


Soul Imprint



An HMC Student Arts Publication
November, 1990

jih

The Greditor Speaks

<Insert clever opening here>

Hi. I'm Greg Levin, and I'll be your host for this year's installment of *SOL iMpROV*, Harvey Mudd's student creative journal. I inherited this position from Jack Houn, the magazine's founder and original editor-in-chief. He said he wanted to give someone else the opportunity to do it this year, unselfish guy that he is (personally, I think he just got tired of all the work ... I can now relate to that). Anyway, he's still around and has been a big help in our efforts to get this thing together.

As you may have noticed (or will shortly), there are some advertisements in the center of this issue. Last year, ASHMC paid for the publication costs, so we didn't have to give a second thought to money. Because of a tight budget this year, they were only able to provide us with about half of what we need to do our annual four issues. So after a lot of thought and debate, we decided that the best way to meet our financial

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requirements was to sell advertising space to local businesses (the other option being to put a price tag on our product, and nobody wanted that). The ads were put on an 8.5" x 11" insert for fear of coupon-snipping. All these establishments have been kind enough to support our publication, and I'd appreciate it if you'd take a look at them. ASHMC and our local patrons have made this publication possible.

We've got an interesting collection of work in this issue, and an abundance of cats. Scott Lewallen submitted a beautiful charcoal

drawing of a cat, and we've done our best to reproduce it (although our best never seems to do his work justice). Mike Yuan has done the first in what may be a continuing series of Cybercat stories, as well as a spot-illustration for it. Keith Kuwata's "Smoke and Solitude" is a story left over from last year that, for some reason or another, never got printed. We've got poetry from regular contributors in that department, Dan del Rosario and Doug Thompson (Doug's not around anymore, but we still like him). Benis Babusis has provided us with another of his clever... creations, and we've got some great artwork from Jocele Wang, David Simpao, and Jack Houn (cover). Cliff Stein and I did some spot art, but I've been too busy with production to do my usual full page. However, I soon hope to start my most ambitious project to date, which will take up lots of space (more on that next time).

please see page 13

Smoke and Solitude

by Keith Kuwata

Susan's Stereo blared in defiance of the quiet hours at Mudd-Blaisdell. The digitized, equalized Sony, however, squawked the sounds of another era. "The Lucky Strikes Program starring Jack Benny, with Mary Livingstone, Phil Harris, Rochester, Dennis Day . . ." announced a cheerful Don Wilson.

"Lucky Strikes means fine tobacco," Susan confided to Brian, who was struggling not to breathe the fumes from her lit cigarette.

"Lucky Strikes makes fine tumors," Brian responded grimly. He was grateful, nevertheless, that Susan's half-a-pack a day habit was about the hardest thing to put up with. And it was a small price to pay, waiting out a cloudburst in a dorm room enjoying some old-time radio.

* * *

Brian, nominally a Harvey Mudd student, often sought solace at other campuses. This semester's escape found him in an American Studies seminar at Pomona. Earlier that day the professor had assigned term projects on various institutions of American culture. Brian and a Pomona student he had never met signed up for "The Influence of Radio on American Attitudes During World War II."

After class the Pomona student accosted Brian with a smile. "Hi, I'm Susan," she said, extending a hand. "Brian, right? The Mudder, right? Junior engineer? I know a lot of engineers up there. How's systems going? God, what a bear it must be. I think . . ." She stopped only to fumble for a lighter for the cigarette that had been dangling from her lips. Brian

was rather non-plussed, but recovered and offered, "A pretty exciting project ahead of us. You have to wonder how the radio networks cooperated with the government during World War II to . . ."

"God, what a boring class that is! I'm glad we finally have something interesting to do . . ." Susan turned her head to blow out a cloud of smoke and happened to notice their American Studies professor glaring at her with the full weight of his tenure.

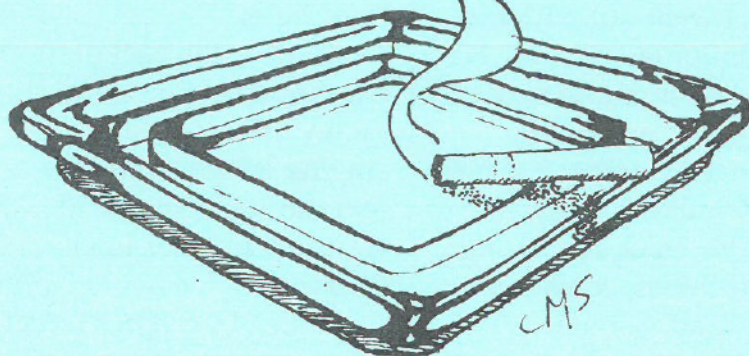
"God, let's get out of here!" Susan snatched Brian's hand from his pocket and ran with him outside the building. She skipped down the stairs of Carnegie with Brian helplessly attached, turned, and asked him, "Oh, am I keeping you from something? Do you want to talk more about the project?"

Brian looked at the watch on his finally freed wrist, and said, "Almost time for a rally at Honnold. Want to come?" He looked hopefully at Susan, whose eyes were wandering up and down College.

"Well—the rally is about something political, I suppose?"

"Of course. El Salvador."

Susan frowned a little. "Hmmm . . . Look, uh, I don't know, I'm not too



excited about political stuff. I've got a problem set to finish for my 1:15 class anyway. But hey, we should get together and go to the library and do some research on this. I'll be up at Mudd this afternoon. Meet you outside of Jacobs at around three?"

Not too excited about political stuff? Brian fumed to himself. Central America is going to pieces and she has a problem set? Where the heck are the "eager, thoughtful, and reverent" in Claremont? He shook it off, though, and almost managed a smile. "Yeah, I'm done for the day at two-thirty, so I'll be free then."

"Great! See you later, Brian. Hey Sherri, hold up!" Susan dashed across College, avoiding a car and two bicycles to talk to someone she had spotted in Marston Quad.

"Where the heck is my bicycle?" Brian cried in disbelief, holding a snapped chain in his hands. There was no refuge from the violence of the world, not even outside Pearsons.

* * *

"It's kind of funny," Susan said, lying back on her pillow. "For a couple of years, I lived in Waukeegan, Illinois, the birthplace of Jack Benny. In fact, I went to Jack Benny Junior High in Waukeegan."

"Why Southern California? Why Pomona? Why

physics?"

"My mother and I moved out here when I started high school. She grew up here—she went to Pomona, in fact, and majored in physics like I am. Why do you ask so many questions?" She looked a little puzzled at him and lit another cigarette.

"My instincts. A journalist at heart. Always issues to be advocated, people to be explored."

Susan looked at him blankly. She took another drag and kind of shook her head. "Doesn't that leave you lonely?"

Brian fanned the air in front of him. "No lonelier than you," he replied.

* * *

A little past three, Brian saw Susan dash out the door to Jacobs. "God, what a hectic afternoon. Maybe I should drop my thermo and stat mech class—oh, how was the rally?"

"Not bad. You read the CMC paper, the Claremont Advocate?"

Susan nodded vaguely.

"I'll be writing an article on it for the Advocate."

Susan lit a cigarette. "Yeah, I went out with the news editor last spring. He was pretty humorless, too."

Brian did not visibly react to the comment. They started walking down to Honnold. "I figure, enough articles, rallies, conversations—maybe some stu-

dents will start looking beyond their problem sets and social anxieties."

Susan stared down at the grass, looking almost wry. "You're like my father. He's a firebrand of a Presbyterian minister. God, how he can make people feel ashamed for not having a social conscience. He shamed my mother out of a marriage to him."

Brian actually laughed. "Kind of funny for an atheist to be likened to a Christian."

"Not really. The passion can be the same." Susan coughed and discarded her cigarette. "Me, I have my Sunday morning clothes and memories of my Westminster catechism. They're convenient for Easter services and funerals that come up."

* * *

Susan straightened up and turned down the stereo.

"My mother died three years ago, right before I entered college. She had lung cancer. God, she never smoked a cigarette in her life. They said it was the smog all the years she lived here."

Softly in the background, Don Wilson was telling Jack Benny about the latest singing commercial Don and the Sportsmen had come up with for Lucky Strikes.

Susan cleared her throat

and stood up. "Look, I told my boyfriend I'd drop by tonight. We can listen to more Jack Benny some other time. Darryl lives over in Wig—do you mind walking with me over there?"

Brian agreed and the two went downstairs and outside. The rain had stopped, but drops still fell from the trees as they walked quickly along Second. They turned and approached the entrance to Wig.

"Hey, Brian," Susan said, giving him an impromptu hug. "It's been real fun talking to you. We've got a lot more stuff to do. I'll call you up sometime. See you later!" She whirled around and fumbled for a card key in her purse.

As Brian trudged up College Way, he tried to keep himself upset about wartime propaganda. But all his mind could fill with were thoughts of the next time he would see Susan.

Meanwhile, Darryl tried to keep his girlfriend from waking up his corridor in Wig.

"God, Darryl, listen to me!" she almost screamed. "Tell me the truth—am I a lonely person?"

"Where are you right now? Does it look like you're lonely?"

"You've got a point," Susan agreed, blowing out another cloud of smoke. ■



TRANSLUCENCE

by Doug Thompson

A red and dusty silent cry
Came crashing through the midnight sky.
The bodies slept in mortal chains
Of blue and green and silver pains,
And souls dressing in powdered lights,
Found in the wakes of flying kites,
Awoke to taste the symphony
Of notes born from angel's honey.
The embrace of freedom, a kiss;
And souls partake of painful bliss.
In emerald fogs swim lost dreams
Within which sorrow festers, teems.
They live the tunes until Dawn comes,
Beating her silent, death-filled drums,
And slays the nighttime silver-blue.

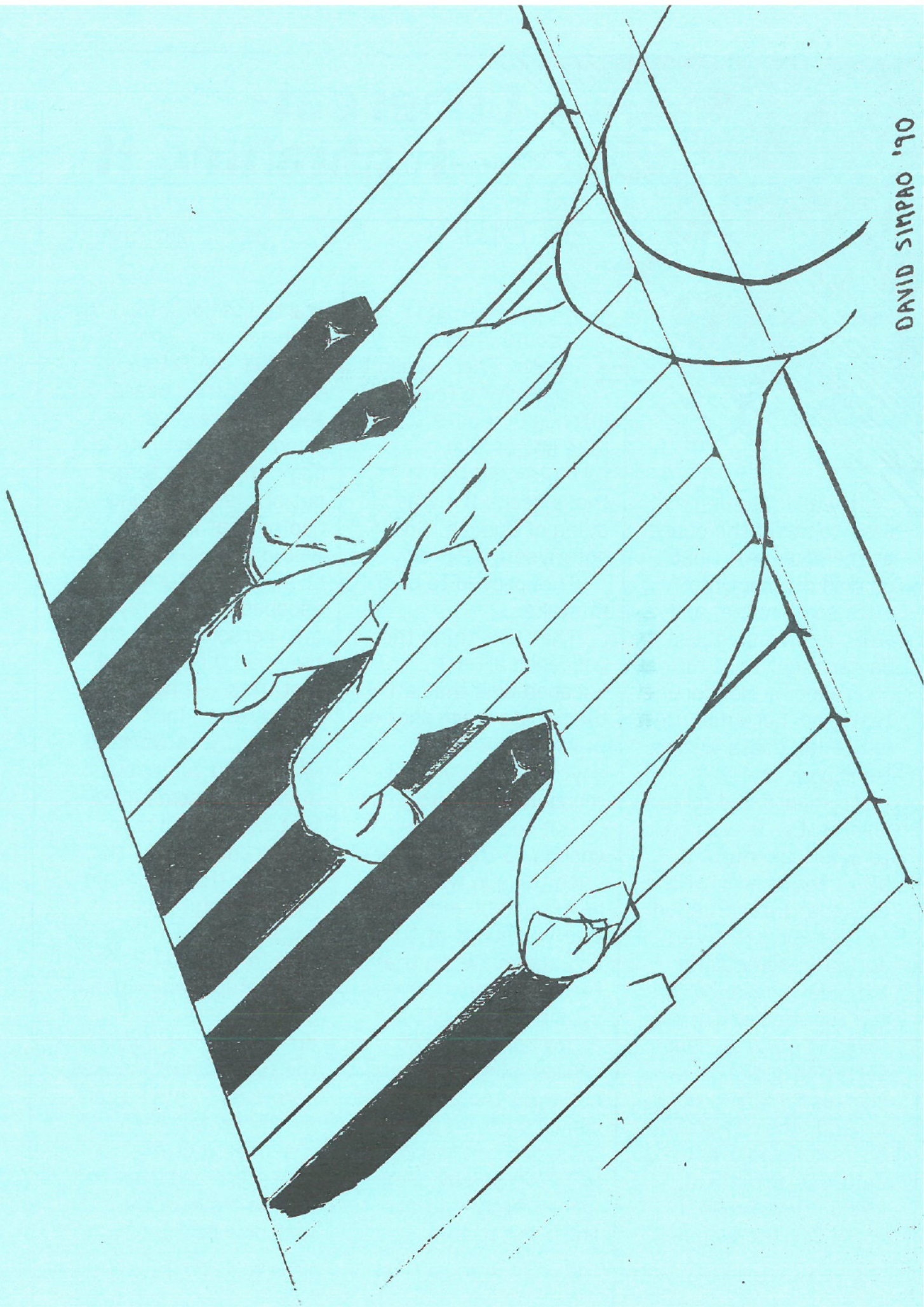
What It Is!*

SOL iMpROV is a periodic publication that seeks to compliment one of the main purposes of Harvey Mudd College as stated in the Preamble of the Student Handbook: "to emphasize an understanding of the human purposes and aspirations their knowledge can serve." To this end, *SOL iMpROV* promotes the process of self-expression by providing a forum for artists, both literary and visual, in which they can explore, express, and discuss their creativity, emotions, and philosophies. *SOL iMpROV* is also an ongoing process, and for this reason, we depend on your input to continue our publication. If you have any creativity that you would like to see published, or if you have any suggestions, comments, or criticisms about *SOL iMpROV*, please don't hesitate to contact us. We have an jarthur account (improv@jarthur) for your convenience. We appreciate your input in all its forms.

*With apologies to Nexus



Joelle Wang





Cybercat-Hightailing It

by Michael Yuan

again— and I could starve to death. There wasn't anybody to feed me, although I wouldn't take any of that formula crap from those geeks if I was dying of hunger. So I got myself adopted.

This proved to be a mistake.

The first thing that happened after I escaped was that all black cats were shot on sight. Not with anything deadly, just tranquilizer darts meant to stun long enough so that the geek with the gun would not be mauled by eight to twelve pounds of fur and claws. When that failed to work, Lorning Labs put out a reward on my fur—alive, of course, since they did not want the product of ten or so years of cybernetic research to be destroyed by some money-hungry idiot— and other people

started to join in on the hunt.

After the father in my family had heard about the reward, he tried to put me into a bag. I managed to get out of his grasp, and, hoping that his eye would heal (though not soon, the bastard), escaped through my own personal door that they had thoughtfully installed. He had forgotten to lock it.

Now I was worried about food again, but I discovered some deep instinct within me which knew all of the catly skills of hunting. Even though I didn't "scan" right to other cats, mice and birds were stupid anyway and couldn't tell the difference. At first, the idea of hunting was revolting to my human instincts, but then I reasoned that my ancestors had done it all the time. Plus, I was now better

It was ridiculously easy to avoid the guard at the door. All I had to do was distract him with some noise, and when he investigated, I darted right past him.

Freedom! No more tests, no more men in white lab coats with their pens and instruments and stupid comments. It was good to smell the night air, all of the scents of the city that intermingled in it to form... well, actually, something that was probably very bad for the health, but I loved it anyway. Much better than the odorless, colorless lab. I could now run around on something other than cold tile or plastic, I could climb trees, I could see the world

equipped for the job at hand: my nose could discern the smell of rodent at twenty meters, and my ears could pinpoint them at a hundred. I was more silent when stalking prey than man had ever been or ever could be. The only drawback, of course, was that I was also hunted.

So I stayed in the back alleys of the city, although I detested the fleas and other vermin which decided that they liked my skin. There was always a good escape route planned in case somebody discovered me. It took time to figure these out, but on several occasions it proved to be worth it. One chase ended after I had led my would-be capturers over a fence (I went through a hole, they had to climb it), through an obstacle course in a dark alley, and into gang territory. They turned back after realizing where they were, and almost made it before being stopped by three kids dressed in two colors: red and steel. Hey, better them than me, I thought at

first, but then my morals, such as they are, took over and I sprang at a gang member, clinging to his buttocks. He yelped in surprise, just like a dog, and grabbed for me while another swung a chain. I dropped off, the one I had attacked got the chain across his wrists and stumbled into the third, and in the resulting confusion both I and my former pursuers got away.

I continued to roam the streets, and black cats continued to get shot. The second thing that happened was only natural: the other cats started to get concerned. I did not know this at the time, but it turned out that some cats had not been only temporarily incapacitated. Also, most of those who *had* been carefully captured were not returned to the streets after being determined to be just another cat.

The third thing that happened was that the Gathering leaders decided to call me to a Meet. Of course, my identity was known, not

as a cat but as a *mri-moshka*, a "man-in-cat." I thought about running again, but then realized that with the amount of cats in the city, I would not get very far. Even with the knowledge that I had of the shortcuts and byways, human intelligence was one thing, feline cleverness was another. Besides, I realized, they could have been less polite about it and simply brought me over by the scruff of my neck. So I went to the Meet at the appointed time.

Never have I seen more felines in one place than at the Meet! The site chosen was Central Park, and was half-full. I'm not exaggerating. Cats of every single known breed and color pattern were there, including some that humans had not yet discovered. In the center of the Meet were the leaders of the many Gatherings present that night, as well as four black cats. Just four. And then I knew the magnitude of the problem.

The cats around me

sensed my presence as I passed through towards the center. I could feel an intense interest, but no anger. There was the difference between cats and men; a similar human group would have lynched me by now. But cats had no place for that particular emotion—it clouds the senses unnecessarily.

One of the leaders spoke when I reached the center and sat with my tail flat and my head bowed. "Lift your eyes, little one. Much better," he said when I complied. There was no waste of words as he gestured towards the four cats of the same color as me. "You see what has happened?" There was no need to add "Because of you." I nodded, expecting something worse, as a human.

"What do you propose to do about it?"

Only one answer was obvious, and it was the one I was going to make. "Well," I started, and then an idea hit me. I looked down and paused (no pun intended), and then

continued, "it would be possible for me to go to the *mosh* place and reveal my identity."

Since I stopped again for a moment, the leader took the opportunity to speak again. "You are a wise one . . ."

"Wait, please. Excuse my impertinence, but I do have a much better idea."

The front guard was a new one. He heard a noise at the door over the sound of a late show, and when he came to investigate, saw a small Tabby scratching the glass. He crouched down and extended a finger to the kitten, who tried to swat it. The kitten's efforts, of course, were blocked by the glass.

"You're in the wrong place, kitty," he said, not unkindly. "People here, they'll use you for experiments and nasty stuff like that."

He continued to play with the cat through the glass until a thought occurred to him, something that must have come hard.

"Hey, you know what? My kids would like you a lot. They never had a kitten before. Would you like to live in a nice home?"

Taking the kitten's leap at his finger's movement as assent, he said, "Good," stood up, and opened the door.

And was immediately bowled over by the weight of ten cats hurtling from the darkness, myself included. It was too bad that this guy liked cats, but we had to get past him. Fortunately, he was knocked out when his head hit the floor, so we didn't have to really hurt him.

Tens of more cats followed behind, pads making a soft *puff* noise when they hit the tiled floor. I led them through a maze of corridors, finally coming to a door with a security lock. When I had escaped the first time, I had been lucky; people were opening the doors as I got to them. Which was good, because I had had no idea how I was going to get through otherwise.

As I had instructed



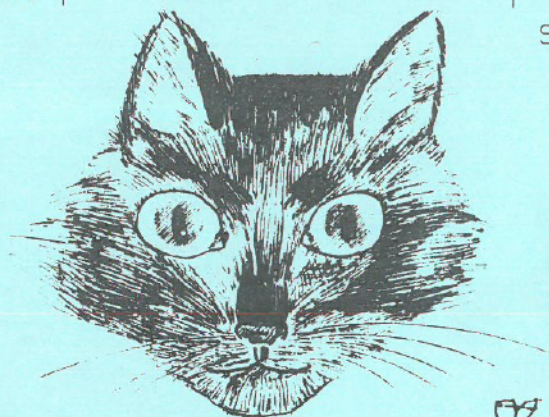
them, a few of my companions formed a pyramid onto which I climbed in order to insert the card taken from the fallen guard with my teeth. Standing on my hind legs, back claws retracted of course, and leaning against the wall with one paw, I managed to punch in the code with a claw, breaking through the keypad overlay. I couldn't help it. Card pulled back out, the door swung open and we streamed through.

The door swung back, but that was okay since we could get out using the same card. There was another coded door, and then we were in the lab that I had been imprisoned in. It brought back bad memories. "I can understand why you would want to escape from here," one cat murmured.

Cats in cages woke at our entry, and stood, stretching. "Greetings, *mri-ka*," was generally all they said. It was not difficult to undo

the latches which held the doors in place, and soon we had added to our numbers significantly. Most of the members in the company were tired, so our newly freed black companions completed the final task that I gave them.

I found a pad of ink,



used for the rubber stamps which labeled me as one of their subjects. *Hmm...*

The next morning, the scientists who came into the laboratory were understandably outraged. Not only were all of the cages that they looked into empty, but equipment was knocked over, glassware shattered, and, most importantly, experiment notes were shredded into little

strips of paper. The security guard who accompanied them into the room had found his card lying next to him when he awoke, and was now holding it tightly. All he would say about how he got the lump on his head was, "You wouldn't believe it if I told you."

Naturally, the scientists were all ready to blame the ALF, the ASPCA, and anybody else they could think of until one of them had the bright idea of watching the film recorded by security cameras.

Why the guard didn't think of that himself, I have no idea. They sent somebody to get the technician in charge of such things, and managed to get a television hooked up to the camera in the corner.

The recording showed all of the events of the previous night. At the end, they saw five black cats climbing into cages right behind the scientist in charge of the group. All heads turned.

When the head scientist was fully facing the cages, he opened his mouth at what he saw. Timing it perfectly, all five of us leapt out of our cages at the people gathered in the room. I smacked the head scientist in the cheek with a paw, leaving an ink-print. One of the cats raked the poor security guard's hand, and then snatched the dropped passcard.

Almost unable to control my sneezes of laughter, I pushed off his chest, turned and streaked out the door like I had three weeks ago, this time with four feline friends. This time, I wasn't coming back. ■

No Tears **by Dan del Rosario**

No tears I ask
To all my friends
With broken hearts
So hard to mend

Put the sadness away
In your heart so deep
And the treasured
memories
Forever keep

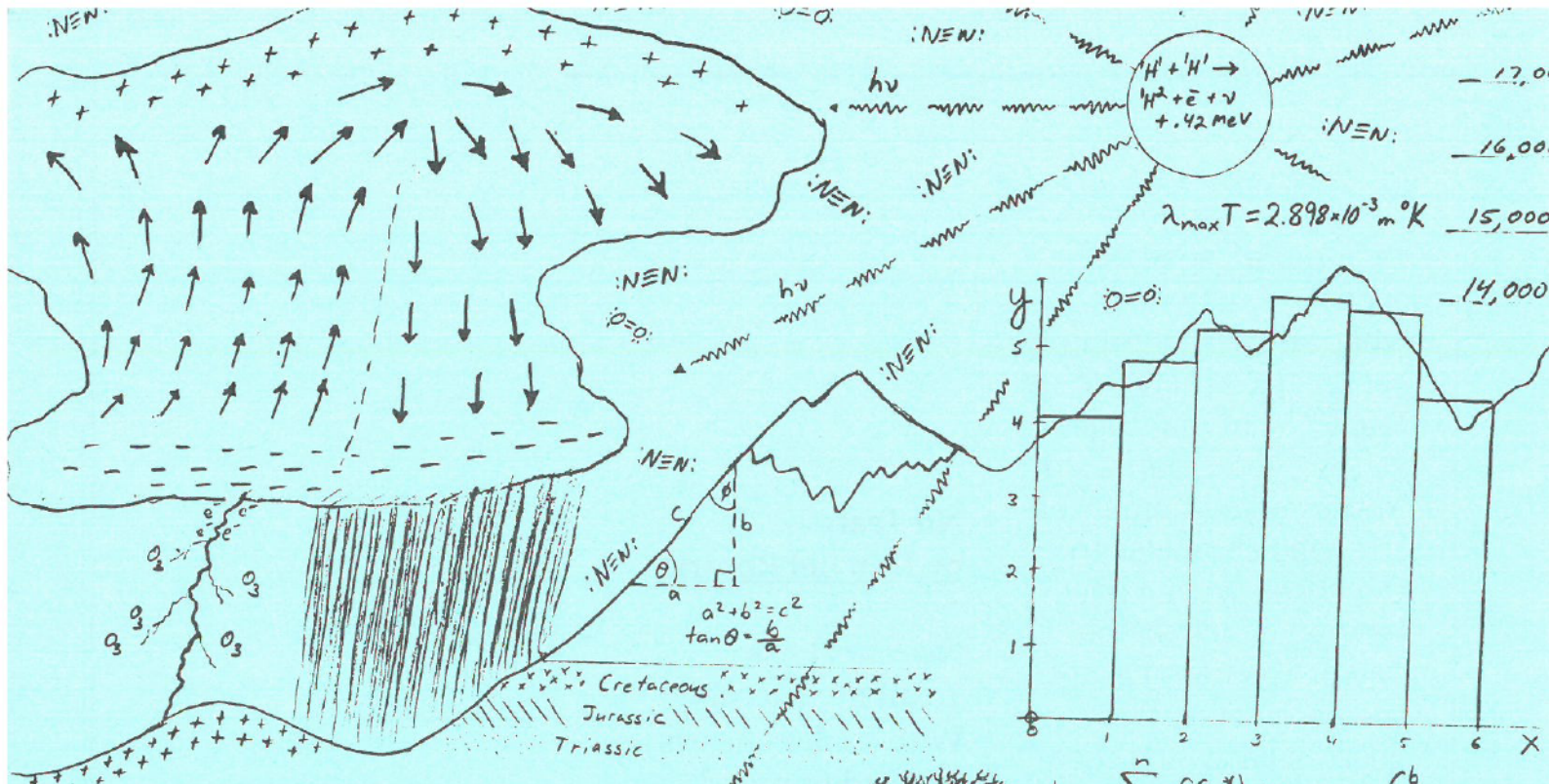
Life is so young
We must all still mature
But a broken heart...alas
So hard to cure

We must all be strong
In the eyes of our peers
And quiet our souls
We will shed no tears

cont. from inside cover

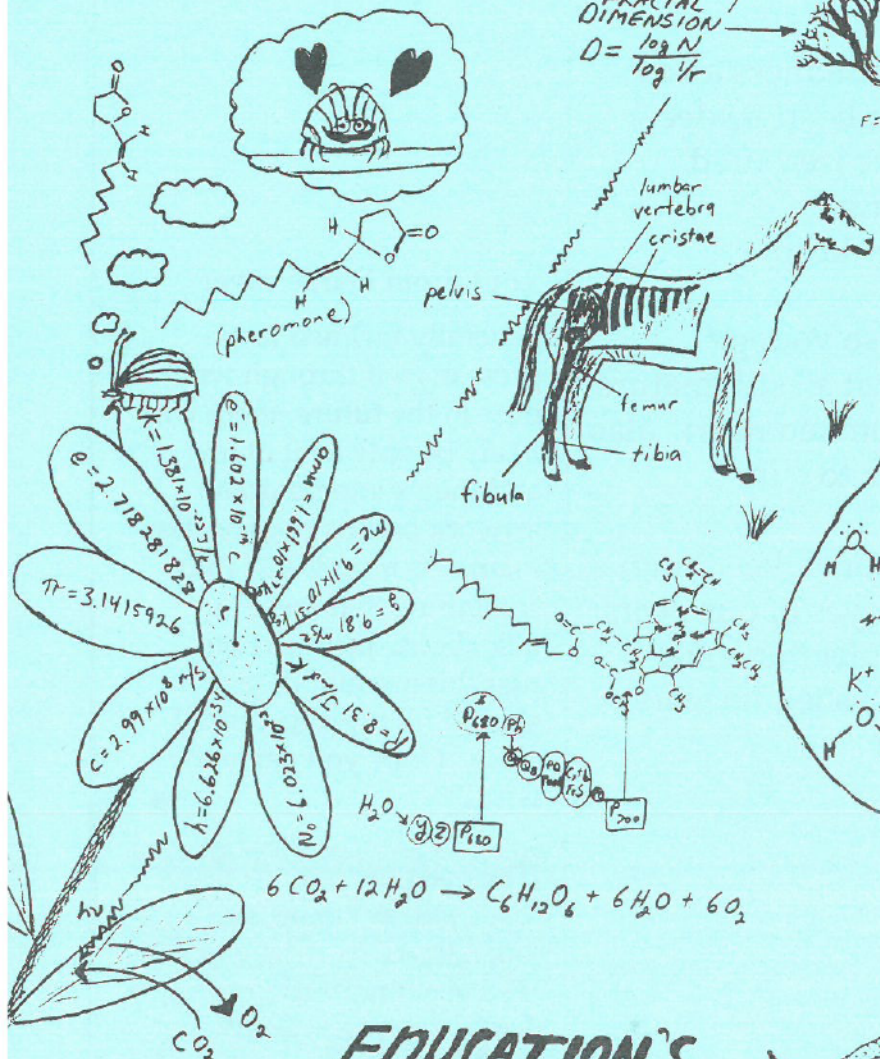
generally inclined to express myself through writing. In the future, there will likely be only a bit of text and then some random artwork on this page, unless I surprise myself and find something that I want to talk about. Jack tells me that this amount of text should fill my page, so I'll close. Hope you enjoy the issue. ■

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FRACTAL DIMENSION
 $D = \frac{\log N}{\log 1/r}$

$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{i=1}^n f(x_i^*) \Delta x_i = \int_a^b f(x) dx$



EDUCATION'S
 EVIL LEGACY

Birm
 9-23-90

Thirteen

by Tom Konrad

Hello. You don't know me.

No fuck.

No, really, you don't know me.

Did I say I knew you? I don't, and I don't think I'm interested in knowing an asshole.

That's my whole point. You don't know me, yet you insist that I am not worth learning to know, or as you more colorfully...

I didn't say that. I simply said that I was not interested. So
-interested. And

go and...
why not?

stick your head up

your ass. For one, I'm late for work. Secondly, you...

Are you?

...just walked up to me on the street. I

can hardly make friends with everyone who I meet in the...

Oh? Do many people talk to you

when you are driving to work on the highway?

...fucking highway. That's right. I'm not on the

street, I was driving to fucking

Five.

work on the fucking

Six.

highway in the goddamn traffic and

where the fuck am I now?

...where the fuck am I now? That's a good question. Why don't you look around?

I don't see a

goddamn thing. Who the hell are you anyway?

You don't know me.

...know you. Yeah, you said that.

Just tell me where the hell I am.

Ten. You guessed it.

Speak fucking

Eleven.

English. And what the hell are you

counting?

Twelve. I am counting the number of demons to be assigned to your personal torment.

You mean I'm dead. And every time I say fu— you...

...add another demon to see to your

personal discomfort.

Oh, shit.

Thirteen.

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