you're doing it for. All the people. Sure, the vast majority of Americans are on record as standing behind their troops in Vietnam and most troops accept the dissenting minority as part of the America they're fighting for. But,

dissent & THE VN GRUNT

it's galling to hear that top North Vietnamese officials are sending their congratulations for these demonstrations.

The question that comes to mind immediately is, why doesn't somebody go to work on those Hanoi soldiers in Vietnam who are rocketing and mortaring American positions in Vietnam? Why doesn't a group of dissenters in North Vietnam demand their return home?

The truth is that nobody in North Vietnam would DARE to express oppo-

sition to their government policy. And if there were such a group, we wonder if the U.S. Government officially would encourage them. Not likely.

War is a dirty business, but this picture of an enemy who is killing American soldiers working with other Americans to weaken the morale and resolve of our troops on the front line is pretty odorous. You don't have to be a flag waver to see that something is wrong there.



GRUNT has been selling in Vietnam and the Far East for over two years. It's a humor mag and it's good. We know that because we got stacks of letters telling us. We're not big time and we're not coining money, mainly because we're concentrating on GI humor and the GI scene and not on advertisers. The only real satisfaction we've had from putting this out is reader's reaction.

When we switched two months ago to a breezy "underground" format, we sold out in a week. The style caught on, and more important, what was inside hit the mark — you. We want to continue in this style and we want to get closer to the mark. But we need your contribution. You have to tell us what you are thinking about. Do you dig the new format? What don't you like about it? Keep us tuned in.





You've had it up to here with the Saigon bar routine: the 400 piaster teas; machines that look like girls patting your legs; short change artists; lovable street urchins who wait for the chance to pick your pocket. The whole grabby, sexless, contemptuous pursuit of your dollars begins to stir your intestines.

After a time, even the heralded massage parlors are no longer novelties: you know every move the deft fingers will make before



they begin to move, and no matter what you give her... the broad wants more.

Maybe you're the type who doesn't dig this kind of action anyway. Maybe the con of the cyclo drivers hawking their unseen 16-year-olds is simply not your bag. You've probably been through it before in other places in other lands.

Okay... this is only a suggestion. But we can see no harm in giving it a try. If you are seeking a fairly decent femme to converse with, exchange language exercises with, or... maybe to wake up next to the morning after, why not give the classified ads a gamble.

Each English language newspaper in Saigon carries ads of agencies such as Miss Lee, Miss Gina and Miss Suzie. The women are ostensibly in business to spare you all the old horse shit you usually have to go through to get together with the girl you want to meet. They have photo catalogs to skim through, and although some pics may prove deceiving, the service is fairly straight. If you want conversation, Miss Phuong may be the girl for you. If it's marriage, then perhaps a meeting with Miss Lan could be the answer. Each bird is classified into the proper category.

In one establishment, the initial fee is 500 piasters. That's for the initial consultation and an inspection of the complete catalog of pictures of local lovelies. If you find the right looking face (and figure perhaps) it will cost another 2,000 Ps for the rendezvous. If the doll fits her ad, then it's entirely up to you. You can invite her to the zoo or the movies, or take her out of the town, whatever may be the mutual agreement. In certain situations-

if you really turn her on - - she may even invite you to meet mom and pop and all 15 of her brothers and sisters. After the initial contact it's in the hands of the gods.

Many Vietnamese girls sincerely wish to meet foreigners through a third party. It gives them a chance, for one thing, to opt out if you fail to meet their specs. Many come from respectable families, are educated, and have even traveled abroad. They know that not every American is prowling Tu Do every night. They know there are guys seeking a genuine, meaningful relationship, or a girl they wish to see periodically, just for an evening of conviviality. Whatever motivation draws a girl to sign up with the agent, may be the same as your own. It's true there could be a few darlings using this as a subtle means of turning a fast buck, but that's part of the risk. You must make your own judgment.

Although the agencies are apparently on the up-and-up, they may lack the thoroughness of a stateside dating service. You know the adage about a bad apple now and then. Yet, it's worth an investigation, and Grunt has known several young



men who have been more than satisfied with the results.

The places checked by Grunt staffers passed the test, and there are documentations that prove the point. Frank S., a construction type, said, « I got no bitch. I checked out a couple cuties before I settled on Xuyen, and I didn't have to look any further. We started dating casually, and now she's part of the household. She has a great personality, cost far less than any bar girl, and I don't feel as though I'm keeping a whore. She has a daytime job as a typist and drops by three nights a week. She asks damn little from me, and I'm proud and happy to be in her company. She's a living doll. »



Then there's the Air Force Captain who was tempted to check out one of these establishments, but put it off because he figured it a con game. Finally, after the reinforcement of a couple of beers, he made the visit. He picked the girl he was attracted to, and found her to be as anxious to meet him as he was her. He helped her with her English each Saturday until the time came when the language barrier seemed no problem at all. They simply clicked.

« We'll take in a Saturday night dinner somewhere, maybe at the Brink, and afterward go to her place. It's given new meaning to my life away from home, gives me something to look forward to during the week. We really turn each other on, and I couldn't ask for a better deal. I don't know how she spends the

other six nights of the week, and don't give a damn. All I know is our convenient and pleasant romance costs me nothing more than the price of cab fare, a steak, and a bottle of good wine... well, maybe I bring her an occasional gift from the PX. But think what I'd be spending if I got on the Tea circuit? »

Grunt does not endorse any of these dating agencies, and please don't come crying to us if you happen to hit that bad apple in the barrel. We have, however, heard some good things about such services, and that's the word we pass along to you. If you are adventurous, it's just possible one of these places may come up with your true love.

The way we look at it, it can't cost you more than an evening of the Tu Do haunts to find out for yourself.



IF THE BASE EXCHANGE COULD ADVERTISE
THEY MIGHT RUN SOMETHING LIKE THIS:



You have reached 18. Your head is shaved, you don a yellow robe and spend a year in a monastery.

This ritual is touched upon in Thailand, where every young man must spend a minimum of three-months as a Buddhist monk before entering the military service. Other Eastern nations follow similar traditions.

The idea is not without merit, according to those who have experienced it. The year of meditation, the begging bowl, humility, chanting and isolation is said to build more than character. It contributes to a maturity that opens the channels of the mind to find the essence of meaningful existence.

Would this be a valuable practice for the American? If each young man was sent off to a monastery (of whatever sect) upon graduation from high school, what philosophical harvests would be reaped?

With violence so prevalent among American youth, it is pondered whether such thought-evoking conditioning could separate truth from fantasy. Perhaps such a contemplative existence would be a solid basis for mature reasoning when life and death matters have to be dealt with. It's only a hypothesis. But the matter has been weighed by the minds of some of our remaining political philosophers.

« With the world becoming more mechanized, more crowded, » one proponent theorized, « the need for serenity, deep-calm, subjective probing... is greater than ever before. A man could emerge from the peace and tranquility of a monastic existence with a much needed dimension added to his acquired knowledge. He would be given an opportunity to tune-in to subjective and universal reality.

An anthropologist itemized typical youthful hang-ups such as classroom competition; athletic events; television; drive-in-movies, as part of the American social activity that imposes a caste system parallel to that practice in India. He pointed out the importance of family background, physical attractiveness, athletic

pro prowess and the myriad other assets and liabilities that determine the character of American youth.

He doesn't deny that thousands of fine young men are produced from this milieu, but he feels that the non-entities, the winners, the

problem among young people is that they know something is wrong in the world, but cannot direct their energies into a channel of constructive action. « Action for the sake of action, » he says, « is not enough. »

mind, body and soul ...putting it to a grindstone and sharpening it...all of it. You see people differently when you come out. You're more tolerant and understanding of the weaknesses in others, because you have analysed the weaknesses in your make up. »

The U.S.A. is not philosophically oriented, said the same man, so he doubts if such a general trend would ever occur, at least in our time. But he strongly advocates it, and feels certain that once the « white light » is seen through diligent contemplation, the short-cuts sought by drugs would be forgotten. What he advocates is a spiritual renaissance. But his voice trails off when he thinks of the obstacles that stand before such a trend. He feels that it is perhaps just a bit too late. But it is certainly thought-food. Universal Monastic Training could be the answer. Soul people; flower people; black people; white people - - all people - - could, with proper conditioning and direction, learn to live together as individuals and as an integrated mass. Those who use their hands; those who use their heads - - in the ideal society - - could possibly all come together in a unity unknown heretofore to mankind.

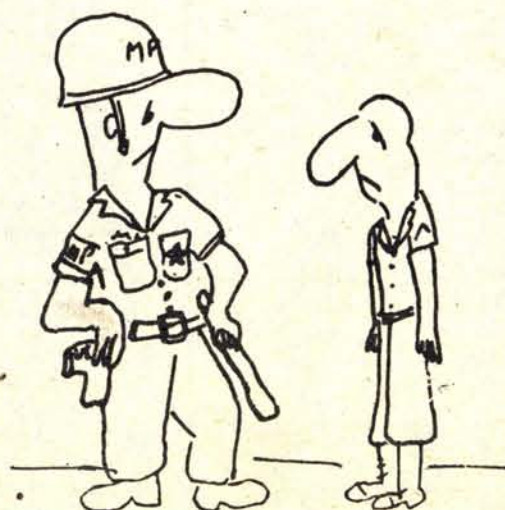
Universal Monastery training

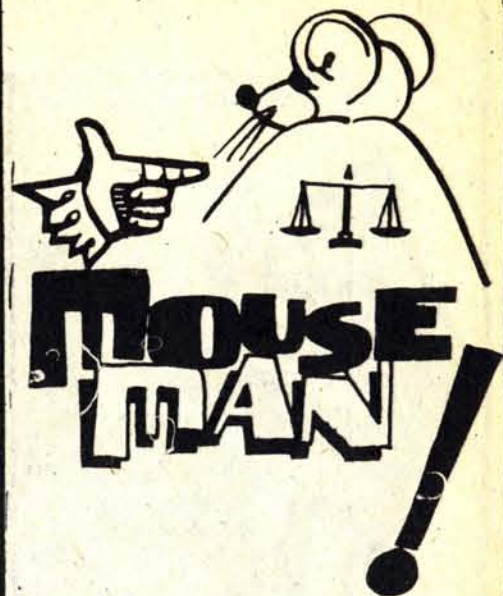


losers, would all have an equal opportunity to see their own intrinsic nature, if the monastic asceticism became a part of their overall development. He declares that this should be a requisite before a young man is permitted to make the decision of his future, whether it be college, an eight-to-five job, a military career or whatever. He believes that one

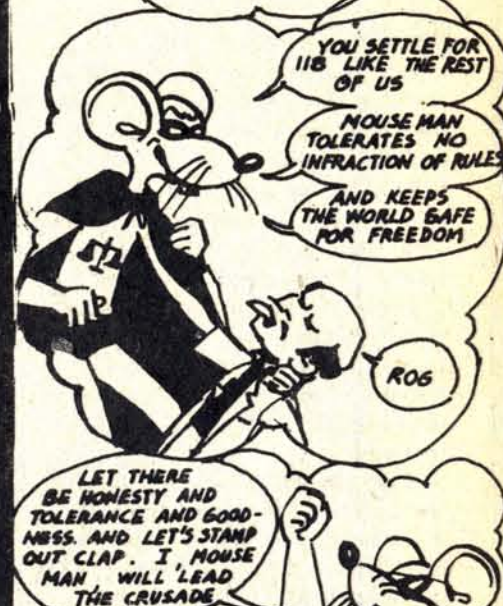
He says they must have a well considered goal and this cannot come without deep and imposed contemplation. Each man must be the master of his own destiny and follow only those leaders with whom he truly agrees.

« There is nothing on earth to compare with a year in a monastery, » said one who chose this as his thing. It's like taking your





IN A RAGE BORN OF WAR AND STRIFE
MOUSE MAN ATTACKS..

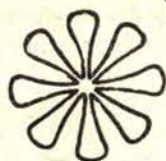


MOUSE MAN FIGHTS REAL WARS
THE WARS AGAINST
MONEY CHANGERS WHO
SEE THAT CHARLIE HAS
THE GREEN TO BUY
RIFLES..

AND SO WE LEAVE
MOUSE MAN, VICTORIOUS
AND TRIUMPHANT, AND WE
SLEEP EASY IN OUR FOX HOLES
KNOWING THE CONG CAN'T BUY GUNS FOR
GREEN AND CLAP IS ON THE WAY OUT...



Strangers in the Night



Pilferage and moonlight requisitioning has been a problem over many wars, and is alarmingly prevalent in all areas of Vietnam. The theft of gasoline was becoming a particularly annoying problem, for instance, at the Moc Hoa Airfield in the Delta.

When the Green Beret unit (on one side of the strip) and the MACV people (on the opposite) compared notes, it was decided something must be done about such wanton thievery... and fast. The Berets hastily installed a Ground Radar Detector at their place that would definitely snare the culprits no matter where they purloined their POL booty.

Shortly after the system was in operation, the Berets picked up signals that indicated foot movement about the MACV fuel storage area. An alarm sent security guards scurrying to the scene, but all was quiet and serene. It was apparently a false alarm.

The next morning a routine inspection was made at the Green Beret compound. With astonishment and much chagrin, the Berets discovered their own fuel supply had been drained to the dregs. Not only was this theft carried out neatly, but something else was glaringly obvious by its absence. The strangers in the night had also made off with the Ground Radar Detector.



"Now, THAT'S what I call art!"





Food

for beautiful
people in the
East

Growing numbers of the hip crowd at home and in Europe are turning on with the « brown rice diet » or, what is referred to as « macrobiotics ».

This is the Zen Buddhist diet whose main ingredients are brown rice, soy sauce, sauteed vegetables and - - if available - - seafood.

There are seven macrobiotic restaurants in New York, at least two in San Francisco; one is listed in L. A.; there are a dozen or more in Paris, and a couple in London.

What is interesting is that what the beautiful people of the Village, HASHbury, and Chelsea cluster together to partake of, is the most common peasant diet of Asia.

The brown, unhusked rice is a definite staple among the VC, it is said, because it allegedly gives them « staying power » along with good health. The Japanese have taken to the diet but this is no surprise. The whole concept was introduced in Japan early this century by a man of that nationality named Georges Ohsawa.

Ohsawa, way back then, insisted that the diet would improve your memory, improve your sleep and appetite, keep you from falling victim to illness, that it would make it easier to work harder, think more clearly, and attain the aura of « satori ».

Satori is described as a kind of healthful « high » that is experienced by those who indulge in the diet on a seven-day regimen. You eat nothing but brown rice (all you can stuff down) and drink minimal water. But, according to Ohsawa's instructions, such strict adherence is not required to make you feel fit.

I get high
on hot dogs myself !..



The hippies have adopted the diet because they believe it to be conducive to the love peace movement. Others describe it as « cheap high ». But there is a rationale involved, and the fetishists among the participants insist there must be a balance between the yin and the yang.

The concept is to cool it on the yang (which is supposed to make you too aggressive, violent and hot-tempered), and to be careful of too much yin (that, they say, will turn you toward the feminine, and make you retiring, submissive and weak). The proper balance between yin and yang is of utmost importance. Meat, for example, will hit too heavily on the yang. Sugar is yin as hell. The food, they say, that will provide the perfect balance almost everybody needs, is plain old brown, unhusked rice.

If the diet seems somewhat on the simple side, there is more to consider. It also requires abstinence from sugar, potatoes, egg plant, (egg plant?) white bread, tomatoes, and many other things you may think are healthful and nutritious and pleasing to the taste. But, if you can lone it on rice (and certain other cereals), vegetables, seaweed, marine foods and oriental tea you've got it practically made.

Ohsawa put it neatly when he said : « Macrobiotics is the biological and physiological application of oriental philosophy and medecine... a dialectical conception of the infintie universe. » (You just don't get quotes like that any more). He said the regimen was 5,000 years old even then and has shown the way time and again to infinite happiness via health. The route to Nirvana on

the highway of food was also hypothesized by Lao-Tse, Sun Tzu Wu, Confucious, Buddha, by the Shintoists and the ancient Greeks. So what are you going to do : argue ?

Mixing the past with the present, one of the earlier proponents of guerrilla warfare, Sun-Tzu, made such dietary advocacies more than two-thousand years ago. His disciples in Red China and North Vietnam have borrowed his advice and use it today. Many enemy killed or captured over recent years, carried among their personal effects bags of the important brown rice.

It may sound like fantasy, but many Americans who have Asiastized themselves by extended stays in this part of the world, have remarked how rejuvenated the experience has left them. They

IS "NUOC MAM"
REALLY MACROBIOTIC ?

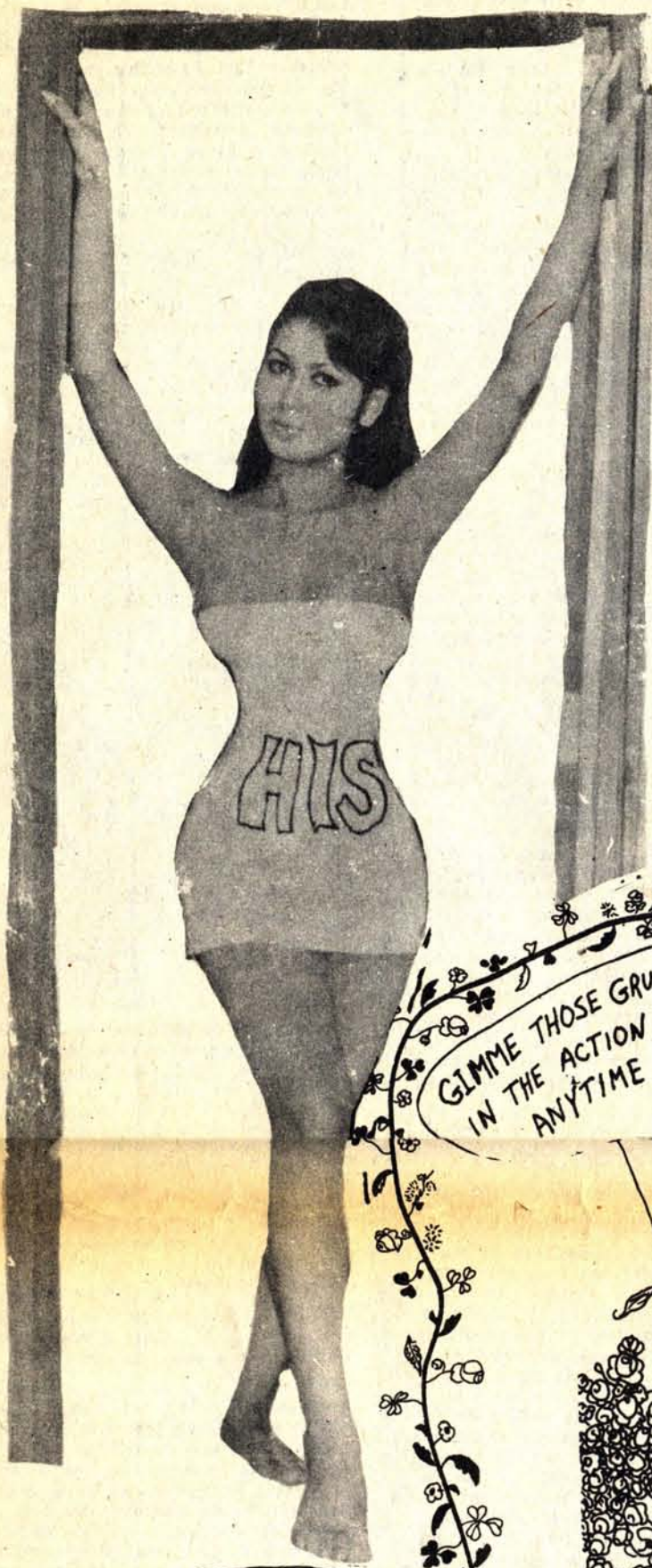


often have proved the claim by their very appearances. This conforms with another concept of the Ohsawa teaching. He said one must exist on the food that is indigenous to the place you live; here it would be the peasant diet. Those who have been in the boonies, and have switched their diets, are walking proof of the theory.

For those interested in pursuing the matter, we suggest obtaining the book by Ohsawa entitled « Zen Macrobiotics ». It was published by Ignoramus Press, 1434 N. Curson Ave., Los Angeles, California.



GRUNT



GIMME THOSE GRUNTS
IN THE ACTION ARMY
ANYTIME

I'D RATHER HAVE A
SAILOR WHO'S
BEEN AROUND
THE WORLD

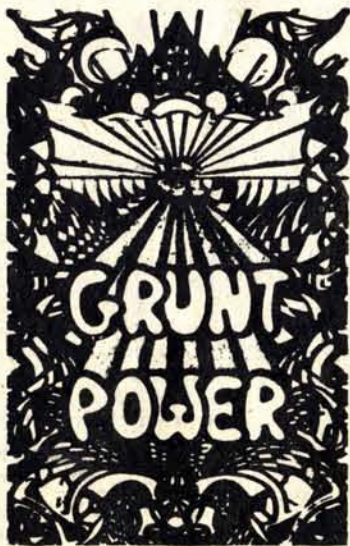
DO EITHER OF YOU
GIRLS KNOW HOW
IWO JIMA FELT
WHEN IT WAS
ASSAULTED?

IF YOU CAN
WRITE YOUR
NAME YOU
CAN WRITE
FOR GRUNT.

SEND ANY
CONTRIBUTIONS
TO
BOX 1164
REDLANDS, CALIF.
92373



OFF WE GO
INTO THE WILD
BLUE YONDER



Steinbeck IV

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

find out how many pharmaceutical tranquilizers or psychiatric drugs are sold, it amounts to billions of dollars a year. When somebody goes to have a beer, he's expanding his consciousness. This urge to change the way you feel right now is the oldest urge going. We have food when we are hungry so we can change what the hunger feels like. When we're too bloated, we have Bromo-Seltzer to change what we feel like when we're through being hungry. This alteration of consciousness minute-by-minute is what man has been doing all along. When he makes love, when he falls in love, when he gets himself in trouble... he's just trying to keep his brain fertilized with changes. When we talk about drugs we have to talk about the entire realm of devices that man uses to titillate this little sensual nerves.

GRUNT : Do you think that as life becomes more complicated these titillation devices have of necessity become more sophisticated?

STEINBECK : I have no belief that life is more complicated today than it was any other day in the universe.

GRUNT : Life was certainly more simple at the turn of the century than it is today.

STEINBECK : If you work 14 hours out of a 24-hour day, you still have 10 hours by yourself. You'll make enough trouble for yourself in those 10 hours. Or, if you didn't have to work at all... I'm saying that the farmers out in the fields fill their minds with exactly the same amount of things to deal with as a businessman. They're simply of a different order.



GRUNT : Let's return to the subject of higher education.

STEINBECK : Just because of my own history I have a fairly perverse attitude toward it. And I feel that you do need to know a lot of things to be able to forget that you knew them. Otherwise, forgetting isn't worthwhile. So the learning process is not any mistake, and I really have no argument with higher education. I think it's a just earning in a very smooth chain of learning and unlearning. I learned by myself unfortunately, and didn't have the help of the sages in the United States. But I've also forgotten by myself, so I'm at just the same place anybody else would be. But it always used to amuse me how convinced everybody was that college education was necessary... not for ethereal, esoteric advancement, but material advancement. Like, if I don't get a degree I won't get a job. I worried about it for a long time myself, but finally the pressure of that kind of regimentation forced me out. I was fairly intelligent and glib at really a post-pubescent age, so when people would ask if I had been to college I'd say yes. Then they'd ask how old I was and I'd say 17. It was absurd, but I carried it off.

GRUNT : Did you list a particular college as your alma mater, or just any one at random?

STEINBECK : Because of my interest in music, I'd usually say Julliard. My Army associates all thought I was a Julliard graduate. It extended to all parties, except probably my family and people who knew better. The masquerade bordered, I guess, on the psychotic, but continued through my two years in the Army.

GRUNT : What about the rapport you seem to have with the local religious leaders here in Vietnam : is this a result of a personal religious background?

STEINBECK : I wasn't brought up in any religion. I had a very clear-minded father. From the time I was about 15, I was reading the one book I still read, all the time, every day : Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu. Tao means the way of nature. It's the basis of all Oriental thought, the heart of Buddhism, of all Oriental philosophy. Beyond that, it is the heart of all

thought. Contained in the Tao Te Ching... if it is clearly understood... is the beginning and end of the universe. Any time my head is hungup, I can cool it out very easily by thumbing through a single poem. It is an incredible document.

GRUNT : So Tao Te Ching is your working bible?

STEINBECK : Yes. Every organized religion has a way to Tao. There is a Taoist saying that Tao is like an ocean; religions are rivers which all flow into Tao. Every religion is trying to tell you the same thing.

GRUNT : From what you're saying, you are not a member of a definite religion group.

STEINBECK : I have a certain philosophical inability to belong to an organized religion. They are there for the people who need that kind of path.

GRUNT : Do you believe in the efficacy of prayer?

STEINBECK : Prayer in its original meaning is an attempt at communication with the creator, or "Godhead" as the Christians call it. This God dwells within the human consciousness, or else how can we find a way to get there? The different ways to a direct experience with that primordial source depends entirely on the person. Prayer, to the Christian, is an emotional experience, but it is also repetitious, so you get right into the Indian mantra: Om mani pad man om... that's prayer. It sets up a mechanism for the consciousness to free itself. Or : Om, om, om... that is the basic sound of Hinduism. Prayer is a psychological technique. But if it does transcend psychology itself, it would be belittling to call it a psychological technique. Because if it is a successful meditation, prayer -- whatever you want to call it -- does reunite one's self with the self of the universe. It certainly transcends anything as basic as psychological phenomenon.

GRUNT : Have there been times when you were unhappy or down and out... where you turned to God with a direct plea for help?

STEINBECK : Yes. I used to when I was a little more ignorant.

GRUNT : Have you reached the stage of Divine attunement that you no longer have to practice such rituals?

STEINBECK : In order to receive any experience; commonly considered a divine experience, you first have to rid yourself of every possible desire... because any desire to have that experience will be the very thing that stands in the way of it. When a man wants something very badly it's unlikely he's going to transcend anything. He will just be faced with his misery. The only way to escape the pressures of life is to accept the pressures completely. Christians would say : "lovingly". Then... and only then... is your mind cleared to do anything you want.

GRUNT : To simplify it, are you saying we should ride with the waves?

STEINBECK : No.. what I'm saying sounds like a tremendous moral ability or something like that. I don't mean to make that impression. I'm simply saying that in my opinion it's through these catastrophes we all experience that any understanding can happen to begin with. Because if it's easy for you all the time, then you have no need to transcend the material world. It's only when the material world is at its worst that we are looking for an out... a place to escape. It is only through something you can never beat, that you accept it as it is. Because you realize at this point that the only thing you can do to help is to accept it the way it is. You won't even be sure this can help, but you're exhausted... you can't fight it. It's only after you accept that state of affairs... you have Christ on the cross saying : "Father, Father..." It's only through that final, "I don't understand. I just don't understand..." finally realizing you have God. But I'm speaking now in very Western terms. In my own theories I generally deal in much more concise Oriental symbolism. In my book, "In Touch", I get into my philosophy; I say a great many things about society, changes and events, and what I think is actually occurring in the evolution of the United States. It's a chronicle really. It carries me from my time in the Army, through my arrest in Washington, D.C. where they found 20

pounds of marijuana, through to the time just before I returned to Vietnam. It's a very casual book because I'm not a writer. I may write to communicate, but in terms of being a craftsman who spends a lot of time doing that, and who loves doing that... I'm not this kind of person at all. I'm not terribly professional, although I hope I might be communicative or expressive. I want to write a good deal more, but it's my urge to communicate that motivates me.

GRUNT : What are your opinions about the evolution of the United States? Do you see us heading for something similar to the fall of the Roman Empire?

STEINBECK : Maybe so... I don't know. Sitting here on my bed it's difficult for me to see anything but the most innocent play of nature involved in the course of American history, world history.

I see America as hedonistic, or maybe all these materialistic things, and obviously the time is changing for those things. But America is really an incredibly beautiful place. In its role in the course of human history we can say it's decaying... or it is good or bad... or it is or it will be. But America is innocent of its own role. It has been chosen for it by the course of nature, which is the course of man's own ancient mind. America is no more responsible for what happens to it than a person is responsible for what happens to himself in the last analysis.

GRUNT : Our destination is inevitable?

STEINBECK : Exactly, exactly. I can dump anything on America I want to, because I have a deep appreciation for it. I think this idea is true with many people of my generation, and the attitude has been misinterpreted. The fad is to shoot down America, but why not? It's America's karma for shooting down Vietnam. We can all bitch about America, but it's very good, because it may help America. If anybody really wants to level with themselves, America is only a place where most Americans were born.

GRUNT : Has it occurred to you that the United States has a curious habit of shooting down its philosophers?

STEINBECK : In America's past and may be in future, intellectualism or philosophy has been in the way of what we refer to as American materialism. Nevertheless we have still produced the greatest writers, transcendental poets, everything. If it is true that America kills off her philosophers, I would say, on a very detached level, it's because philosophers stand in the way of her inner nature, which is kind of a gross nature, but... it is, nonetheless, American. It's almost like a cocktail conversation that we kill off intellectuals and philosophers, but in the heart of all our materialism we have the greatest social minds ever born. They may not be the clearest minds as spirituality is concerned, but Americans have their way. It really



shouldn't be fought. It's only because Americans have thought they are so good... that they have been bad to begin with. It's almost as simple as that. If they better understood what their purpose was as a nation, or as a part of a whole group of people... and they got behind it and really perfected it... instead of pretending they are the savior of humanity, we could be more than a great country... we could be a natural country.

GRUNT : Are we helping the Vietnamese by our presence here?

STEINBECK : Again... I think we're helping the course of events... even if we think we're hindering it. I'll tell you my own personal evolution on this point: I came to Vietnam as a hawk, and I left Vietnam as a dove. Let's get it down to its actual terminology : militarist and pacifist. But now I have no overwhelming feeling that anything has been done that should not have happened to get man and society farther along. Without the mistakes of

this war we would never have the information to evolve higher. And the Vietnamese have their own karma to pay. Many Vietnamese complain that when Americans came they didn't understand them or their culture. I play the antagonist to them. I say that they take us for all we're worth, and aren't ready to go halfway, that they don't try to understand Americans. They nod their heads and agree. When they think about our leaving, they say : but why are you going? It's like two lovers in a doorway. They know they can't live together; they know it will never work... but they can't understand why they're saying goodbye. It's very weird.

GRUNT : When the Americans have totally withdrawn will the Vietnamese suffer lack of leadership? Some think a man of Ho Chi Minh's leadership qualities is needed in the South... a man with his charisma.

STEINBECK : I believe Minh was an incredible man, but even if he had been leading the South I can't see how anything would have changed. I can't see how things could ever be different from what they are today. The South and North have seen an ancient duality. It was not an invention of the Geneva Accords. North and South have been conscious of each other as North and South since Vietnam began. As the Vietnamese themselves believe : they are dying like flies to pay back their



Buddhist karma debt for wiping out two civilizations when they came south from China. The Vietnamese do not believe it is any accident that they have had to suffer to such an extreme. They can blame it on the Americans or the communists, or the communists can blame it on the nationalists... but in reality, Vietnam's suffering has been a long time in coming, and it has been here a long time. Soon it will leave; I think after only a few more years. But as to the blame for the war in Vietnam : nobody is to blame.

GRUNT : What do you foresee as the end result of the Paris Peace Talks. Will there be a coalition government?

STEINBECK : I'm not politically astute enough to say, but I think Thieu will be gone. A war president is not the president that will be able to carry a peacetime government. The people will be looking for a chance to correct what they feel to be the injustices done them... whether these injustices are real or not. This is a natural reaction of people. I'm sure the American government is aware of this too, and are probably grooming someone for the future.

GRUNT : As long as we're gazing into crystal balls, what do you see as the future of Vietnam?

STEINBECK : I think South Vietnam in time will turn into a Taiwan and be extremely wealthy, be seemingly free of the rest of the troubles in the world.

Everything will be happening all around, but Vietnam will be almost like a free port. I base this on intelligent nationalism coupled by American support. And by the way, I'm not talking about a dirty, filthy, sinful kind of country, but a very clean... almost European thing. This is a dream image I'm painting for you, but it will come about within say, twenty years.

GRUNT : If the United States settles for less than full victory, what will be the psychological effect?

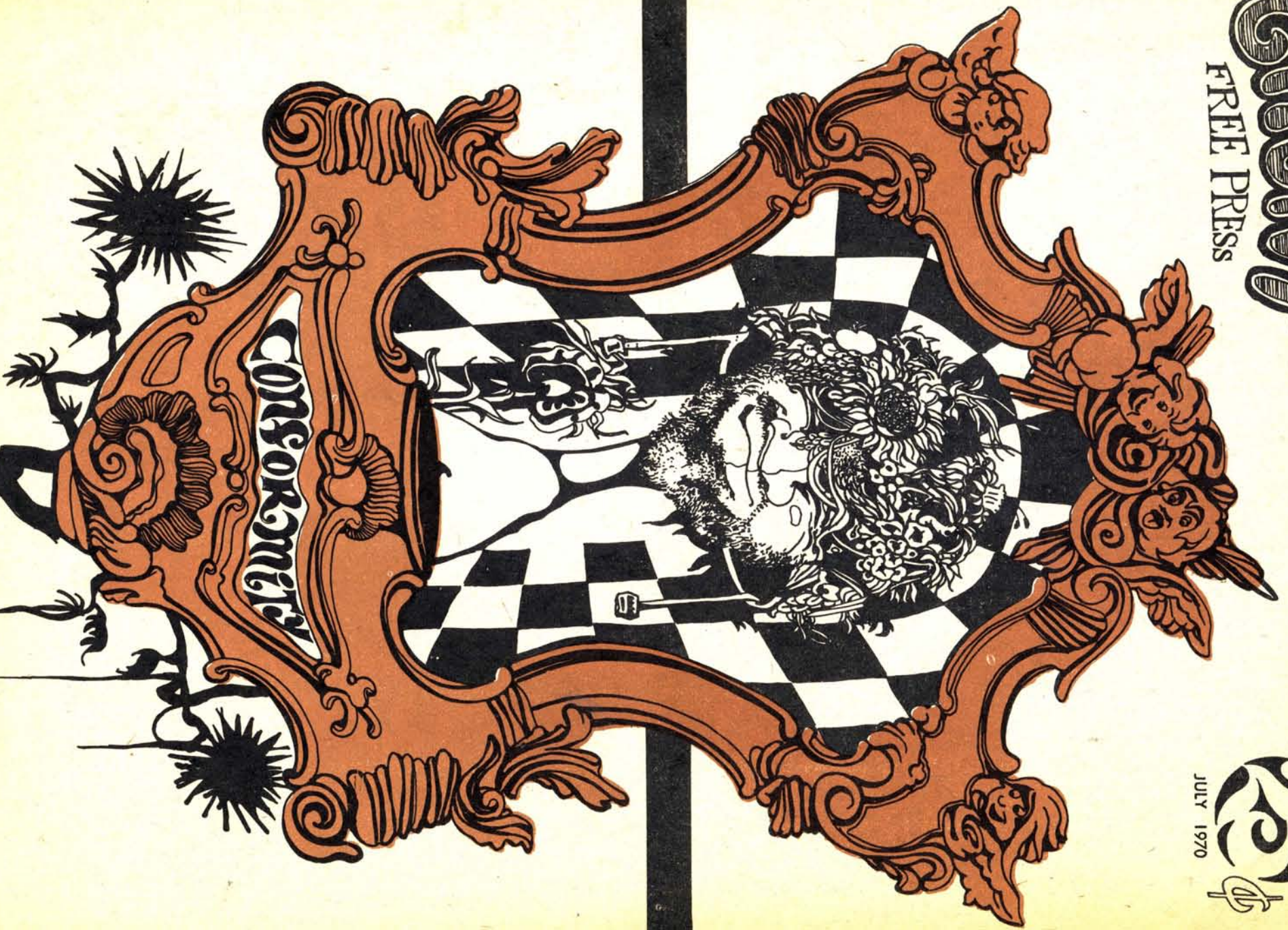
STEINBECK : It's been a popular Western political concept that if man doesn't study history he is doomed to repeat his mistakes. But with that attitude we think of history as something outside ourselves, when actually it's a reflection of ourselves... a reflection of our own ancient mind floating over the tide of human events. When Americans think about the war in Vietnam - and I'm including my friends of the New Left - they would be wise not to use guilt as such a tool. The war was unavoidable, and there's only one way to give it any kind of nobility. That is to accept it completely. We can only do good things for ourselves and the rest of the world when our minds are free. You cannot do anything until you've straightened out your own mind. One way to clean out the American head is to

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