charge of the warehouse was taking stuff by the forklift load and putting it in the back of his pickup. Nobody ever thought to check that guy.

I don't think I did that much damage to the company. In 1982 the company blamed the store's problems on management, most of whom were transferred to other stores. The store never fired or caught anyone stealing, but the store's reputation did bring management morale way down. Just think, they were in charge of the worst store in the entire country.

TOY STORE FLOOR MANAGER • RON

I worked at Toys R Us in Tampa, Florida. The job was boring, but I found a number of ways to entertain myself, other employees and even the customers.

I don't want to grow up, I'm a Toys R Us kid.

— Toys R Us slogan

One Christmas the store had a Barbie Doll house on display and every night I would create a different scene by dressing the dolls up in strange outfits and setting them up in unusual situations. One time I dressed the Ken Doll in a clown outfit, tied Barbie against a balcony, and set Ken up so he was whipping her. One day during the summer I found a Barbie Doll on the floor with half a leg chewed off so I attached a peg to her leg, resealed her in a box, and sold her as Peg-Legged Barbie. I found a ripped-up Cabbage Patch Doll, and a friend and I took the doll home and resewed part of it, took it back to the store, and sold it as an Anatomically Correct Cabbage Patch Doll.

Once, I cross-dressed a Ken Doll and repackaged it. A lady and her daughter saw the cross-dressed Ken Doll. They bought it then took it to the newspapers because they thought it was the result of some mix-up at the factory. About a month later, after I got fired, my girlfriend called the papers and told them that I was responsible for the doll. The next thing I knew, radio stations and newspapers from all over the country were calling me. Until I went public with the story, Mattel was going through all of their security systems trying to figure out how something like this could have happened. I know Toys R Us didn't want to tell Mattel what happened. Toys R Us does not like any publicity whatsoever, good or bad. Eventually I was fired, not by my boss, but by a big representative from the company. My boss liked me and tried to defend me, but the representative had the last word.

When you are saying something that doesn't mean much, you must say it with a great deal of authority.

— Virgil Thompson

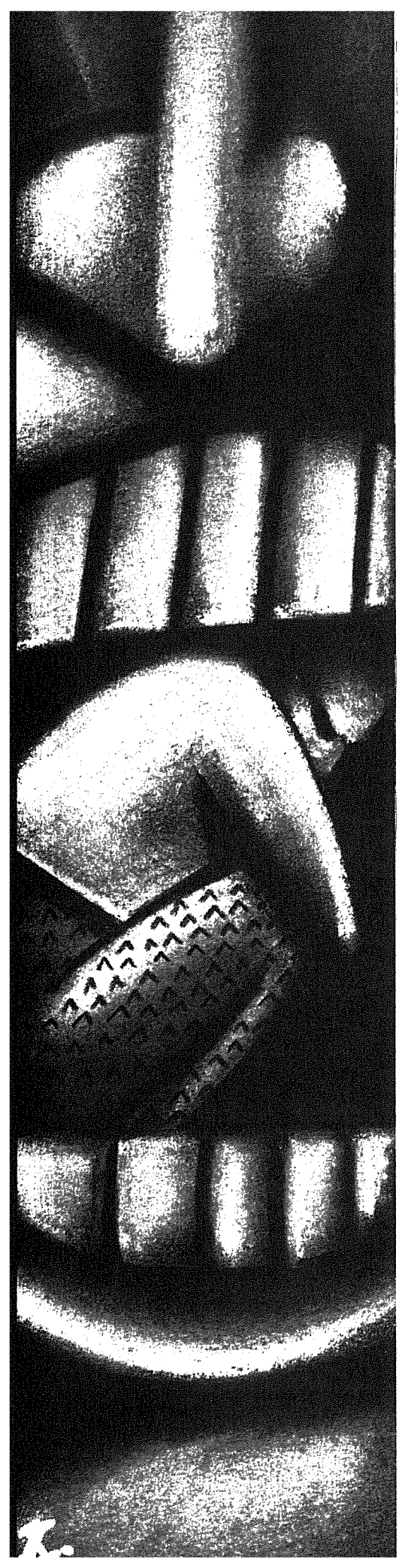
I had some fun with what I did. I'm not trying to sound like a jerk or anything, but I was the best worker at the store. If they gave me three things to do I would do five. I kept the other employees amused. I saw it as a necessity for surviving the type of job I had, but I would have to say that I probably went a little farther than other people.

DEPARTMENT STORE CLERK • PAUL

Some twenty years ago I was working at Uncle Bill's department store. I was just a floor clerk in the miscellaneous department which was paints, hardware and stuff like that. There was a manager named Virgil James. It was a long time ago but I still

From our examination of various measures of an individual employee's perceived economic difficulties, we found very little evidence to support the hypothesis that employees become involved in theft because of greater economic pressure.

— Theft by Employees, Richard C. Hollinger and John P. Clark[3]



remember him, a real tight ass, prim and proper. Mr. Business.

Keep in mind that twenty years ago it was real easy to get a job. We knew that if we fucked up and got fired, we could find another job. Back then, a job wasn't really a matter of pride to me, it was a matter of funds to get things I wanted. I never had big plans for that job. It wasn't a career move, it was just a place to go. I didn't take a lot of sick time off. I needed the money so I wanted to work. I was a really good employee. I was courteous to the customers and I did the job well. I didn't really even think about it, it was just the way that I carried on.

Everyone that worked there were friends, longtime friends. We all knew the company was fucking us over because they'd never give us raises or anything. They might give us a nickel or something and then make a big deal out of it like they made some big sacrifice. They paid us shit, so we compensated for it. I'll give you some examples. Our friends who were cashiers would give us super discounts. A friend of mine worked in the hunting department. I wanted a twelve gauge shotgun and he sold it to me for $12; it was an $80 gun. There was a twenty-five percent mark-down table with damaged items and stuff they were trying to get rid of. So we would take the new merchandise, make up tickets for it, put it on the mark-down table, and buy it at the reduced price. If I wanted a big tool box I'd just drive my car to the back loading dock. A couple friends and I carried this tool box that took me two weeks to fill up with tools. We're carrying the tool box back to the warehouse and this Virgil James started to walk back to the warehouse. So we just threw the tool box off the back of the dock and right through the plastic window of my '59 Dodge convertible top. Never caught us, never caught us at all.

GROCERY CO-OP CASHIER • DIANE

The first thing that interested me in working for the co-op was that they paid well, had paid holidays and health benefits. When I started there, I didn't think of it as a company because everyone supposedly had the same interest in providing food to the public at a cheaper price. Later I saw that the structure wasn't really arranged that way and that all support workers, myself included, were being used to make the co-op "fat" for the people who ran it. Nothing I said made any difference because everyone made more money and got more benefits than I did.

You were hired as either a collective worker that did a bit more of the office backroom type of work (and got about $2.50 more an hour), or as a support worker who did more of the grittier work like stocking the shelves and doing the cash register. It was mainly a difference of duties and pay. It was kind of sketchy who got to be a collective worker and who got to be a support worker. There were collective workers who were really inept and support workers that were completely capable of doing any part of the job. The company decided which position you would be in. A lot of it had to do with if you had a college education or not. It was frustrating to be a support worker and know that you weren't getting paid as well as collective workers, who seemed to have an easier job than you, when the place called itself a collective.

As managers, our fundamental purpose is to build a department and organization that we are proud of. Our unit in many ways becomes a living monument to our deepest beliefs in what is possible at work. We strive to create both a high-performing unit and one that treats its own members and its customers well. Each time we act as a living example of how we want the whole organization to operate, it is a positive political act.

— The Empowered Manager, Peter Block [4]

How many employees steal from their employers? Experienced private investigators believe that one-half of the work force engages in petty theft from employers; taken are paper, pens, and other small items. Of those fifty percent, however, half also steal important items, and from five to eight percent of all employees steal in volume. A study by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce found that up to seventy-five percent of all employees steal at least once and up to forty percent at least twice.

— "Employee Theft: A $40 Billion Industry," American Journal of Political and Social Science [5]

Although larcenous customers are more numerous, employee thieves seem to be greedier. A survey of eleven major retailers by Jack L. Hayes, a Stanfordville, N.Y., loss prevention consultant, found that shoplifters who were caught stealing outnumbered their employee counterparts, 92,212 to 8,197. But the average shoplifter's take was only $57.31 of merchandise, compared with the employee's $890.

— New York Times Magazine [6]

The longer any support worker worked there, the less able they were to be collective workers. See, support workers got disgusted with collective workers because we got a better view of the whole structure by not having the power that other people had. The people in the collective couldn't understand why we, of all people, should get our insurance paid for, even though we made less money and couldn't afford doctor bills. Because they paid us less, they felt we should get less benefits. These are the same people who sign petitions for Justice for Janitors and other noble causes, but wouldn't look at what was right under their noses.

Over time, I got more confident about what I could get away with. Sometimes I'd let things completely slide through and not ring them up. I wouldn't let the customer know I was doing that. I would give the twenty percent employee discount to the elderly and people that used food stamps and just write down that they were workers. I would purposely mark down new shipments of inventory that came in. I would make a basic guess about the price, then lower it. With produce, a lot of the time they would mark it up then add five cents because they figured a percentage was going to go bad or get bruised. When I priced the produce, I usually didn't include the extra markup, just for the hell of it.

I got frustrated that the company wasn't really living up to what they claimed to be and that they had a reluctance to deal with support workers' questions about the company structure and why things were the way they were.

I think what I did was some type of self-empowerment. I never thought of it as revenge. It seemed like the only outlet to vent my frustrations. The little things I was doing were so nit-picky, that if I wanted to do something to drastically undermine the company, I would have looked at it from a completely different angle. I was just splitting hairs but it made it easier for me to work there.

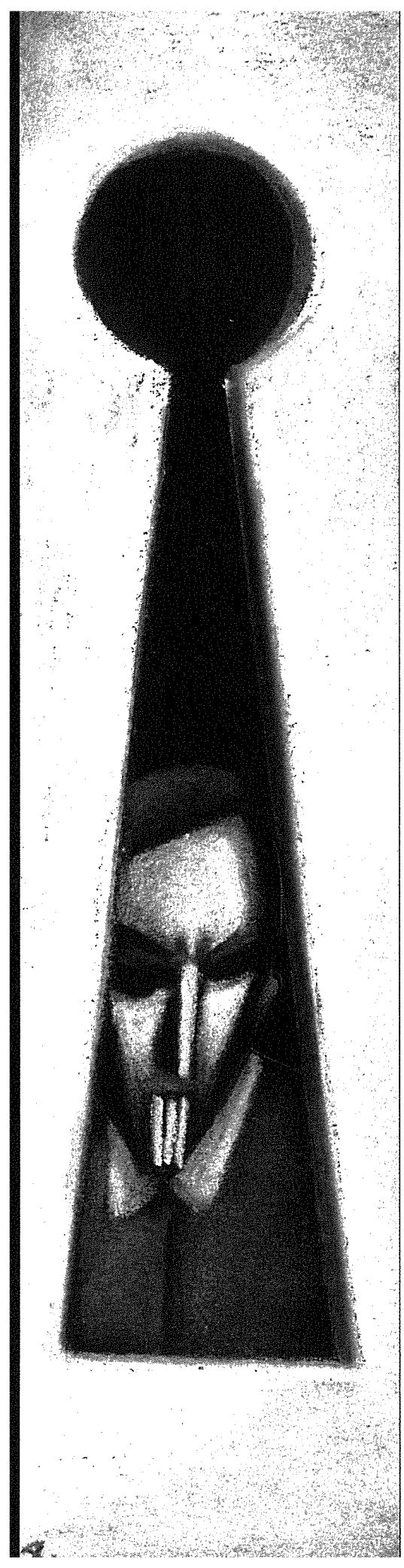
RECORD STORE CASHIER • OWEN

I worked for Wherehouse Records and Tapes for three years in three different stores. At that time they had 105 stores in two states. Now they have five or ten mega-stores.

The rumor was that the owners knew zero about the record business and had no respect for any artist who wasn't white and a million seller. I was hired as a clerk because I had classical record experience: I listened to two Mahler records and I qualified.

I started at a store in the suburbs that only stocked Peter Frampton and Barbra Streisand records, which was fine. Then I was transferred to a store in a black neighborhood. At Christmastime, the store had 300 copies of Peter Frampton's latest album and not a single Randy Crawford record. We would have to beg them to send us one copy. We were pretty disgusted with management by this time. I transferred to a store closer to where I lived and we ran into the same problem: only white mainstream artists were stocked. Again we had to beg for current hits and could never meet the demand for the records that were being requested.

One day, me and a couple of women who worked there were griping about the situation when one of the clerks who had been in the store forever said, "You know, there's a way of handling this



problem." He showed us a grade-B technique of tapping the till, which was basically ringing up a sale and not giving the customer the receipt. The next sale that goes through you open the drawer, make the change, and give them that receipt. Anybody could do it.

Soon, all four of us were doing it. It started with $20 a day for lunch. Pretty soon the store was making six or seven sales a day on the books while we walked out of there every night with armloads of records that we sold to secondhand record stores. We made some pretty good money. The company was so blind to what was going on that they sent us a new manager to see if she could save the store, but of course she couldn't. She ordered thousands of dollars of these off-the-wall records that we told her to order. We took them home and told her the next day that they had sold. Everyone from the regional managers on down had no idea what was going on.

We also let shoplifters come in and steal from the place. If we thought they were getting greedy, or if we didn't like their attitude, we'd stop them, but we had a nice class of regular shoplifters who would pick and get what they wanted. If we saw that someone had refined taste we would encourage them and recommend other albums.

DEPARTMENT STORE STOCK CLERK VICTOR

I didn't care that some schmuck on third shift started doing graffiti on the bathroom walls. They put locks on the doors to keep him out, but left me in the cold. They had no right. I had to make those fuckers pay.

I was in aisle thirteen pocketing a screwdriver as an elderly gent headed for the bathroom. I shadowed him and waited outside the door, paper towels in hand. As he exited I caught the door and entered under the pretext of filling the towel dispenser. He was out of sight and I figured it would take him about three minutes to stroll up to the office and deposit the key into the hands of the next eager poo-goer. I worked fast. Inside of a minute I had disassembled the lock and removed it from the door. I lifted a ceiling panel and shoved the whole apparatus up there, along with the screwdriver. I began to wash my hands as a revelation struck me: I wanted them to find it! They should know the underlings were disgruntled. Quickly I pulled the lock assembly from the ceiling and entered my choice stall. I lifted the cracked porcelain seat and splashed the lock into the toilet.

COPY SHOP CLERK • ALAN

I've never dealt with so many fucked-up managers as when I started working at a busy, downtown Minneapolis copy shop. We had to do a lot of work, took a lot of shit from customers and got paid beans. Actually, it was one of the best jobs I've had because everybody that I worked with was really fun.

Maybe they call it take-home pay because there is no other place you can afford to go with it.
— Franklin P. Jones

The good work strike-workers provide consumers with better service or products than the employer intended — for example, they undercharge shoppers or give free bus rides.
One good side effect of the good work strike is that it places the onus of stopping a service on the employer.
— "Strategy For Industrial Struggle," Solidarity pamphlet [7]

U.S. News and World Report found that 34% of 18-29 year old employed individuals felt it justifiable to steal from their employer.
— James D. Walls, Jr., Senior Vice-President of Stanton Corporation [8]

Employee theft is a $40-billion-per year disease eating away at the health of American companies.
— "Employee Theft: A $40 Billion Industry," American Journal of Political and Social Science [9]

There is really no category of harmless theft. A company that does not stand firm on all issues of theft will find the rules bent and broken in every way.
— Security Management Magazine [10]

One day, a friend from work and I decided to go to a movie, until we realized how absolutely poor we were. The only one we could afford had a $1 admission. We decided we weren't being paid enough, so we started to pay ourselves — from the cash register. We got to the point where we couldn't work a day unless we got $40 each, on top of our daily wages. If a manager got on our case to work faster, we laughed and took $20 out of the cash register for harassment. We found out later that we weren't the only employees taking money. It seemed to be a common practice. Eventually, we got so fed up that we decided we weren't going to charge anyone for anything all day. This became known as the "Free Day." The three of us gave away hundreds of dollars' worth of services and products. We didn't charge anyone for time on the computers, laser printers or copiers. If anyone came to pick up a big job, we just gave it to them. A lot of customers were very shocked. Some people almost got to the point of demanding we take their money, which, when you think about it, is silly. We told customers it was part of a promotional campaign or that the cash register was broken and we couldn't take their money at the time.

The owners started to notice money was missing, and that at least one employee was stealing, but there was nothing they could do because the store was open twenty-four hours and they didn't keep good track of things. I think they still don't know just how much money we took.

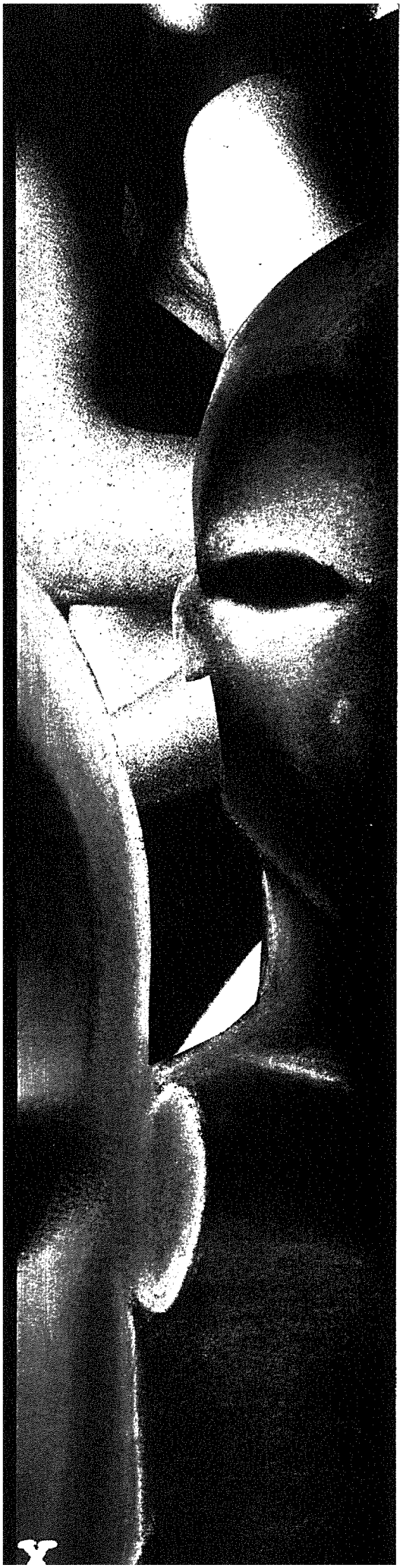
Our bonus checks were paid according to the number of good customer evaluations we got. We would go through them (even though we weren't supposed touch them, much less look at them), and if any bad ones came in we'd throw them out. If we didn't meet our end-of-the-month quota for good ones, we just made some up with fake names and addresses, and wrote how great the employees were at that particular store. The results would be published in the company newsletter each month. We were rated the best employees and the best store. The management never thought employees could make money by faking these evaluations. We faked hundreds of them. To this day, when I get together with other people who worked there, we always have a good laugh.

CONVENIENCE STORE CLERK • MARC

For two summers I worked part-time at a large discount convenience store which was part of a large national chain. The work was tedious and boring. The attitudes and practices of local managers and the corporate owners didn't make the job any better.

While working at this store I learned from one manager that about $15,000 is lost to shoplifting each year. I also learned that they counter their losses by marking up most of the merchandise twenty-five percent over the retail price. For example, products that are bought for about $.99 to be sold for $1.99 were often priced at $2.59. Even fixed prices on products that the corporation manufactures themselves — the store brands — were often inflated.

What also bothered me was that, had the store avoided stocking up on many products that could never sell in the first place, they'd



have been able to market everything else at a fair price. Anyone who has ever spent much time with typical American children could predict that Mr. T. Shrinkydinks and toys from the TV show *Ghostbusters* weren't going to be a hot item. But this store loaded up on these products, and now they're stuck with cases of useless merchandise. Rather than assuming responsibility and seeking a reasonable solution, such as hiring someone with a stronger eye for market trends, the store chose to recover their losses by marking up all the other merchandise. Simple math shows that the store probably turns a pretty hefty profit, more than making up for what they lose to shoplifters.

Seeing customers being ripped off every day, over and over again, showed me that people were accepting those prices as retail. The store had frequent sales which made shoppers think they were getting bargains. In actuality, they were finally getting products at retail value or a little bit less. Also, many of the store's customers are elderly men and women who don't have much money to spend for the household products they really need. Many of them no longer drive, so rather than walking at least a mile to a store like Kmart, which has a larger selection, they bought from the chain I worked for.

My job mainly consisted of working the cash register, pricing merchandise, and walking around as a sales clerk. As a cashier, I was able to see which products were especially popular. I also learned that memorizing the prices of popular items is relatively easy for cashiers, since they see the same merchandise purchased over and over again. I got all the information I needed to aid me in my scheme. All the other assistance I could want was provided by the nonexistent security system. Employees used to monitor and secure the store and, unlucky for my managers and co-workers, they trusted me.

I put new merchandise on the shelves at the inflated prices my managers demanded. While I priced these items at their intended prices, I priced other items at twenty-five percent to fifty percent less than retail. Instant sale, but I was the only one who knew about it. You cannot peel off a sticker without destroying the sticker under it as well. This conveniently prevented anyone from lifting a sticker and seeing the old price. To prevent suspicion, I left extremely popular items alone. Any other items I marked down. No one is going to take the time to check the merchandise receipts or catalogs to check the retail price, especially if the store is understaffed. To the best of my knowledge, no one ever suspected a thing. By the time I stopped working at this store, I cost them at least several thousand dollars while giving consumers merchandise at reasonable if not heavily discounted prices.

The ironic thing was, the name tag I had to wear at work read "Customers First!"

VISUAL MERCHANDISING MANAGER JIM

I was hired by the largest department store in Hawaii as a visual merchandising manager, which really means a display manager. I

had a crew of assistants, called trimmers, who helped on the displays. We did all of the windows and interior displays, and dressed all of the mannequins in the store.

I'm a little more relaxed at work than most people. I figure if the work gets done and it's professional work, what's the difference? I can't stand being uptight at work all the time. To me it's a job, and I can't believe that I get paid to dress mannequins. It's pretty silly when you stop and think about it, but there are a lot of people who take it very seriously.

There was a newly hired woman trimmer who was very talented and beautiful. At first, we were nothing more than co-workers. About a month after she started working, we went to lunch together and discovered we were attracted to each other. With time, we got a little more involved and eventually started going out. We found more than enough time to get away and have sex at work. We could have done it at her or my place but we decided, "We're here and the moment grabs us."

In most department stores there are these little passageways behind the display windows. Only the display people had the keys so we would go down there once in a while. We did it in sitting rooms before the store opened, or up in the production room where we dressed the mannequins. Because we were doing display work all over the store, our choices were unlimited. We were never gone longer than a half hour and there was a pager system that we could hear from anywhere in the store, so if anyone wanted us, it wasn't a problem.

The manager of the store was very tight-lipped and straight-laced. She thought this woman and me were spending too much time together and would give us dirty looks every time she saw the two of us going to lunch together. I think she thought that something was going on but she never caught us in the act. It was always kind of a kick to do it and think of what would happen if this woman had ever seen us. It was like taking a chance because I would have been fired instantly if we had been caught.

DEPARTMENT STORE MATERIAL HANDLER SANTA

I snuck out the back door of the store during lunch hour, pushing five shopping carts into the woods behind the store, every day, for close to a month. Then I would pull out some rope, which I stole from the hardware department every morning at seven, and tie these five carts onto the rope and hoist them up various trees.

Finally, twenty-seven working days and 135 shopping carts later, a store manager walked into this "forest of sabotage" and discovered where all the missing shopping carts were. After a lengthy investigation, the store never found out who committed this act. It took three hours to pull these carts out of the trees.

I committed these acts partly out of boredom and partly out of revenge. What better way to spend a lunch hour than to string up shopping carts, pretending they're my bosses? Naturally, I did not feel any sort of guilt and laughed many times thinking about it.

It very seldom happens to a man that his business is his pleasure.
— Samuel Johnson

No office anywhere on Earth is so puritanical, impeccable, elegant, sterile or incorruptible as not to contain the yeast for at least one affair, probably more. You can say it couldn't happen here, but just let yeast into the place and first thing you know — bread!
— Helen Gurley Brown

The kind of actions that one can undertake at the workplace are only limited by the imagination of the workers themselves.
— "Giving Them The Gears," Open Road [11]

It is very clever to know how to hide one's cleverness.
— Francois, Duc De La Rochefoucauld

EXOTIC FISH STORE CLERK • MAC

Before the store went out of business, it was the largest one specializing in both fresh and saltwater fish in the Northwest. I pretty much did whatever the management didn't want to do. The one boss that I always dealt with liked me. He let me spend most of the time maintaining the aquariums and dealing with the fish. This was great, because it was something that I was interested in. Back then, fish were my thing.

The place was extremely profitable, but it was mismanaged. One day we were told that the State Comptroller was closing us down because the store hadn't paid sales tax for the last nine months. They wanted us to stay on for a week to clean up the tanks and get the fish ready to go back to the wholesalers.

I was working with two guys that I never really got along with. There was deep-rooted jealousy on their part because they had accomplished far less than I had, and I was a lot younger. They were put in charge of the clean up procedures.

I came in the day that we were supposed to start and these two guys were blaring a tape. I asked them if I could put on a tape. They said, "Yeah, whatever. Hurry up." Within a couple minutes of listening to my tape they pulled it out of the tape deck and threw it across the room — the tape casing shattered. Just because they didn't like the music. It kind of pissed me off.

I had mentioned I wanted to take home a certain fish. The first thing they did was to pull the fish that I wanted out of the tank — a really expensive one — and one of them puts a cigarette out on it. So it fucks it all up. A little later they tried to put a cigarette out on me. Then they started picking fish out of the tanks and throwing them at me. It was just getting stupid. I was getting really angry. I said I was going home and one of them went, "Fuck, yeah, you're going home. You're fucking fired!"

I went in the back to wash my hands. There's a big holding facility there for all of the saltwater fish which are very expensive, ranging from $50 to $500 a piece. Those two guys were planning to steal a bunch of these fish for their tanks at home and, little did I know, they also had a couple of their own fish in there too. I grabbed a gallon bottle of bleach and poured about four cups of it into the tank's filter system. I calmed down almost instantly like it was no big deal. I was just about to leave when one of the guys went back there and started freaking out. He was throwing shit around, yelling, "What did you do this for? Oh my god!" My only alibi was that the back door had been open. I said, "Oh man, somebody must have come in through the back." I started to freak out to make it look real. The bleach killed about $2,000 worth of fish.

Luckily, I got away with it. I think the boss that I was friends with knew I'd done it but ended up paying me anyway. I didn't admit anything. That was the one and only time I've ever really done something that drastic. Looking back on it, I couldn't say that I wouldn't do it again. I mean, they deserved it, fuck.

POS/EM (Point Of Sale Exception Monitoring) catches dishonest sales associates in the act, at the point of sale. POS/EM is effective against cash register losses such as: cash theft from the drawer, under-ringing sales, even credit card fraud. This new loss prevention system from Sensormatic records the attempt and the transaction data on videotape, providing positive documentation of what actually occurred.

During the surveillance mode, if POS/EM "sees" an exception it has been instructed to monitor, it selects the appropriate camera, automatically aims the camera at the register, and superimposes the transaction data over the video picture of the cashier and register. This information is then stored on videotape. In addition, POS/EM can supply you with hard copy of the transaction via a standard 80 column printer.

— Sensormatic Electronics Corporation brochure [12]

Workers are amazingly candid about their own stealing when questioned anonymously. The University of Minnesota sociology department discovered that while carrying out a three-year study with a $250,000 grant from the Justice Department's National Institute of Justice. About one-third of all employees in three industries — retail, hospitals and manufacturing — reported they had been involved in stealing company property during the preceding year.

— Nation's Business [13]

17 QUALITY: BUILT THE AMERICAN WAY

Manufacturing

MACHINIST • BURT

I worked for a small company called Gray's Manufacturing Company in Inglewood, California. They made specialized airplane parts for companies like Boeing and Lockheed. I was the low man on the totem pole, working for two rich brothers who were trying to outdo each other all the time. One brother had done really smart things with his money and had made good investments. But the other brother, who owned the company, was always losing his ass on small business ventures. He always put it off on his little brother who took his frustrations out on me. It was like passing the buck.

What it boiled down to was a really shitty job: deburring, which means cleaning the parts when they came off the machine. I had to run this big piece of sandpaper across each part five or six times, bore it with air and water, and check it with calipers. I had to wash my hands every time because if I got just one little piece of grit on my calipers, it didn't measure correctly. It's a really screwy job. They were charging the company a lot of money for these parts — about $25,000.

I was frustrated doing the work and having the boss come and check stuff that I knew was accurate. He would be frustrated because of the bad deals he was making, so he'd knock the parts around and make them so they weren't any good, then blame me. If one part hits a certain place on another, it's not going to be any good. After he screwed up half of the parts I had done, I had to go through and figure out which ones were screwed up and fix them up just right. I got really tired of this and knew it was going to come out of my paycheck. So I thought, fuck it! I'm going to ruin every one of them.

I made it *look* as if the parts were okay. I took ten-thousandths of an inch off more than I should have, or I bored a hole wider than I was supposed to. Then I wrapped them up, packed them and got them ready for delivery. The boss didn't catch anything because I'd always make sure the top three in the batch were okay, and he'd only check those when they were packed. All the ones after the top three were screwed up. The company only got $4,000 worth of good parts out of a $25,000 job. It really ended up costing them a lot — probably $21,000, not including shipping — and what it cost to recall the parts.

The pay was low, they treated me badly, they were running a shitty company, and their ethics were rotten. I still think they owe me for all the shit they put me through. I did really good work. They kept promising me a raise, but it never came. They ended up going out of business.

COIL WINDER • JAY

While working as a coil winder in a big transformer factory, we workers faced the dehumanizing "science" known as Minutes Times Motion, which is where a computer estimates how long it should take to complete a task such as building a transformer. Every day, we would check the number and type of transformers

What is property, that it is so sacred, that it must not be destroyed if it stands in the way of human life and justice?
— New York Call, 29 June 1913[1]

The Boeing Co. today is trying to find out who cut hundreds of electrical wires in a new 737 being assembled at Boeing's Renton plant.

Officials say it looks like sabotage. Mark Hooper, spokesman for the Boeing Commercial Airplane Group, said Boeing believes the cuts were deliberate, although an investigation still is underway.

"The cuts were found in dozens of places at different times during several systems checks and performance tests," he said.

A motive is unknown, although some workers might be upset by recent layoffs of production workers. About 650 people, mostly in Everett, lost their jobs last month.

The case is believed to be the first sabotage in a Boeing commercial airplane plant. Boeing produces fourteen of the 737s a month at the Renton plant.
— Seattle Times[2]

"These are sensible and mature sorts of people — in their own outside environment these sorts of acts of vandalism and sabotage would never be tolerated. But in the workplace it was a different kettle of fish. ... Ford's probably killed, mentally, more people in their time than any fucking company. So consequently whatever action was ever taken against them, I can feel very humane in favor of the people who performed that action." (autoworker interview)

For the managers of car factories, sabotage is no doubt a 'social problem'; for the 'saboteurs' the work itself is the problem. Sabotage is one of the solutions.
— Sabotage: A Study in Industrial Conflict, Geoff Brown[3]

"When I was working on the line back in the sixties, if there was something I wanted from the supervisor and didn't get, I would let trucks go by without doing my job. I was no angel. Like everyone else, I would get away with whatever I could. They couldn't do anything to me, and that was the best way to retaliate against the supervisor: get his ass chewed

built, and at the end of the week we would get a computer-generated analysis of our efficiency rate. If we "beat the clock," we would get a happy face on our evaluation report. A frown face would mean that we were just not up to par, as far as our computer was concerned.

To get a grip on this bad situation, especially in a non-union plant, we required a total conspiracy amongst workers. Starting with the guy I knew the best, we each agreed to slow down production on one of the transformer types. We each handed in approximately the same number of units as our co-workers. After a few frowning faces on our monthly reports and a talking-to by the supervisor, the management had to readjust their computer time accordingly. It makes management look bad to have a product constantly come in under production goals. Adjusting to our new time made them come out around 100 percent again. This victory encouraged other assemblers to do the same, with equally good results.

As we became faster at winding, we would overproduce and thus we would have to store some units in our lockers. We soon saw the wisdom of having a bank of units, in case we didn't want to work as hard one day, or a friend needed one because they messed one up. We earned more free time at work, and were still working at 100 percent, as far as management was concerned.

CARBURETOR ASSEMBLER • EUGENE

It's common to hear people complain about American cars breaking down and having problems; there's always some goddamn thing wrong with them. It's almost always internal, and they have to take the car back to the shop and figure out what's wrong with it. It's not an accident or a fluke. These machines are designed by engineers who know what they're doing. They're precise. It's the people putting them together who aren't quite as precise as the engineers would like them to be.

I worked manufacturing carburetors in Detroit. There was one particular carburetor that you could place a BB in and it was there for life. The only way you could see it was if you x-rayed it. The only way to fix it was to replace the carburetor. It would be an intermittent problem with your carburetor — you'd never know when it was going to strike. Usually it would hit you when you were going downhill.

Anytime we got a chance to do internal parts, like a carburetor, we would screw them up purposely. We would put in bolts that were the wrong size. We would do anything we could to make the carburetors dysfunctional. We did this to as many carburetors as possible.

I inspired and taught many others. They were bored out of their minds. It was such a relief for them to take that screwdriver and damage that part internally, knowing that no one would know they did it.

The goal was to wreak the most blatant destruction without getting caught. The most insidious thing, of course, was dealing with internal parts of engines and inside door panels. Workers might take a pair of pliers and pop off just one cog on the end of

for shipping incomplete jobs down the line. It happened a lot." (Mander "Lee" Thornsberry interview)
— End of the Line: Autoworkers and the American Dream, Richard Feldman and Michael Betzold, eds. [4]

The assembly line is a haven for those who haven't got the brains to do anything else.
— Henry Ford [5]

I gotta tell ya, with our $2.4 billion in profits last year, they gave me a great big bonus. Really, it's almost obscene.
— Lee Iacocca, April 1985

The urge to destroy is also a creative urge.
— Mikhail Bakunin

Some absences for sickness can be looked on as deliberate refusals to work, and therefore as sabotage.
— Sabotage in Industry, Pierre Dubois [6]

On any given day, one million American workers don't show up for work — some are sick/vacation, but many just don't feel like it.
— Forbes Magazine [7]

the plastic crank. There's a gear inside that's plastic and when you roll the window up and the cog is popped off; eventually that window won't work. With wiring and electronic parts, you could do countless things so that initially it works, but later on you'll have problems. You can't find out the source of the problem, who did it, or how it happened. That's the beauty of it.

Sabotage is different than revenge because it's a means by which you can express yourself and free yourself from oppression and dehumanization. You aren't attacking a person, you're dealing with an issue. It's satisfying to know that you're causing long-term problems for the industry. For the first time in my life, I saw other people like me who were drudging through life, making pretty good money and benefits, but whose lives were shit. Being human is so wonderful. If we're pushed apart from that, we tend to struggle because you can't be human in America and work in industry.

When you work for the auto industry, profit is number one. Although they say they're not doing it anymore, they've cut back on quality. They're trying to compete with Japan, but the only way to do that is to treat the most important person in the industry — the worker — as a human being.

They don't treat you like a human being, they treat you like a robot, and your function is to produce the profit. You're dehumanized. The carburetors were our way of equalizing the situation.

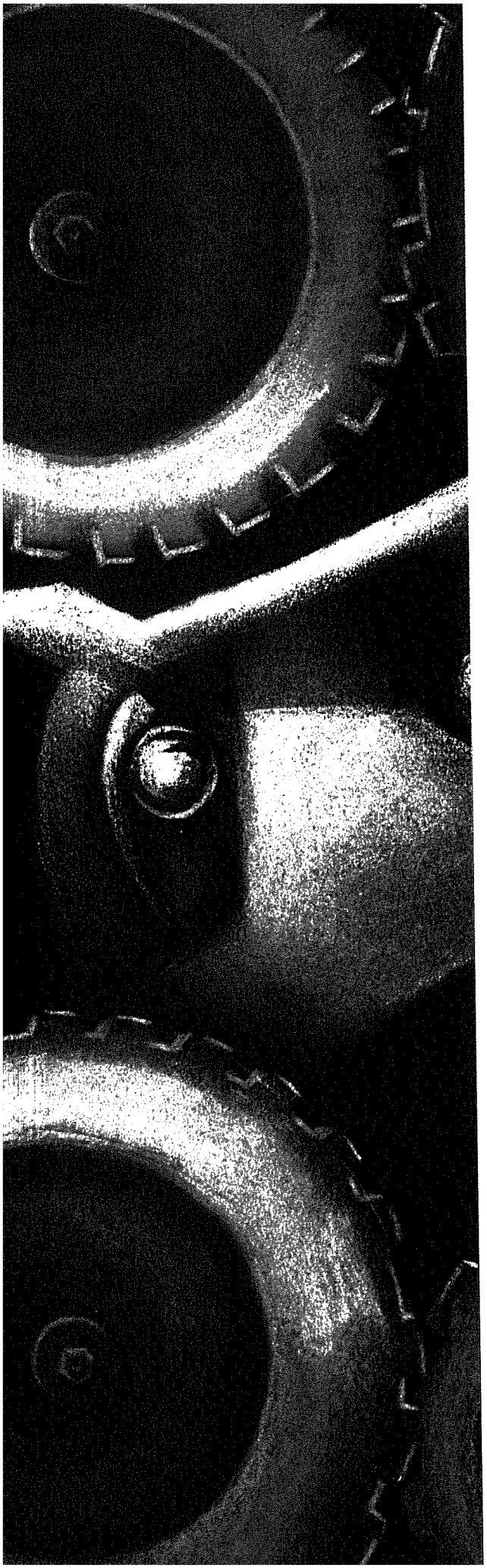
I caused a lot of damage. Not only did I teach and encourage others to do it, I caused many Americans strife and heartache and taught them the lesson not to buy from that particular company. The auto industry got a bad rap because of it. The fear and dissatisfaction from driving a car that breaks down all the time are going to stick.

WELDER • TAIT

For close to three years I worked at a family-owned company doing welding and general fabrication work. There were six employees, three of which were the owner and his two daughters. The place was really tense. I didn't let it bother me at the beginning, because I'm very tolerant. Things tend to roll off of me real well. I'll take it and take it, then all of sudden I'll say, "No, this is enough."

This guy was my supervisor when the owner wasn't there. No matter what I did or how I went about it, if it wasn't his way, it wasn't right. I've been doing what I do since 1980 and I've gotten used to working in my own methodical way. My supervisor didn't do shoddy work, but he was always in a hurry. He wouldn't stop and think where I would stop and think a job through. The owner never cared how I did a job as long as I got it done and did it right. This supervisor was the exact opposite: he would get me mad, then leave me alone for the rest of the day, and then the next day nothing would happen. After I quit this job I found out his theory was, "if you're pissed off, you work better."

I started getting really stressed at work. I was getting headaches by ten in the morning. It started spilling over into my private life, because I would be totally on edge. I spoke to a doctor and he said



I had stress headaches. He asked me what I was exposed to at work and I just laughed and said "an asshole." He said that maybe I should quit my job.

I started to purposely get mad. With that and the tension headaches, I decided I didn't want to be there anymore. I called in sick more, I would go in for a while and then say, "I'm sick, I gotta go." I wasn't really sick, I was just sick of working there. As I said, I'm a tolerant person until I'm not. I would just get into a mood and not want to go to work. I never purposely did shoddy work because of the situation, but I'm sure that it took a toll on my thinking and my general quality of work.

ASSEMBLYLINE WORKER • NICK

I worked for a year in a typical World War II-style plant with a sawtooth tin roof and smoke stacks billowing oily gray smoke. There were 1,000 of us poor bastards working there, doing mindless arm and wrist repetitions thousands of times per day, producing a basic industrial product.

The accident rate was enormous. Our sign out front read IT'S BEEN _____ DAYS SINCE OUR LAST ACCIDENT. It had no number on it as it would be too embarrassing. Almost every day there was a work-time lost accident. There were three shifts a day, and most of the accidents happened in the wee hours of the morning, say just after your 4:00 am lunchtime of chili con carne served warm in the can from a vending machine. The nurse was only on duty during day hours, when no one got hurt.

One time a co-worker got his leg jammed in a machine. The foreman pulled me off the line and ordered me to take him to the hospital; an ambulance cost too much. I ran to get my car and drove around town looking for the damn hospital, which I had never been to before, while my buddy moaned in deep pain. Once there, I helped him out to the emergency room and they took him away. I had to stay up front to fill out the papers. When I told the admitting nurse where we were from, I didn't even have to sign anything. She said, "We have an open account with your company."

This was a union shop and contract negotiations were on. The contract expired and the big union bosses told us to work without a contract. We walked instead. To prepare for the walkout, it was essential to plan ahead. Production went way down so as not to have a big stock of finished goods. The last shift to work before the walk-out had a myriad of mechanical problems. It was uncanny. The laser quality assurance probes started breaking, their bloody red eyes getting skewed every which way. The box machines started getting jammed and glue was dripping all over the conveyor belts. Forklifts were falling apart, parts from them disappearing mysteriously. Finally, with the factory so disabled, we walked off the job. The next shift was massed by the main gate, cheering, taunting the bosses and pleased at not having to cross the gate and enter the monstrous plant. The international union boss and the company boss ordered us back, but no one balked. Out of 1,000 people perhaps seven went back, and we took their pictures for future shame.

More men are killed by overwork than the importance of this world justifies.
— Rudyard Kipling

During the strike, the management desperately needed to truck the warehoused goods to market. Often, however, dump trucks of broken concrete would get dumped in front of the plant gates, preventing the big tractor trailers from entering. Despite not having strike benefits (the union had declared our strike illegal) and no unemployment benefits (the company lawyers got it cut off), we stayed out for a month until we won the strike.

STEEL WORKER • RICH

At the large steel manufacturer where I worked, we made everything from carburetor parts to grid irons for buildings. I started out on the ground floor of the shop. My job was to cut tubing.

I learned how to work most of the machines from going to a trade school. I loved working with the machines and building things. I was ambitious and learned every machine in the shop. The machine I used was expensive but inefficient. So I went to the lathe and made a particular part to make my saw work better and make my job easier. Soon I started working on other machines to make them more efficient and make life easier for a lot of the workers. The foreman didn't like what I was doing; not only was I doing things that the engineering department should have done, but also, I was making him look bad. The foreman made me stop — so I quit — but before I did, I caused the company thousands of dollars in damage.

I shortened every single tube I cut by at least one-thirtysecond of an inch, which made an incredible difference when the part went to the welding department. The welders had to bend the tubes and use hammers to smash certain tubes in place. I worked like a mad dog and increased production of these tubes and then mixed them up in the tube bins so nothing was in its right place. The foreman saw that the parts weren't working but couldn't figure out why. He consulted with various engineers and supervisors and they figured out that the tubes were being cut slightly shorter in an inconsistent manner. The foreman blamed everything on my saw, which was exactly what I wanted. I played dumb and went back to the inefficient saw without my invention. They never guessed that I cut all of the tubes short on purpose.

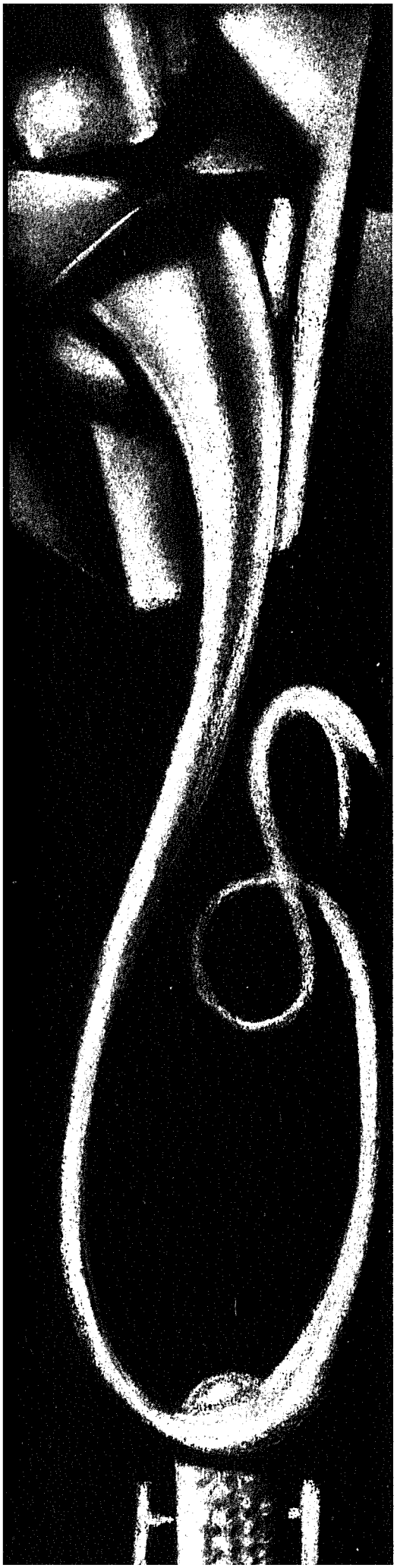
A clever system of sabotage was adopted in Philadelphia by workers of a great fur factory. Before stopping work the cutters were instructed by their union to alter the size of the patterns on which the clients' fur coats had to be made. Every cutter followed this advice and reduced by some one-third of an inch all the patterns he could lay his hands on. The strike was called and the boss, naturally, began to hire scabs — but strange enough, the strikers did not seem to be excited and left them alone. Imagine the surprise and rage of the boss when he at last found out that not one single garment was of the right size and shape.
— Sabotage, Emile Pouget, 1912[8]

It frequently pays to pretend ignorance. Actually it is a form of socratic irony. There are times when play-acting the role of the unwise is the wisest role of all.
— Gratain, "The Best of Gratain"

The hours are long and the pay is small, so take your time and screw them all.
— industrial saying

18 SEEING IS BELIEVING

Broadcasting



DISC JOCKEY • TICO

I was the sports director, the assistant news director and DJ for an adult contemporary FM station in Ohio. I was also the youngest person there. The people who worked there were these losers who were too ugly to get into TV, but who had great egos and loved to hear themselves talk. Everyone I worked with loved working in radio and had dreams of moving to a larger station and becoming radio stars. I didn't take things that seriously.

As part of being news director I had to do traffic reports each half hour during drive time in the morning and the afternoon. I was supposed to listen to a CB radio and switch back and forth among the police ban stations to listen for wrecks being reported. I did this for four or five days but it was so boring waiting for something to happen that instead, I listened to two other news stations' traffic reports and put what they said, verbatim, on the air. Sometimes the report I gave was an hour old; once I reported that I-75 was backed up but listeners called the station and explained that the road had been clear for the last forty minutes.

Some days, getting news stories was really hard. I had to go through the wire reports (AP and UPI) and find stories that would be of some interest to the listening audience, then edit them down. This took a long time and was tough to do, so sometimes I just made up news stories. I always incorporated my friends into the stories. For instance, I used a taped quote from a friend of mine to report how the state was going to start making people carry a voting license, much like a driver's license, which Ohio actually tried to pass a year earlier. We basically wanted to piss people off and get them involved.

Soon *all* of my friends wanted to be in stories. We kept getting away with it, even as the stories got wilder and wilder. One time our top news story was about a woman who caught her husband cheating on her and attacked him with an electric knife like you use to cut up turkeys. I worked it out with my engineer to play the sound of a Black and Decker saw and a man screaming on cue. I started the story and then the sound effects came in and somehow I didn't crack up. We immediately went to the next story and, sure enough, I noticed that the phone lights were all flashing. Not only were the call-in lines flashing, but also the special hot line that only the general manager at the station was allowed to use. It seems that every advertiser that had commercials during that news segment, and a couple who didn't, called in to complain. The general manager wanted to see me and the engineer in the office after our shifts. He told us that what we did was in bad taste. I got reprimanded pretty hard because a couple of advertisers dropped from the station.

I got in a lot of trouble at press conferences I had to report on. I would always ask the celebrity or politician real pointed questions. Most of the time I got kicked out of the press conference and the radio station got a bad reputation. Generally, the more important the person was, the more of a smart-ass I was. When Mohammed Ali was in town, I asked him what he had left upstairs and his manager came over to me and asked me to leave because Mohammed wasn't comfortable with me in the room. I couldn't

handle these kiss-ass press conferences. I would do my research and grill the person until I was asked to leave.

A couple of my co-workers found out what I was doing and threatened me. Only two people at the station actually enjoyed what I did and they were friends of mine. I think I exploited the power of the mass media to help get over the boredom of the job, but I never did it to harm people, even though unconsciously I was acting true to the old saying, "the way the media interprets the news is the way people know it." I finally left the station because I realized I was starting to get serious about radio. I got a couple of offers from rock stations. I starting thinking about a career in radio and how depressing it would be, because I knew I would always have more fun making fun of it than working hard for it.

The management of a radio station is one of the few areas where business and artistic creativity come together: the excitement of being able to implement your ideas, your feelings, and your knowledge.
— Radio Broadcasting, Robert L. Hilliard [1]

MASTER CONTROL OPERATOR • HAWLEY

Eight of my friends and I got jobs with a national cable company that had just opened up a new station. We had a enormous amount of responsibility and the pay was low, but the company knew people like us were burning to have access to the station's equipment so we had to take what they offered. We took our jobs really seriously because we all wanted a future in television. We took pride in our work, and wanted to make everything look like top quality television programming.

Master control is the nerve center of a television station. Every second of programming you see on your home screen has gone through the master control room of the station to which you are tuned.
— Television Production Handbook, Herbert Zettl [2]

Because I was good with technical things, my job was to put all of the local programs on the air: turn on the tapes, cue them up and broadcast them at a certain time. I also produced Local Origination programs. The station put over a million dollars into their Local Origination facility. They had a five camera mobile unit, a van, edit suites, two studios, and the only ones working there were my friends and me. We had access to everything and produced a shitload of local programs — hockey, arts festivals, political events and the most phenomenal jazz concerts in Massachusetts. Our programming was seen nationally and we won countless local and national awards.

It was interesting when the company bigwigs had to ask me about what programs would fit where, and I told them what was going on. I had to tell this one guy what was happening because he couldn't operate any of the equipment right. He couldn't stand hearing it from a woman and he couldn't stand hearing it from me. This guy kept moving up in the company. It was phenomenal because he didn't have a skill in his pocket but kept finding another niche to fit into. As he moved up he started hiring people and created his own department. He came up with the ideas of Bingo for Dollars, Real Estate Buyers Guide and Auto Buyers Guide. He started taking up more and more channels because he was bringing in money. We only brought in awards.

Work is accomplished by those employees who have not yet reached their level of incompetence.
— Laurence J. Peters

There was a lot of excitement when the station started. After about a year, when the station started to get a lot of exposure and awards, the company realized it could do programming that made money. That's when we became aware that there was a mutiny on hand. All of a sudden this boss denied us access to equipment. He started bringing in older people who were smooth administrative types. They knew they were going to take over shortly. A dress code

was laid down, some people got their notices, and others resigned. The shit started to hit the fan.

Since I was in charge of the station's tapes, I started destroying the records of tapes we had given out to people. I began destroying certain computer programs that were essential for the station. Then I realized we ourselves wouldn't have access to the programs that we had made, so I started replacing the master tapes with lower quality dubs.

The company was scared shitless about me quitting. They needed me because I was the only one who knew how to use the master control equipment. When I finally did give my notice, it shocked them. I left them high and dry but that wasn't enough for me. I wanted to hurt them really bad.

On the night of the Fourth of July, a friend of ours who still worked at the station opened up the entire building for us. Once again, we had access to everything. Right away I knew this would be my last chance to do anything. Then it started to hit me that the company didn't deserve even dubs of the programs we made. So I made my way to where the taped programming was kept and proceeded to bulk erase the station's entire performance showcase library. Everything I felt they didn't deserve to have, I erased. After I was done, the station had not a shred of decent programming left. I felt very satisfied.

A smooth and harmonious relationship between the programming and engineering departments is important in matters dealing with the broadcast of a station's programs and local productions.
—Broadcast and Cable Management,
Norman Marcus[3]

19 MAY I TAKE YOUR ORDER?

Restaurant

The foodservice industry is labor intensive, having on its payroll more people than any other industry in this nation.
— Quantity Food Production Planning and Management, John B. Knight and Lendal H. Kotschevar [1]

Percentage of fast-food restaurant workers who admit to doing "slow, sloppy work" on purpose: 22
— Harper's Index [2]

There's no such thing as a free lunch.
— Milton Friedman

Striking waiters in France practiced sabotage by publishing the truth about the conditions in restaurant kitchens.
— New York Call, June 29, 1913 [3]

By the time a business owner figures out someone is stealing, the company may not have any money left.
— Daniel Jones, President of D.Y. Jones & Associates [4]

Companies may not be able to control employees; in fact, the opposite may be the case.
— "Losing Dough in Bakeries," Security Management Magazine [5]

BUS BOY • CHUCK

I worked at a seafood restaurant in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where we had to wear ridiculous outfits. They were these big, blue polyester sailor suits that had big, white bell-bottom pants and a French sailor hat that had a little red fuzzball on top. All the little old ladies who ate there thought we were cute. It was horrible: the suit made us sweat and we felt completely embarrassed.

I worked there with a lot of my friends and we were all bus boys. We were on the low end of the totem pole. The waitresses were cheesing us for the tips. We were supposed to get a certain percentage but we rarely got anything. The guy that ran the place had a horrible temper which he took out on us, so, needless to say, we had a lot of animosity towards the place.

The restaurant was famous for its desserts. The little old ladies liked to eat these massive napoleons and big cheesecakes. We had this game called "Search and Destroy." When the waitresses weren't looking or were turned away from the counter, we would run back into the kitchen, grab as many of these desserts as possible, take them back to the dishwashing area, and totally dig into them with our hands, filling our mouths and eating them as fast as we could. Then we'd throw the dish in the dishwasher to destroy the evidence.

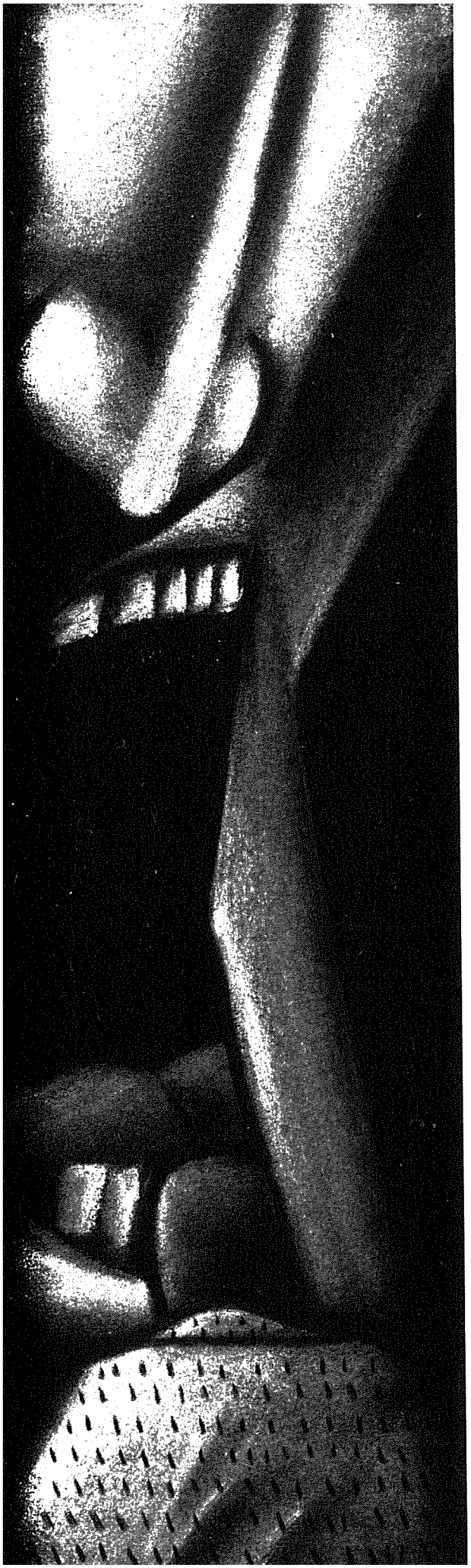
I worked there for four months wearing that little hat. I used to take it off and hide it, but then the owner would ask me, "Where's your uniform?" I'd pull out the hat and put it back on. One time the owner wanted us to work on New Year's Eve and we were all at someone's house, saying how we were tired of it. We sat there burning our little hats and just being totally disgusted with the job. We all decided to quit at the same time, that same day, on New Year's Eve. We left him completely short-handed. That was the best thing, sticking it to that guy on one of the busiest days of the year. We had a permanent workers' strike!

PIZZA MAKER • DARRIN

I was in high school and the only job I could get was at Happy Joe's Pizza Parlor. It was really miserable. I had to work the big machine that rolled the dough, and of course, the dough would always get tangled in the machine, forcing it to a stop. Every time it fucked up, my asshole boss would scream at me. He was always screaming at me but he never quite got around to firing me because I did my job as best I could, even though the pizzas were bad and always fell apart.

I started to realize that I always worked the same shift as this girl who was constantly harassed by the boss. He always hit on her and she always turned him down. Then he started grabbing her, and I would be dealing with the dough, saying to myself, "Oh no...."

One night he did something completely outrageous to this girl like pinching her ass and I started yelling at him. Of course I was fired immediately. I finished my work for the night and left without fucking anything up, but before I came in the next day to pick up my paycheck, I made a copy of my key to the back door.



About a month later, me and a friend who also worked there started going in at night and stealing money. We knew where the boss put the cash, how to get into the safe, and on which days there would be the most money. We never took all of the money because we didn't want anybody to figure out what we were doing. We paced the hits apart so the boss wouldn't get suspicious and change the locks or the safe. Nobody ever caught on. There were never any reports in the newspapers or anything like that. After a while we got tired of being cautious and started taking all of the money. This went on for months.

It really hadn't been our intention, but it worked out that when all of the money started disappearing, the boss had no choice but to tell the owners about the problem. The regular bank deposits were always short money and because the boss was the last one to touch the money, the owners were suspicious of him. He got fired a couple of weeks later. The best part of it was that the owners charged him with embezzlement. Last I heard, the boss had to get a lawyer because the case was going to court. He was up shit creek.

So a fourteen-year-old kid fucked him up because he was an asshole.

WAITER • JOEY

I worked a job with two friends at a small café. The business did well enough, so we had no problem with feeding everybody we knew in the neighborhood. At the time we were all very social and knew lots of people. Often there were more people in the restaurant who weren't paying than were paying. What I found was that most of the people that we were working with were also giving away food. It was a thrill to recognize that other people were doing it. From then on, we just encouraged each other to go to greater heights by stealing more. It created a sensation of pleasure within the employees.

I worked there for a year and a half before I got fired. After I left, more friends were hired and the owner never caught on, so the restaurant served as a free food place for an extended community for close to five years.

I always steal from work because no matter how great the place is, they're always going to fuck you over at some point. It's just a question of when. I'm usually taking stuff way before the boss even starts yelling at me. It's like getting your revenge in advance, knowing that it's going to happen. I felt much better leaving the place knowing that I ripped them off.

DISHWASHER • STEVE

I was twenty-seven years old and had just graduated college. All I could get was a dishwasher job at a country-style French restaurant. I thought it would suit my needs because I was just looking for an easy job.

The boss was kind of a Charles Nelson Reilly meets Captain Kirk type, an incompetent leader who yelled when things were going wrong. He was the worst cook there, of course, and he loved to schmooze and waltz from table to table. Then he'd run back in the

kitchen and start screaming, "Who put sauerkraut soup on the menu? No one's ordering it because they think they're going to fart. I knew that it was a bad idea." I know that everybody there must have thought he was an idiot. Everybody kissed this guy's ass, but the minute he was out the door, they would start opening the expensive bottles of wine and logging them in as if somebody had ordered them. We ripped him off blind. Everybody cared about the restaurant, but everybody also ate well and drank lots of wine.

The boss was the guy I was after, because he'd screwed over a friend of mine really good. She was a hostess and he replaced her but kept her on without telling her that she was replaced, so he could make her life a little shittier. It was so cruel that when I was ready to leave, I planned my revenge.

The restaurant had these little cassettes the boss had made up for the house music system. I think there were about thirty of them, really mundane stuff. The week before I was going to leave, I took five of the tapes over to a friend's house who had a really good cassette deck. I wound ten minutes into the tape, cranked the cassette deck to full volume and recorded a two-second noise burst off the radio; then, another five minutes further into the tape, an even shorter one, and ten more minutes in I recorded a really long gross one where I would rip down the dial. I did this to all five ninety-minute tapes of sleepy music. Then I put a really offensive song on one of the tapes as the ultimate bomb.

Very innocently, I came back the day that I was going to quit and put the tapes back in the pile. After the lunch rush was over, I explained to the boss that I couldn't work for him anymore. I walked out and never came back. For the next few months, sure enough, the customers would be sitting there in this quiet French restaurant, when all of a sudden blasts of noise would erupt and make them drop their forks.

This continued to happen over the months. They thought something was wrong with the sound system or that a CBer came by and cued his mike. When they finally figured it out, it was great because they didn't know how many tapes were ruined. They certainly couldn't afford to pay anyone to listen to all of the tapes, so they had to get rid of all of them.

I think that the rest of my life has been anti-climactic since then. It was a shining moment.

KITCHEN MANAGER • WEZ

I'd been working at a café called Pacific Desserts off and on for two years when the kitchen manager quit. I had seniority and was moved into the position, but neither the title nor the pay was offered to me, just the work.

High school kids waited tables at night there and often came in in the morning before the place was open for free coffee. I had been making myself breakfast before the manager got there and I decided to expand. For the last three months of school, I made omelettes and fried potatoes using the restaurant's eggs, cheese, milk, vegetables, potatoes, spices, etc., for what became the morning coffee club, at $1 per plate. Soon they started to bring their friends and one of them even made a plaque in his pottery class

Who was swiping ice cream at the Fanny Farmer Candy Shop in New Rochelle, N.Y., Mall? Someone from the company's main office in Cleveland dispatched two people to the scene to find out. They zeroed in on the woman behind the counter, Mimi Sunn, sixty-six.

Have you been giving away ice cream? they asked. Yes, Sunn said. About thirty or forty cones in sixteen years — to the guards who escorted her to the night depository.

The police were called. They handcuffed Sunn and took her to the station. Some of the clerks, who'd come to associate Sunn with Fanny Farmer, asked, "Mimi, what are you doing down here?" Sunn was in tears. The grandmother of two had been working in the store mainly for relief from caring for an ill daughter. Now she was charged with petty larceny. The "property stolen" line on the complaint sheet read: "Ice cream cones — $38."

A few people at the station were outraged. Others laughed in scorn at the officers. Calls went back and forth between the Lieutenant in charge and the sweets company, which dropped the charges — as well as Mimi Sunn from its employment rolls.

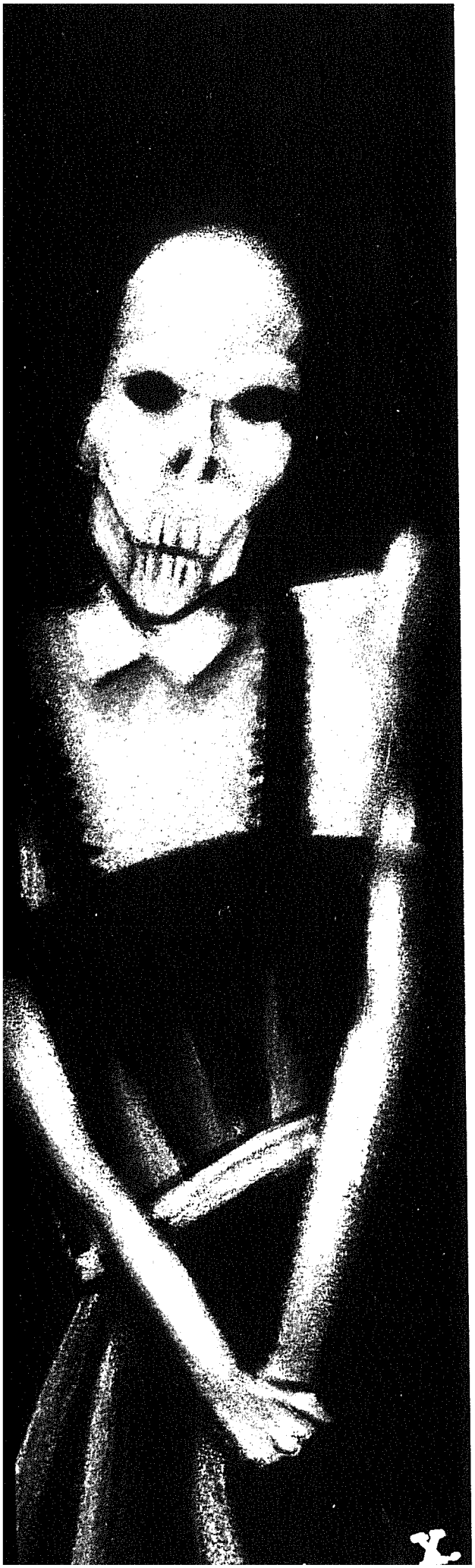
— "Ice Cream Crime," Reader's Digest [6]

The cooks of a great Parisian cafe, having some unsettled grievances with their employers, remained the whole day at their places before the red hot stoves — but in the rush hours when clients were swarming the dining rooms, nothing was found in the pots but stones that had been boiling for hours, together with the restaurant clock.

— Sabotage, Emile Pouget, 1912 [7]

After all, to make a beautiful omelet, you have to break an egg.

— Spanish proverb



that read "Wez's Underground Café." I usually made about $8 extra per day, which would about equal a raise. I was also spending an hour of the company's time for my own profit.

WAITRESS • CAROL

I've worked in the restaurant business my whole life. I've done all kinds of work: making sandwiches, cashiering, washing dishes and busing tables.

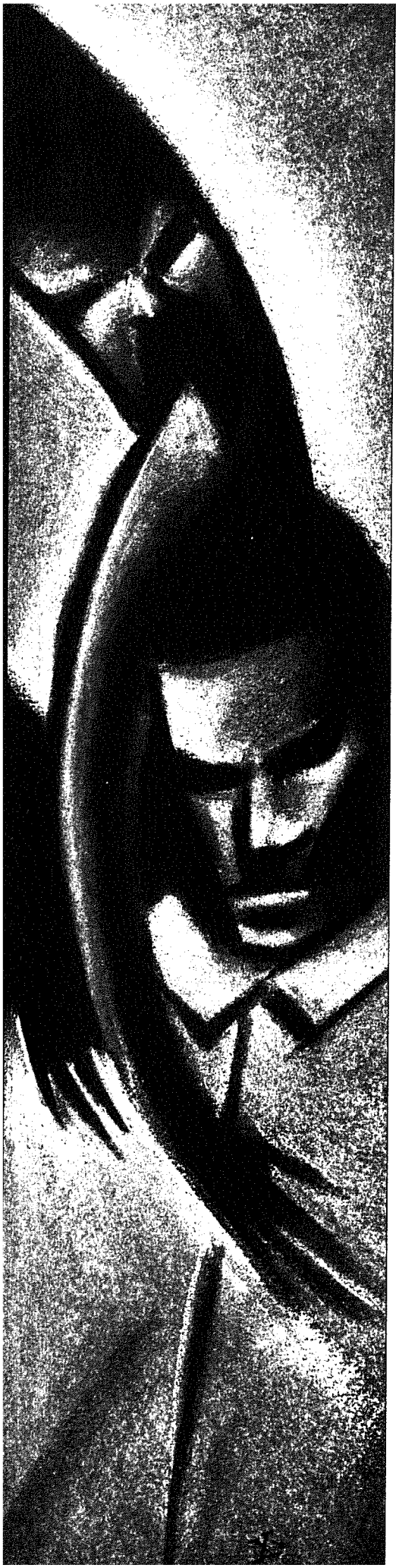
With restaurants, the way it works is managers want you to give 100 percent to the customer. In other words, they want you to be sweet as possible, no matter if the customer is grouchy or if you've had a bad day.

At one job I had, we were only making minimum wage. Our boss had promised us all raises but we didn't get them. This went on for a couple of months so three of us girls got together. There were these salads that were supposed to be kept refrigerated, but we purposely left them out for a couple of hours. Sure enough, about ten customers got food poisoning. They didn't get that sick. You get cramps, a stomach ache, and the runs for about four hours, but it wasn't bad enough to get them hospitalized or anything.

There was a lawsuit against the company. We lost our jobs because the guy had to finally close his business, just for that one incident. If the food's bad and people get sick, any restaurant will get a bad reputation. It didn't bother us that much that we did it; in fact, we were happy we did some damage.

I don't think I would do the same thing today. Now I have enough guts to go up to whoever is higher in authority and confront them about the pay. Today if I saw people doing what I did, I would probably try to stop them because it was kind of foolish. I think there are better ways of handling things like that.

20
AT NO EXTRA CHARGE
Shipping and Delivery



BICYCLE MESSENGER • KENNY

Being a bike messenger in Seattle is hellish, but we had it kind of cush. We had to work our butts off, but at least we got paid by the hour.

The company always let us wear shorts, but since we had to wear company T-shirts, we cut off the sleeves. All of a sudden the company decided to clean up its image because they were dealing with big businesses. They started making us wear long pants and shirts made of heavy material, which is insane. Try biking ten miles up hills, up massive hills with heavy packages as fast as you can, in long pants!

All of the messengers agreed there was no way this could continue. We all decided that we wouldn't wash our clothes at all and that we'd wear the same thing every day. We also realized that the intense heat you build up when you bike, mixed with the right food, means you're farting all the time. So we found the right type of food that caused the worst type of explosions, and whenever we were in a big office building, we farted. You can imagine what it was like when one of us was in an elevator with ten business people in suits. Our clothes were stinking, our bodies were stinking and within a month the company had enough complaints to let us wear shorts again.

LIQUOR COMPANY SHIPPING CLERK ROY

There was a time when I was a temp worker, an employee of Kelly Services. It was always amusing when I, obviously male, walked into a new assignment, when they'd called for a "Kelly Girl." I got to see a lot of people cutting slack for themselves in the world of work. As I moved around, one assignment in particular stands out as a hotbed of slacking off.

I did a stint as a shipping clerk at the Old Mr. Boston liquor warehouse. This was during the last six months the company was in Boston, before it moved to Louisville, having been bought out by another company. The previous shipping clerk quit when he found out the company was not going to transfer any of the workers to the new location. Everyone knew their job was ending, and for all the resume help and outplacement services, the bulk of them were going to end up unemployed. This completely destroyed morale in the entire plant. With even the plant manager about to go out on the streets, there was no one who cared to check up on the employees and keep them working hard.

So none of them did. Things were especially bad in shipping, since most of the warehouse employees were long-time alcoholics; I was one myself, encouraged by this job. One of my duties was to help my boss go around the warehouse once a week and pick up all the half empty bottles, and set the cases that had been broken aside so they could be refilled. The worst of the half-open bottles we would pour down the drains. The better stuff came into the office, where we drank it ourselves.

And we certainly had time to drink it. There were three people

in the shipping office — with work for only one and a half, which declined rapidly as operations moved to Louisville. Whenever I was done typing up shipping papers for the day, I turned to reading. We also talked a lot about everything from auto repair to what was wrong with employers.

Meanwhile, in the warehouse, the half-drunk guys continued to knock over full cases of liquor with the forklifts, and more than once the stench of cinnamon schnapps filled the air. Every month we'd take inventory and track the "shrinkage," which should have been called "drinkage."

Things got worse and worse as the date for the final move came closer. Adding machines vanished from the offices all over the plant. Apparently a grand piano and a solid oak conference table did the same. Finally, the guys in the shipping department decided that we might as well arrange for our own severance bonuses as well. On the final day, we were supposed to load all of the remaining stock in a boxcar and send it down to Kentucky. We loaded about 200 cases of mixed liquor onto a panel truck instead, and drove it around town, stopping at the houses of all the workers. When it got back to the plant, the truck was empty.

I still have some of that booze...

OFFICE SUPPLY SHIPPING CLERK NORMAN

The family who ran the business treated their employees like second class citizens. The owners were really sloppy about running their business. They were responsible for most of the mistakes, but blame would always come down on the workers. Once I was blamed for a problem in accounting, but I worked in shipping and receiving. They would yell at me until I explained to them that I had nothing to do with the problem. Then they'd run off to yell at someone else.

Most of the paperwork came through me. I had to put copies of the invoices in slots for the different departments of the company. I purposely put the paperwork in the wrong slots. I knew that when people picked up the papers and found that they had the wrong ones, they would just throw them away; it was a reflection of the general attitude of the employees. At first, I did it discriminately. In time, I got more into doing it. Soon the owners couldn't figure out why no money was coming in when the computers stated that all of the bills were going out. As the confusion grew, the company brought in computer experts. At first they tried to blame a couple of innocent employees, until all of the focus shifted to the computers. They looked at every possible place where information could be getting lost, except the path the paperwork followed from department to department. They'd ask the accounting department why certain clients weren't getting billed. The accounting department would claim they didn't get the invoices. They asked me, and I claimed I put every piece of paperwork I got in the right slot. None of the workers would admit they had thrown away paperwork because they wanted to cover for the other employees. The buck would keep on

A wave of mergers and closings has lowered employee morale, which often leads to increases in shrinkage figures. Says Walter J. Salmon, professor of retailing at the Harvard Business School: "If people think they're likely to be fired, they may not be enormously protective of their company's assets."

— "Some Customers Are Always Wrong," New York Times Magazine [1]

Boredom: The desire for desires.

— Leo Tolstoy

A slowdown by 350 unionized truck drivers has "severely" disrupted distribution of the New York Times along the Northeast corridor and in some suburbs outside New York City, the newspaper has announced.

The slowdown has resulted in about 70,000 copies of the Times arriving up to three hours late at wholesale distribution points in cities from Washington, D.C., to Boston and in New Jersey and on Long Island, the Times said.

Sale losses have been about 30,000 copies and the slowdown has cost the company "hundreds of thousands of dollars" in distribution overtime, said a spokesman.

In a front-page box explaining the situation to its readers, the Times said it "is unable to say how long the disruptions [from the slowdown] may continue."

Jerry Cronin, president of the drivers' union, denied any job action was taking place and said the drivers were "living by the letter of the contract they negotiated in the past."

— Editor & Publisher Magazine [2]

Paperwork is so vulnerable to sabotage that it is almost impossible to prevent. Most importantly, most of a company's paperwork is accessible to the lowest employee. Wreaking havoc with the paperwork is not the privilege of executives alone. ... Theft of materials, tools, and supplies is so common that many people do not even think of it as a method of doing damage to the company. In fact, most people who rip off the boss do it for personal gain. Whatever the motive, the company loses.

— Fighting Back on the Job, Victor Santoro [3]

getting passed but no answers could be found.

The company eventually ended up going out of business because the only thing they did was chase a problem around. I think they would have gone out of business on their own, but I helped them do it a little sooner. This gave the employees an excuse to get a new job — which everyone did — but it made most of the employees aware of how fucked-up bosses could be.

RECYCLING CENTER TRUCK DRIVER JOE

Fred Harper testified he stole $1 million in parts from General Motors in eighteen years as a truck driver, most from Pontiac Motor plants where the company he drove for was making pick-ups.
— Automotive Industries Magazine[4]

The recycling center that I work for has a board of directors that basically lives on another planet. It's funny; they consider themselves very progressive — some of them would even describe themselves as radicals. But they're not radical when it comes to dealing with workers fairly. Most of them don't think about the fact that we're running a recycling center and they don't think about the workers. Yet they're very happy deciding what to do with the money that we make.

Some of us were pretty disgusted about this and with the fact that the board decides where the money goes. We wanted a little more control over the money, so we did something to make sure that the money really went to people who need it.

I drive a truck for the center, making pickups from different apartment buildings and selling the full bags of aluminum to Reynolds. There's always homeless people out there at Reynolds, selling the cans they've collected on the streets. A few times, when me and another fellow were feeling particularly venomous towards the board, we played Santa Claus and handed out some bags. Each bag was probably worth about $15. We wouldn't say anything, just give the bags out. They'd be surprised. Sometimes we'd put bags around the yard at night for some of them to find.

I don't think the board would take too kindly to this, particularly since they're such a "moral" organization. But there's no way they could ever find out.

CHRISTMAS ORNAMENT SHIPPING CLERK EMMETT

At one time, the Bradley Novelty Company was the second largest maker of Christmas ornaments in the United States. They were very proud of it. They were in South Boston, which meant forty-nine percent of the people were Italian Catholic, forty-nine percent were Irish Catholic, and two percent were me and four black women. At lunchtime, an Italian matriarch would bring lunch for all the Italians, and an Irish matriarch would bring it for the Irish. The rest of us would just sit there. The black women and I wondered why there wasn't any child care, why we were only making $1.90 an hour and why everyone kissed ass to the factory. The Italian foreman offered me Italian girls from the assembly

line if I would do things for him. I really hated the place.

We were loading train cars with Christmas ornaments and there was this artificial snow stuff that was everywhere and it started caking in my lungs. I went to the supposed first-aid office to complain and it was locked with nobody there, as usual. I asked for a day off to go to the general hospital and they said no. "We've got to get these boxes out so people can celebrate Christmas; you wouldn't want to ruin their Christmas!"

I quickly got disillusioned with the place and started destroying all the Christmas ornaments I could get my hands on. I threw cases and cases of them against the brick walls. I just couldn't stop myself once I heard the sound of those delicate ornaments smashing into thousands of red pieces, green pieces, and pieces with snowflakes on them. When I reached my self-imposed quota, I packed the worthless ornaments up and sent them out to the hundreds of soon-to-be-irate customers. Since I was the last person to load them onto the trains, no one would find out til it got to its destination — and I knew I'd be long gone.

The most important marketer in our company is the man or woman on the loading dock who decides not to drop the damned box into the back of the truck.
— Anonymous, Executive of a high-tech company

AIR FREIGHT TECHNICIAN • DIETER

We were called ground hammers. We'd guide airplanes in, park them, hook them up with the ground units, load them up with freight, then take them back out.

The work was insanely boring, but it was hard because everything was on a schedule. Each plane had to get to another state by a certain time and there's only a certain amount of time allotted for each one. Everyone who worked there had to bust their ass.

At times I enjoyed it because I worked with a lot of cool people. None of us liked the bosses because they were always giving us shit. We'd be doing our work and talking but they were constantly telling us to shut up and just work. They always expected optimum performance from us. We were always complaining about that because we could talk and work at the same time.

There was one asshole boss who would always come around to check on us. This guy was a total prick and constantly on our backs. We'd be working our asses off, drenched in sweat and he'd come over and yell at us, "Alright, put your shirts on and shut up. I'm tired of this shit!" He'd be throwing his clipboard around and telling us to speed up for no reason. Whenever he started acting like that, everyone thought, fuck it and slowed way down. There wasn't much he could do about it. It's not like he could fire everyone. Even the quiet people who always said they liked the job did it.

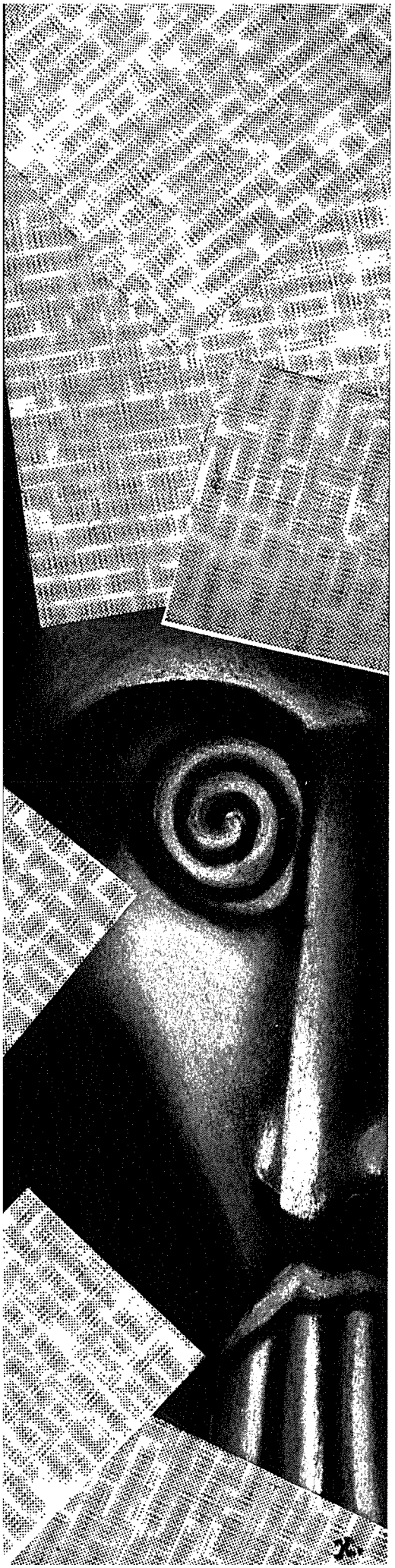
This boss really had it in for us. One of the guys I worked with got fired for some bullshit and another got suspended. I thought I was going to be next. So on a really busy night, I just quit. I waited until I saw the plane that I was supposed to guide in touch ground, and as soon as it did, I took off. The plane sat out on the taxiway waiting to be brought in. They were pretty pissed.

I think if we didn't do anything we'd have gone fuckin' nuts there. It was work, work, work and we were expected to leave our

My father taught me to work; he did not teach me to love it.
— Abraham Lincoln

It is easier to admire hard work if you don't do it.
— Henry S. Haskins

First, all people need and want discipline. The "need" is often more apparent than the "want," but they both exist. Our failure to use discipline gives rise to employees believing that their conduct is acceptable.
— Supervisory Handbook, Bill Johns [5]



personalities aside. What we did made us feel like we weren't owned.

MESSENGER • SAMMY

I delivered and picked up documents for the shipping industry. I had the hardest route, which included all the consulates. Documents for the shipping industry go from one place to another to another, so I always had to keep track of where they were at any one time. Some would be really strict about giving me documents unless I had some kind of proof that I was to pick them up. I couldn't walk in and get it. After I got to know the people on my route, they told me that I was the first person to last more than a month.

The company was really strict about time. The owners would pop in, yell at everybody, and leave. They had ex-messengers that they had set up to run things. I really hated the place — everybody hated it. The messengers were lowest on the totem pole in that company, and the company was the lowest in the hierarchy of messenger companies in the city. Nobody liked anybody. I don't even think the messengers liked each other.

One of the ex-messengers in charge stole my wallet from work, which shows you what management/employee relations were like. It was pretty obvious that no one made any money there, and the next day he took his girlfriend out to lunch at a really nice restaurant and showed up with a new pair of shoes. Everybody knew that he did it, but nobody would do anything about it. There was no attempt at an investigation or anything.

I decided to quit, and I said, "I'm going to fuck these people!"

I started dropping off documents and not keeping any records of what I was delivering. When anything had to be picked up, there'd be no record for it, nothing at all. I started leaving things at the consulates. If a customer said, "The ship's got to leave port. Where's the visa?" I'd say, "They said it would be delayed a couple of days, so next week." Of course I knew I was going to quit and I wasn't going to be there, and they wouldn't have a messenger to replace me. I did it to fifteen consulates representing about twenty shipping lines.

I believe the clerks at the shipping lines, who were responsible for getting the documents to the ships, started calling the company, saying "Where's my visa?" No one at my company could produce any paperwork and they couldn't find me. It was a major disaster, and it's a sure bet the company started losing accounts. That's all the consulates could do: not give them any more business.

I had a friend who was working there at the time. When I talked to him a couple of weeks later, he said the whole place was dying. I went by the place six months after that, and it wasn't there anymore. I don't know if it was because of me or not, since other people were in the same position. But it's safe to say that I did some serious damage, and I think I had something to do with them going out of business.

WAREHOUSE WORKER • AARON

I was the only white guy working for this furniture outlet store in Washington, D.C. I started out as just a grunt, but by the time I left I was the assistant manager. I just sort of fell into it because the owner and his white management weren't going to promote anybody that was black.

The owner would say "nigger" or "stupid nigger" when he thought he was alone with his white buddies. I also heard him say nasty things about me behind my back, but it was still really obvious that white people were the only ones getting the better jobs in the company.

There was one person who had worked there about three years longer than I had. He had the ability to do any of the jobs I did and was relatively loyal to the company. The only way I could explain why they didn't make him assistant manager was that he was black. Because I was pretty good friends with him, my promotion didn't create tension between us but it did create dissatisfaction all the way around.

Not too long after I started working there, I learned that the company's inventory was a joke and I figured out a variety of ways to steal from them. One day, the guy who should have gotten my position was talking about his money problems and I told him I knew a way to solve them. From then on, we worked together running this scam where we sold furniture for cash.

Customers would buy things at the store, then pick them up at the warehouse where we worked. We actually solicited among friends and acquaintances. If someone needed some furniture, they'd pull up to the warehouse like regular customers, we'd put what they wanted in their car and collect the cash later. We more or less had an understanding of what was going to be taken so nobody would get too greedy and get caught. In two years of doing it, the owner never caught on and we made at least $25,000 each in cash.

I didn't think of myself as Robin Hood helping his black brother. I just wanted to give him something because we were pretty good friends and it made me a lot more comfortable working there knowing that we'd shared the money.

The front defense line against thievery is its supervisors.

— Supervision Magazine [6]

Perhaps the most we can say is that theft by employees is a significant and pervasive part of the work experience with between one-half and one-quarter of the typical work force involved in taking company money or property sometime during their employment.

— Theft by Employees, Richard C. Hollinger and John P. Clark [7]

F.A.O. Schwartz, the 124-year old complement to Santa's workshop, has dismissed a mailroom employee for sending toys to himself, through various addresses, rather than to the children they were intended for.

The store said it could not determine just how many Petster Puppies, Lazer Tag games, microchip-controlled Yakity Yaks and Inhumanoids (this year's big sellers) were not sent to the correct addresses, but the company's director of stores, John G. Floor, said the "extent doesn't seem major." ... He said the case amounted to "more than just petty theft."

The man apparently took wrapped gifts, sent them to addresses of his own choosing, and then turned in altered freight slips so the store would not know that the packages had been sent improperly.

— New York Times [8]

21 PRIME INTEREST IN DOLLARS

Finance

It is difficult to estimate current levels of employee sabotage. Corporate personnel and security managers are often reluctant to discuss or to publicize acts of sabotage for fear customers will lose confidence in their firm's products or services. As one security expert remarked, publicized incidents represent only "the tip of the iceberg."

— Personnel Magazine [1]

You get more from the leader.

— Bank of America slogan

After the installation or tightening up of security procedures, most petty thieves will change their ways. They are, for the most part, cowards. After all, if they weren't, they would be out robbing banks.

— Supervisor's Factomatic [2]

The FBI estimates that white collar crime cost U.S. employers $40 billion last year. And nearly 25 percent of all white collar crime is linked to the banking and financial services industries.

— Bankers Monthly [3]

Kay Lemon, a Lincoln, Nebraska, bookkeeper, stole over $400,000 from a company where she had worked for eight years. A churchgoing grandmother, Lemon was in charge of both accounts payable and accounts receivable. Faced with personal financial pressures, she started writing checks to herself and disguised the disbursement by "piggybacking" it on a supplier's invoice. If her company owed an electrical distributor $40,000, she would write a $10,000 check to herself and enter a $50,000 disbursement in the books. When the statements came back from the bank, Lemon was there to intercept the checks and reconcile the accounts.

— Management Review Magazine [4]

Coin packager Patricia Ann Lambert admitted stealing five to ten Susan B. Anthony dollars nearly every day for four months in 1980 from the mint's South San Francisco annex, according to a federal affidavit.

"Lambert would put the coins in white rubber gloves, which she wore at work, then stuff these gloves in her bra and between her legs so that the coins would not be detected by the metal detector," according to the affidavit by a Secret Service agent who investigated the case.

— S.F. Chronicle/ Examiner [5]

BANK TELLER • JASON

I was sick of starving so I needed a job. I walked into the California Employment Development Department and this was posted on the wall: "Be a bank teller. We'll train you." I didn't have any experience at all. I just went in and took an aptitude and math test and aced them both. Then I went to a week of teller school that was run by Bank of America. They taught me how to count money, handle irate people, and what to do if someone pulled a gun on me.

The job was okay. It was just a job but I was getting paid more money than I had ever been paid before. I ended up working there for a little more than a year. There wasn't that much job pressure at first, but then there was this weird reorganization. I started out working part time, but then they had me doing other work and paid me at a lower rate for these extra hours. I was working full time but classified as part time so I wound up making less but working more. I got kind of tired of working full time but I was told that if I wanted to keep my job I would have to keep working those hours — they refused to hire me full time.

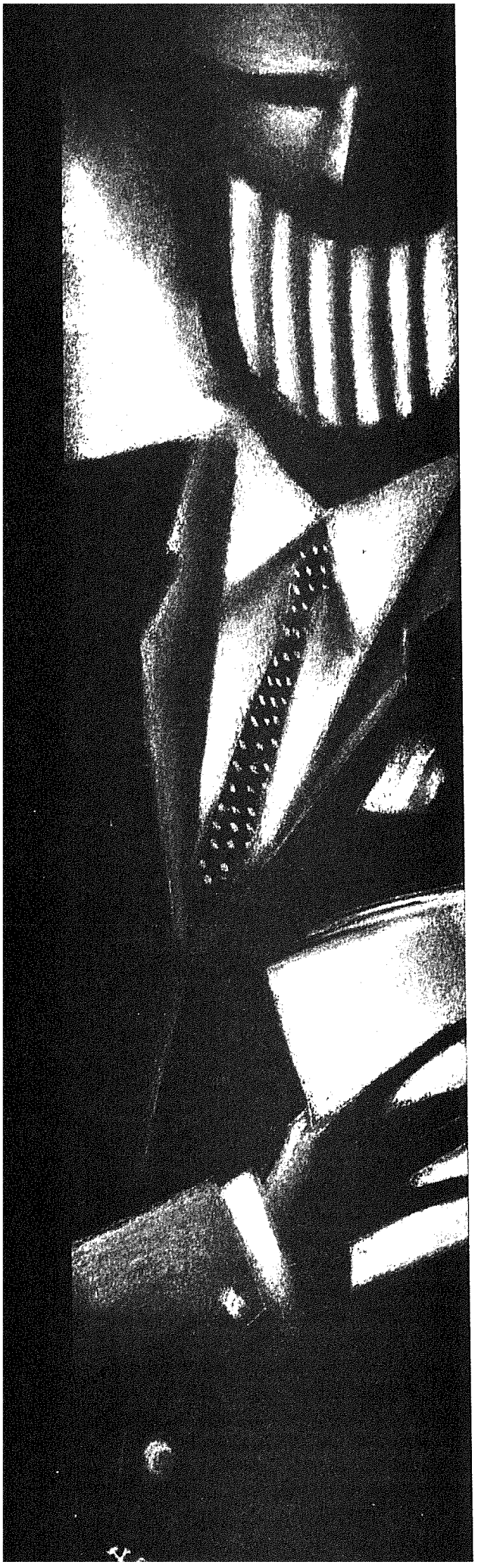
This is when I put the word out to my friends that I would cash any check, just come on down. So over the course of a couple of days, there was a stream of people who had forged checks, or had scammed them somehow and I cashed them. The next day was the busiest day of the year for that particular branch: a Friday, the first of October, payday for welfare, Social Security, San Francisco General, MUNI, the City, and private business. The line was out the door. I just didn't show up. My soon-to-be-wife, who also worked there with me, didn't show up either. We were the two best tellers at the bank and we were also the only ones who spoke English as our first language. It just wrecked that branch. I think that did more damage than all of the bad checks that I'd cashed. I never went back. They tried to call but we didn't answer the phone for a week.

Eventually all those checks came back as bad. I knew that if you steal from a bank from the inside, you'll never be prosecuted because it hurts the bank's reputation. So I didn't think twice about doing what I did. I did it to get even, which I don't think really happened, but it did make me feel better.

STOCK BROKER • P.J.K.

I worked for Smith Barney for two years. I got my job totally by accident. Headhunters love me. They see dollar signs when they read my resume. I don't make much effort to look the corporate part, since I have college up my ass and will do anything from the lowliest of word processing (I type 100 wpm and am literate in nine computer languages) to the highest level of analytical-type work Wall Street has to offer. I got into Wall Street because I'm a hustler. Six years ago I saw all the money those people were stealing, and I thought, "I want a slice."

When I was hired at Smith Barney, my new boss almost wouldn't let me leave — they wanted me to show up and start working the



next day. Of course, this is often a sign that the job has to be filled immediately because the company's a mess, but he wanted me to start the next day because he was a big-shot junk bond analyst and had no helper. He told me I was overqualified but that he'd consider himself fortunate to have me for a little while, doing analytical work at the low salary of $21,000 per year, less than half of what I was making at my previous job. Turns out that this guy is a really nice person and I respect him and like him a lot, but the rest of the shit I saw at that company was mind-bending.

Everything there is done shoddily. I've seen traders lose millions for the firm in minutes because they were hungover and mad at their bosses. You just pick up a phone on the trading floor and start hitting the keys. The touchtone phones are actually computer links to do block trades. One day I picked up some phones, pressed a bunch of buttons and then ran to a Telerate screen to watch the market plunge. I'll never know, but I may have caused a million shares of IBM to be sold that second. This became a big game and I enjoyed scrambling things in the trading department and then running to a screen to see the market fluctuate. It was funny because I'd ask traders if I could use their phones for a second, then get the computer on the line to just pound my fist on the keys.

Once this big, hot-shot analyst — these guys make millions, mind you — wrote this really uncool memo about how his secretaries had all been cocaine addicts and that's why he'd had to fire 'em, and personnel should get off his back for using up so many secretaries. I had six people photocopy this memo and send it around anonymously to hundreds of people inside and outside the firm, all at the company's expense. I sent "news releases" to Ray Brady, the CBS news correspondent, via rush messenger. This was before the big drug-testing shit and it must've really caused a stir. I sent copies to all his previous secretaries and all these other people, and a year later he left. This guy was a sadistic, arrogant fuck, and I sent this memo around to show everybody how he'd screwed himself through his indiscretion. After the way I'd seen him talk to female subordinates, I decided it had to be done. It was scary, but fun.

22 AT YOUR SERVICE

Community Assistance

PROBATION OFFICER • SAXON

As a kid, I was raised on probation, in foster care, and in the Department of Human Services, so I know what it's like to get through it all. When I turned eighteen, I couldn't read or write or do math. My probation officer asked me, "So what the hell can you do?" I said, "I can commit crimes." He then suggested that I become a probation officer because I'd be able to identify with the people I worked with. It sounded like a good idea so I eventually became an officer in a large East Coast city.

I try to think of the community's best interest, not the system's. The system just wants to perpetuate itself. If we were really good probation officers, no one would be on probation and there would be no crime! But then we'd all be out of jobs, and that's why I think the system perpetuates itself.

I'm told to try to keep as many people as possible out of jail, no matter how harmful they are to the community, which is preposterous. A first offender could get time; it all depends on what side of the bed the judge got up on in the morning. You can really work with a person and see them change, just to have the judge go and undermine you. All that work is down the drain because the judge wants to put the person away. I don't find it fair. An officer who works with clients every day and sees them regularly over a period of months should make the decision, not a judge.

I think anyone's lucky if they get me. When I'm working with my clients I try to put myself in their place. I know that I would want to be treated fairly and not put away. If I feel my clients have committed victimless crimes, or the judge is out to screw them, I'll do things in their best interest. I appoint myself as the judge of their case.

When one of these clients is arrested and brought to court, I'll hide their record so no one will ever find it. The judge has no verification so the charges are dropped and the client is off the hook. If a judge orders one of the clients to be drug-tested, it's up to me to make sure it gets done. I'll give the client advance warning so they can pass the test and get the judge off their back. When a client's on probation, they're supposed to have a minimal amount of supervision. For some people, that's five years or five weeks. All that can be done off the record, out of the judge's sight, enabling me to discharge a lot of people from probation before their time is up.

Unfortunately, I don't see any other officers doing what I do. I think that's because they're jaded and lazy. To them it's just a job and they never knew what it's like to come from the bottom.

The probation officer's mission "to protect the community by rehabilitating the offender" is less than precise and provides a dual, sometimes conflicting objective. The focus is the good of the community and the well-being of the client, and within broad parameters established by the court, the officer must balance these interests. How the officer handles this balancing act is left largely to his good judgment in keeping with how he defines his role.

— Federal Probation Magazine [1]

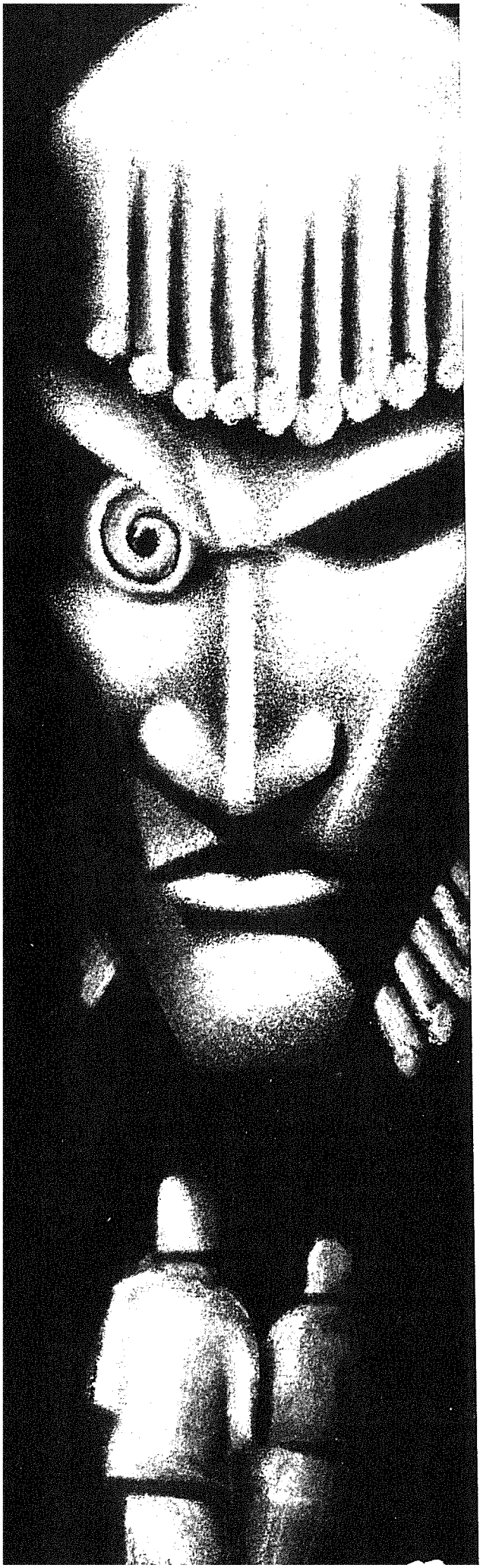
A study by Shirley D. McCune of the job-interest patterns of social work students as compared with students in law, education, and business administration shows them as having a tendency to "avoid systematic-methodical methods for processing information and making decisions, evidencing a dislike for forceful exertion of leadership, and a dislike for the use of external controls to guide the behavior of others."

— Supervision in Social Work, Alfred Kadushin [2]

GROUP HOME COUNSELOR • JESSE

When I was in college, I worked in a lot of group homes for the mentally disabled. These places become mini-institutions themselves, because the behavior programs are very repressive. It was very punitive and I hated that. I hated my boss and what the agency was doing to the clients.

In one job I had a good friend who felt the same way. We had



to work the overnight-awake shift and had this uptight, asshole supervisor who thought he knew everything. He didn't trust anybody, including the staff. He didn't think anyone knew how to do these behavioral programs, or how to work with the clients as well as he did. He and I always bantered back and forth where it was implied that he was trying to get me on something or I was trying to get him on something.

Of course, when he was gone we goofed off. We were supposed to stay up all night, but by the time we got in, the clients had been heavily sedated and were asleep anyway. We had to do these meaningless chores — the household laundry, housecleaning, and writing behavior programs. After we did all of our work we would go to sleep, and believe me, it wasn't like anybody's life was in danger.

One night the supervisor left instructions for us to write up a behavior program for cleaning the refrigerator. Basically you break it down into steps so you can teach a client how, through what's called "conditioning," to follow it. But the process was really intended for staff people, so they would know how to clean out a refrigerator step by step. I was terribly fucking pissed, so we sat down for three hours and wrote a program which had 243 steps to it. I submitted it to the supervisor and he almost had a fucking attack. He said, "Well, I guess you know how to write these up, but it isn't exactly what I was looking for."

When I worked during the day, we used to do stuff like take the van. This guy knew how to change the odometer, so we'd say we were going on a local field trip with the clients and then later turn back the mileage. We would write in the log, "We went to the park and flew kites today and the clients had fun and it was a swell, special day," but we'd really gone to Connecticut.

We saw the clients as adults. When we went out we were supposed to watch and restrict them, but we'd just say, "Go ahead, have fun!" and they were cool, they never got in any trouble. I told my boss he didn't know how independent these people could be if they didn't have to do all the stupid programs. For that reason, I was considered threatening. I had all these really great ideas I wanted to put into the program because I really cared about the people I worked with. Ultimately, I got out of that kind of work, because I couldn't deal with it.

YOUTH SHELTER COUNSELOR • HILARY

Hospitality House, a social service organization in San Francisco, hired me to be a shelter counselor for their youth program as a VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) volunteer. My salary was $400 a month. The program had up to fourteen kids at one time, boys and girls, from thirteen to eighteen. It was a semi-long term program; they could stay for up to two months. The kids in the program were supposedly gearing themselves towards independent living: finding a job and learning how to live on their own. I was the monitor for the housing program while they were getting jobs or job counseling or education.

I worked there for just a year. During that time, I had very little say in anything. I came from a homeless youth background myself,

and while working there I realized why I hadn't ever used services to help myself: most of the kids were treated as statistics. It's federal, state and county funded; there's a lot of competition for those grants. People's salaries, as well as development of the program, come from these grants.

After a year, the VISTA program is over and they have the option of hiring you at a regular salary for the same position. They went ahead and hired me as full-time staff. I worked the same hours, but my salary increased by 100 percent — to $800 a month. I had more say in things because I was a real staffperson. I started hooking into the other workers and the kids more, and started realizing that the kids weren't really learning "independent living" techniques. They weren't learning how to deal with landlords or how to live in a group situation. Certainly none of these kids would earn enough to get a studio apartment in San Francisco or Oakland. So I decided to take it upon myself to have group discussions about things I thought kids should know about living on the streets. The discussions were run by the kids but I facilitated. We talked about everything from how to avoid pimps to how to travel cheaply and safely to how to live in a group. This became very threatening to the hierarchy.

Excellent organizations also prize autonomy and entrepreneurship among their employees. They allow workers to try new ideas and programs. They listen carefully to and are supportive of innovative ideas. Excellent organizations often are short on discipline and long on imagination and creativity. Managers in these organizations support the workers' search for new and better ways to serve clients. The workers may spend less time than their counterparts in more traditional organizations carrying out orders or following policy manuals or procedural guides.
— New Management in Human Services, Paul R. Keys and Leon H. Ginsberg, eds. [3]

At the same time, I was starting to have more conflicts with the director over other issues, like how much input counselors were allowed to have at the meetings. The position of the counselors was that we spent more time with the kids than anyone else and knew everything about them. In staff meetings, we'd provide input but try to maintain confidentiality, like hinting about what they might need. It became apparent to the hierarchy that we were pulling more weight because we could really represent the kids. They didn't like this, especially the director, because it gave the kids power over the direction the program took. I took it a step further and said we should set up an independent living program the kids ran themselves. They pay the rent, they pay the bills, and you still have staff there involved with the whole program. It made everyone upset except the other workers, who thought it was a great idea. So I implemented meetings on the side, where we staff would go to restaurants to discuss it.

What I didn't realize at the time was that I was trying to collectivize the program and make the position of executive director obsolete. When the program got a grant, she'd always tell us where the money was going — and there was inevitably a portion for her. At the meetings I would say, "That's ridiculous. I don't need another raise. This money should go to this other program." It was gaining momentum; the kids were beginning to get involved and were very supportive of the changes that were happening. The director started to feel threatened by me, personally as well as politically, and decided that the shelter counselors could no longer attend staff meetings because our input — mine in particular — was damaging to the group process. She issued me a warning, which basically said I was disruptive to the group process. There was only one way I could fight it legally, and that was through paperwork. It took three months of going back and forth; it was this four-step process. We got to an impasse and it was sent to the executive director of all Hospitality House programs. He

Sabotage consists of the deliberate infliction of harm or damage to the employer's business with intent to cause him loss, and is therefore misconduct in the nature of disloyalty.
— Penalties for Misconduct on the Job, Alfred Avins [4]

sided with her and backed up the warning against me. I had been there for a year and a half.

The director called me into her office and said I was fired. She said I could stay if I said I was sorry, would never disrupt the group again and did everything her way. I said I was concerned for the program and that if the place wasn't open to different opinions, I couldn't stay.

I left that day. I came back four or five days later for my paycheck and was told by my friends who worked upstairs that if I went downstairs, they would have to call the police. I went downstairs. The six or seven kids down there asked why I hadn't been around, and I said, "Didn't you hear I was fired?" They said no and got upset. I said it wasn't a big thing and they could come visit me anytime, but they said, "This isn't the end." I left. Fifteen minutes later the kids went into the executive director's office and said "Why didn't you tell us that you fired Hilary, and why did you fire her?" She said, "It's none of your business," and they said, "Yes it is." They became very defiant with her, in the spirit of the process we'd been developing, where they are the program and have the right to decide some things. She said,"You'll have to come back later," hoping they'd go off and not come back. They went to this other program where kids hang out during the day and told the thirty to forty kids there, most of whom had been at the program, what happened. They came back — in full force — and demanded an explanation from her. They demanded that I get my job back. She refused. The next day they went upstairs to the art department and used the supplies to make picket signs. They held a picket line in my defense for a few hours to bring me back and in support of kids having the right to develop the program. I didn't get my job back.

Some of the kids made it. The ones I've seen around are doing fairly well. They come in and visit with me at my present job. I'm proud. I hope that everyone who works in the social service industry takes into account what I've done, what it means to be a worker in that industry, and what it means to be someone who is in a program.

The professional dedicated to serving people will understand that his or her most distinguishing attribute ought to be humility. The doctrine that "we know best" must be exorcised; there is simply no basis for the belief that we who have Masters of Social Work degrees or other similar credentials are better able to discern our clients' problems than they are, and better able to decide how to deal with these problems.

— Radical Social Work, Roy Bailey and Mike Brake, eds. [5]

WELFARE CASEWORKER • SHAWN

I worked in a large welfare department in Philadelphia. I had 300 cases and a lot of fucking paperwork. You don't work in social services because you care about money; you do it because you want to help people.

A lot of people who work at the welfare office are pissed off because of their own powerlessness. Any ideas we came up with to help the office operate better would get thrown out right away. One time I went to my supervisor with the suggestion of translating an important sign into Russian, since the office was located in a Russian neighborhood. She couldn't make up her mind so I went and did it myself. Later, I got written up for it because I put it up without approval. This was a perfect example of the supervisor's attitudes.

I wasn't protective of the welfare system. I just treated it like I had access to this money that people needed. I used to give welfare

away whether people were eligible or not. This saved me a lot of trouble because if you turned someone down, they'd bitch. We had access to the computer so it was really easy to add someone to the file. I would just overlook a few facts here and there.

About six months after you enter someone into the computer system you will sometimes get information claiming the person was working while they were collecting welfare, or that they have a bank account. The caseworker is supposed to write the person up and start the system of prosecution. Fuck that. If the person wasn't an asshole and wasn't eligible for welfare, I'd go into the computer, delete their files and claim that no fraud existed. Then I'd write a narrative about how good the person was. In that way, I felt that I was helping people out.

There are signs of new stirrings of social conscience in the United States today, although it will probably be some time before substantial new funds are invested in the problems of common people. Meanwhile, how can the field of social work meet its historic challenge of responding to human need?

— Social Work Day to Day,
Carolyn Cressy Wells [6]

23 TIGHTENING THE BOLTS AND LOOSENING THE SCREWS

Repair

INDUSTRIAL MAINTENANCE MACHINIST MAX

The importance of the maintenance function in industry has never been challenged. It certainly has had none of the glamor of the marketing or research functions, and it has not in the past enjoyed the close attention received by the production operations; but we have always been aware of the fact when the maintenance job was not being done.
— Modern Maintenance Management, Elmo J. Miller and Jerome W. Blood, eds.[1]

I was brought up with a strong work ethic. I work hard even when I don't think I'll get rewarded for it. In the same way, it's not a natural action for me to want to fuck up machines because I have a great respect for machinery.

I was on a maintenance crew at a big factory in Massachusetts that made plastics. There was a 900-ton hydraulic press which wasn't working right. They had it stamping out these cases for periscopes for the Department of Defense. We took the machine apart and as I was reassembling it, I found this steel protective ring that was supposed to protect the cast aluminum body of the machine from the bearings. It took me a while to figure out what side it was supposed to go on, and I realized that it would really fuck up the machine if I put it on the wrong side. At first I thought, "Wow, it's a good thing I figured that out; I could've wrecked the machine if I put this plate in on the wrong side." And then I thought, "Yeah, I could wreck this machine." It was a totally spur-of-the-moment thing. The machine would work, but the rollers would eventually wear through the aluminum and ruin the whole machine. These machines run at high speeds, twenty-four hours a day; I guessed it would take two weeks to a month to wear through.

I wouldn't have done it if I hadn't hated the place. Even by the standards of other factories I worked in, the work environment was grotesque. They were ultra-authoritarian. There was always some type of supervisor looking over my shoulder, watching my every move.

Last year some thoughtless workers neglected a machine and this year it's for sale as junk. This company cannot prosper unless each worker does his share to protect and care for valuable equipment.
— Labor poster from 1923

REFRIGERATION MECHANIC • ERNEST

I went to work for my father when he was doing maintenance construction for the Mark Restaurant chain, based in Akron, Ohio. I approached the company about doing their refrigeration, so they gave me eight of their stores to service on a trial basis. I had absolutely no experience. So when an ice machine was down, I would go to the manufacturer's, get brochures, and get the part I needed. The company would pay for the part and unknowingly pay for the brochure.

I'm really mechanically inclined, so I picked up on everything right away and I became really good at what I did. They gave me all of the restaurants in the chain and carte blanche on parts. I fixed the equipment with very few call-backs. Everybody liked me and I was very well trusted.

I would buy parts and charge the company for them as part of my labor. I bought all of my tools that way, electric meters and stuff like that. I think it was easily $3,000 worth of tools. Since I was subcontracted, I wrote my own ticket. It was like a perk item.

I did this for about two years. To make a long story short, I quit the job and went to work for a private refrigeration company and I had a tool box loaded with tools. I didn't even use half of them.

I always covered my ass. I got a lot of tools but I did a lot of things

Marketers reported that service parts were taken by employees and sold; also vulnerable were the parts used to repair trucks and some tools.
— Fueloil and Oil Heat Magazine[2]

The number-one rule of thieves is that nothing is too small to steal.
— Jimmy Breslin, NBC Evening News [3]

Taking your car to a mechanic can be a lot like a visit to the dentist. It may be painful, more costly than anticipated — and leave you numb.
— "Finding a Mechanic You Can Trust," Reader's Digest [4]

Remember that time is money.
— Ben Franklin

Sabotage is the deliberate destruction of property or the slowing down of work in order to damage a business.
— Dictionary of Personnel Management and Labor Relations, Jay M. Shafritz [5]

If you have a job without aggravations, you don't have a job.
— Malcolm Forbes

Right now you're probably thinking, "If it were only true. Is it possible that I can change my life by simply changing the way I dress? Can I become happier, more successful, and even more financially secure merely by wearing different clothing and changing the way I appear to others?"
— You Are What You Wear, William Thourlby [6]

New advances in office copying keep coming from Kodak.
— Eastman Kodak Slogan

that somebody else would get paid a lot more for. I was always at peace with my conscience. I thought what I did was an equitable exchange. I felt I was worth what I got. I would never do it just to cause shit and I don't think I ever really did it to fuck them over.

CAR MECHANIC • SCOTT

I've been working solely on BMWs for ten years, but I've been working on cars ever since I can remember. I've always wanted to work on exotic cars, but in Rochester, New York, a BMW is as about as exotic as you can find. I pretty much service everything on them but I like to work on the higher tech stuff: fuel injection and things that require more knowledge of electronics and computer systems.

At my current job, my boss tries to overcharge the customers. Because of the kind of business he's in, he figures he can get away with it. He sees dollars flying away if he doesn't do it.

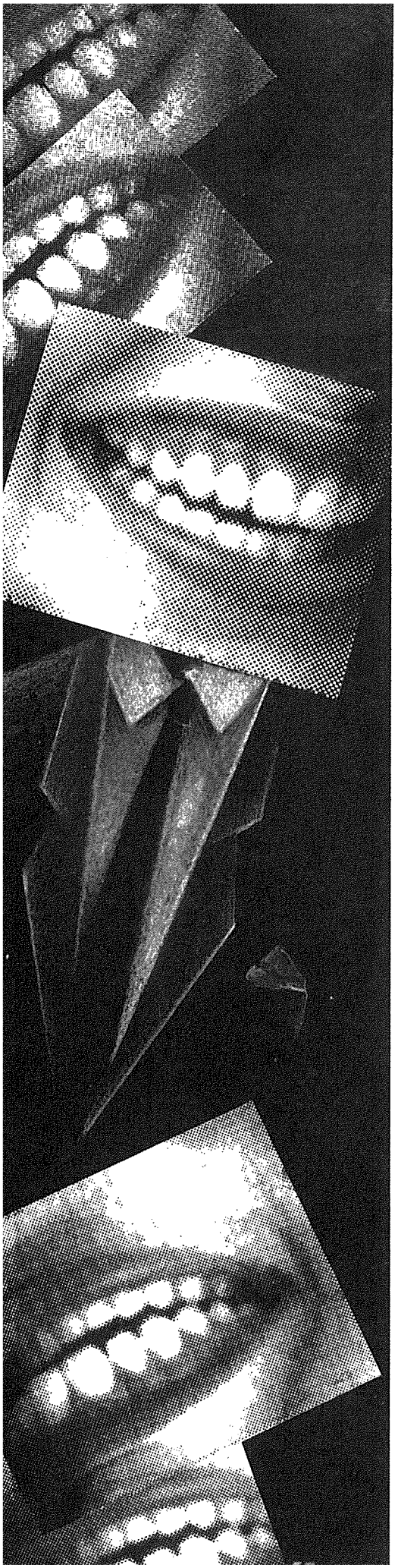
I get in arguments with him on how much time I spend on a car. Since I'm the most knowledgeable person in the shop, I'm constantly interrupted to help one of the other mechanics, answer the phone or talk to a customer. Every interruption takes away from my time of actually working on the car and it takes me a few minutes to get back into synch. The owner gets antsy about me spending five hours to do a two-hour job. He ignores the fact that I've only been working on the car for two hours and doing other things the rest of the time. Still, he wants to charge the customer for the full five hours. I'm like, "The hell you are," especially if I've talked to the customer on the phone and explained how long the job would take. I've threatened to get a stopwatch out and press the button only when I'm working on the car so we can bill the customer accurately. I actually started to do it for a couple of days, I was so pissed off.

COPIER REPAIR TECHNICIAN • C.J.

My job at Kodak in Denver, Colorado was repairing high speed copiers at customer offices, which I thought meant little supervision. Little did I know that "looking sharp and professional at all times" was most important. For the first five months there was little interference from my supervisor, Steve. Things went downhill quickly when the business climate changed and customers were buying and leasing fewer Kodak copiers.

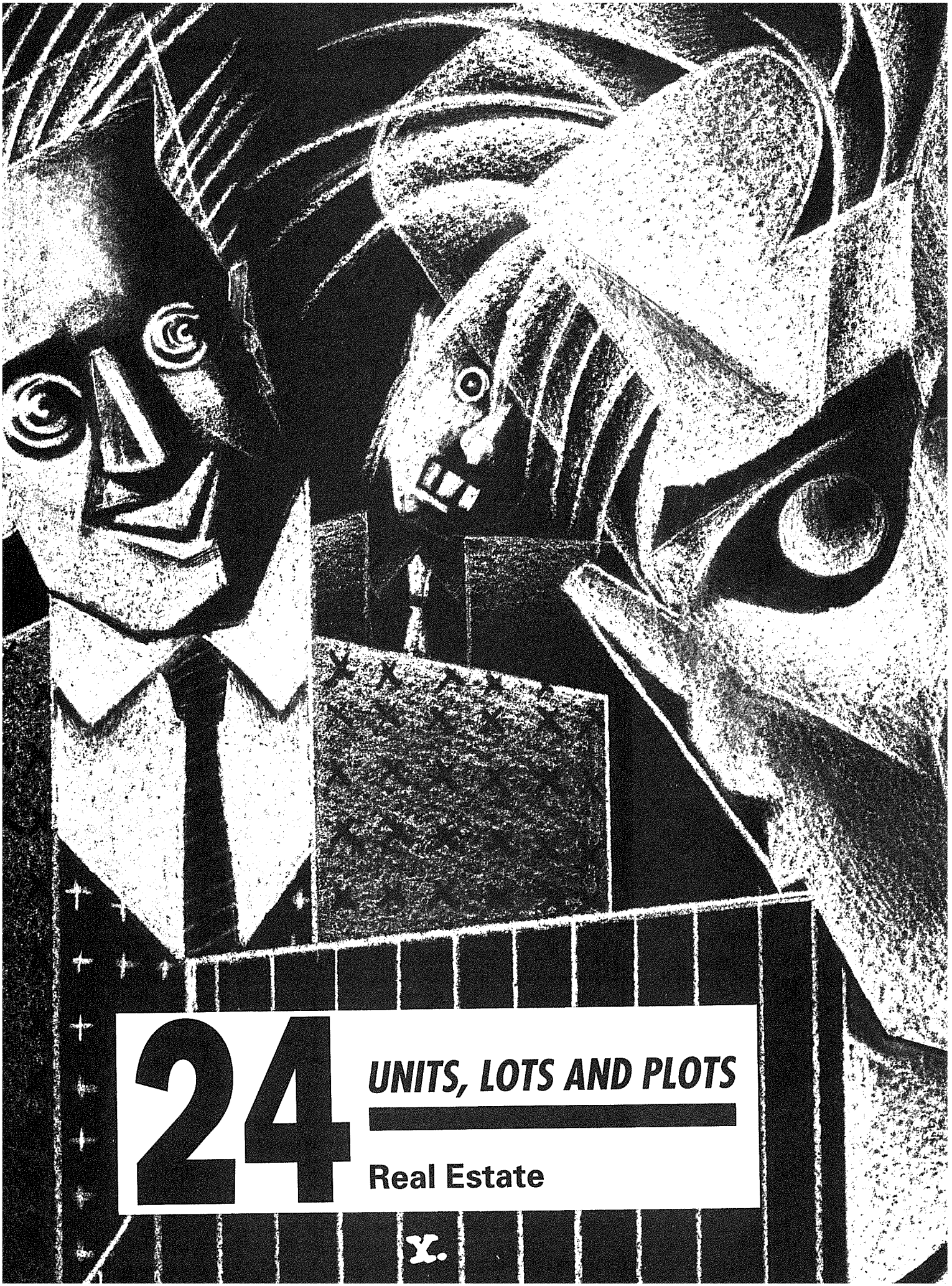
Steve started evaluating my work by visiting where I was repairing the customer's copier. Then he would write me up, selectively noting bad things about my performance, like how I dressed in slacks that did not look "professional." One time he went out to lunch with my co-workers and me to see how I "interacted" with them.

When Steve fired me, he told me I had to sign a paper saying I left under my own free will. I told him he would have to wait a very long time before I did that. For sticking up for myself, I received two weeks of severance pay, medical benefits for two months, and unemployment benefits, none of which I would have gotten if I had just signed that agreement with Steve.



I moved out to California to work for a small company in the San Jose area that serviced Kodak copiers. They wanted someone right away and gave me the impression I was the one they wanted. I soon found that the service manager at this place wanted me to be even more "professional" than Kodak. A week after I was hired, I told my supervisor during lunch that I windsurfed and that I planned to keep my board on top of my car so I could sail after work. The supervisor told me that I would look "unprofessional." Needless to say, I only lasted two weeks and during my "de-interviewing" — firing — I was told how I didn't fit in. The supervisor insisted on insulting me and telling me about all his troubles, even though he didn't want to hear any of mine. So I asked for my check. After I got it, I "returned" the parts and tools that I carried in my car, throwing them all over the parking lot of the office complex and yelling, "If you don't give a shit about me, why should I care about you?"

My supervisor looked at me in this totally perplexed trance, like he was thinking: "This person looks mad and humiliated; gee whiz, I wonder why..." After I got into my car, I proceeded to run over the parts I had tossed onto the parking lot. Leaving like a flaming madman was not as humiliating as the supervisor would have liked to believe.



24 UNITS, LOTS AND PLOTS

Real Estate

REAL ESTATE SURVEYOR • SAM

One of the most remarkable feats in real estate is to acquire control of a potentially great site when it looks miserable. Perhaps it's out of the way or disfigured with decrepit buildings, or it may seem a poor bet because of land use restrictions. You need bold, contrary thinking to see beyond present realities and envision changes which will add value. Then you've got to back your convictions with cash.
— Risk, Ruin and Riches, Jim Powell [1]

Crime is a logical extension of the sort of behavior that is often considered perfectly respectable in legitimate business.
— The Business of Crime

Work, in short, can be a burden. And insofar as it is a burden, humans avoid it if they can; and if they cannot they need to have a reason for taking it up.
— Work, Inc.: A Philosophical Inquiry, Edmund F. Byrne [2]

The responsibility for liking your job and creating the conditions for job satisfaction is yours. Although you can enlist your employer's cooperation, your job satisfaction never becomes your employer's responsibility. That isn't to say that disliking your work is your fault. Doing something about it is your responsibility simply because no one else can do it.
— Working and Liking It, Richard Germann [3]

A friend and I saw an ad for a job making $10 an hour. The ad said something about making maps, but it wasn't specific. So we checked it out. The place was on the nineteenth floor of a fancy office building in New York. It turned out that some woman in charge of some division of this huge conglomerate was hiring people to make maps of all ground-level retail stores in New York City, every single street in Manhattan, and eventually the other boroughs. All real estate companies do this kind of thing. I don't know exactly what they use the maps for, except for some kind of demographics of what sections of the city have what types of stores.

The job was pretty cool — we had to walk up and down the streets. We'd just draw a real crude diagram of where the store was and what level it was on the street, that's all. It was a pretty easy job even though it was time-consuming. Occasionally, some touchy property owner in Manhattan would tell us to get the hell away from his building, but that was expected.

A couple of weeks after we got the job, we realized that it was really stupid to be working for a large real-estate company. In New York City especially, there's a lot of really shitty stuff that goes on with real estate companies, like kicking people out of homes and demolishing affordable housing. This was one of the companies that did that. They had a lot of office buildings in places that were once residential buildings. At the same time, we worked out that no one at the company was about to go around verifying the information on the maps we drew, so we figured it wouldn't be a problem to start faking them.

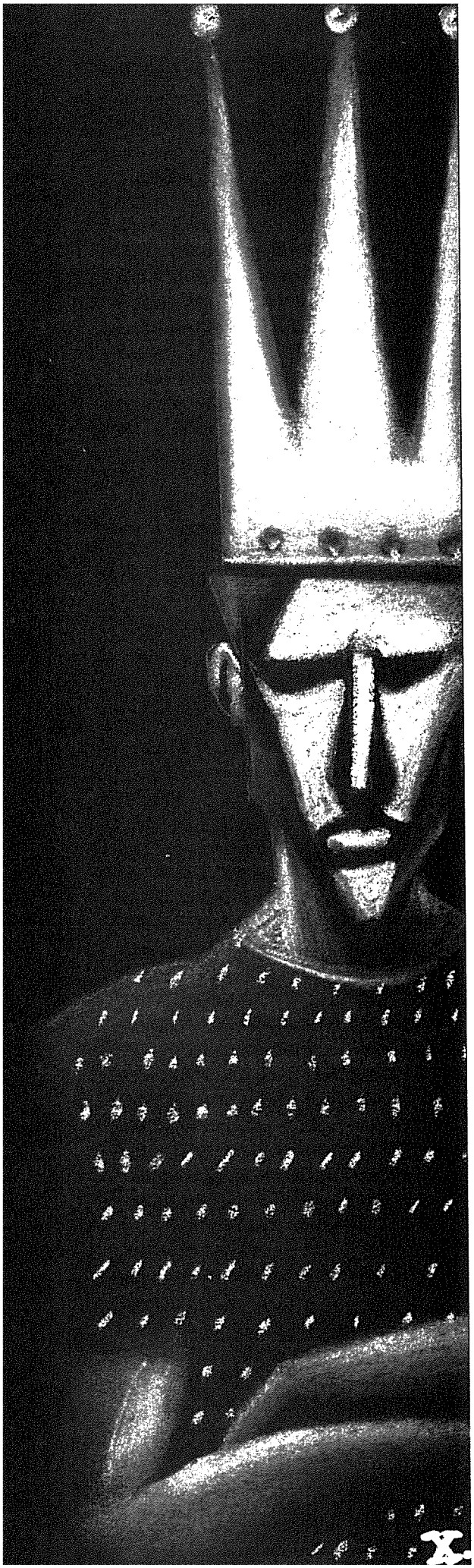
At first we would sit in a restaurant and draw the maps; then we realized we could do it at home while watching TV. We'd check in with the office every morning then go back to my house and relax. At the end of the week we'd turn in the maps we made up. After a while, my partner stopped working altogether but still collected his paycheck. He told the boss he was working on a particularly difficult section of the city, like a part with a lot of stores.

Eventually I quit, which in retrospect was stupid because I could have gone on there for a long time that way. I would have made a lot of money. My friend kept going in to collect money without working to see how long he could do it. He did it for about a month and a half.

APARTMENT MANAGER • KENT

I like my job in many ways and one of the most significant is that I don't have a boss looking over my shoulder every minute of every day. That's rare in a job. This building is my own little forty unit kingdom. Although I don't own the building and don't get the rents that I collect, I've been delegated authority by the owner and that's how I treat the job — as if it were my building. I take care of things adequately and the owner's only wasting his time doing inspections. The bottom line is that as long as the rents keep coming in and the apartments rent easily, he really doesn't care.

The owner instructed me that every applicant should have a

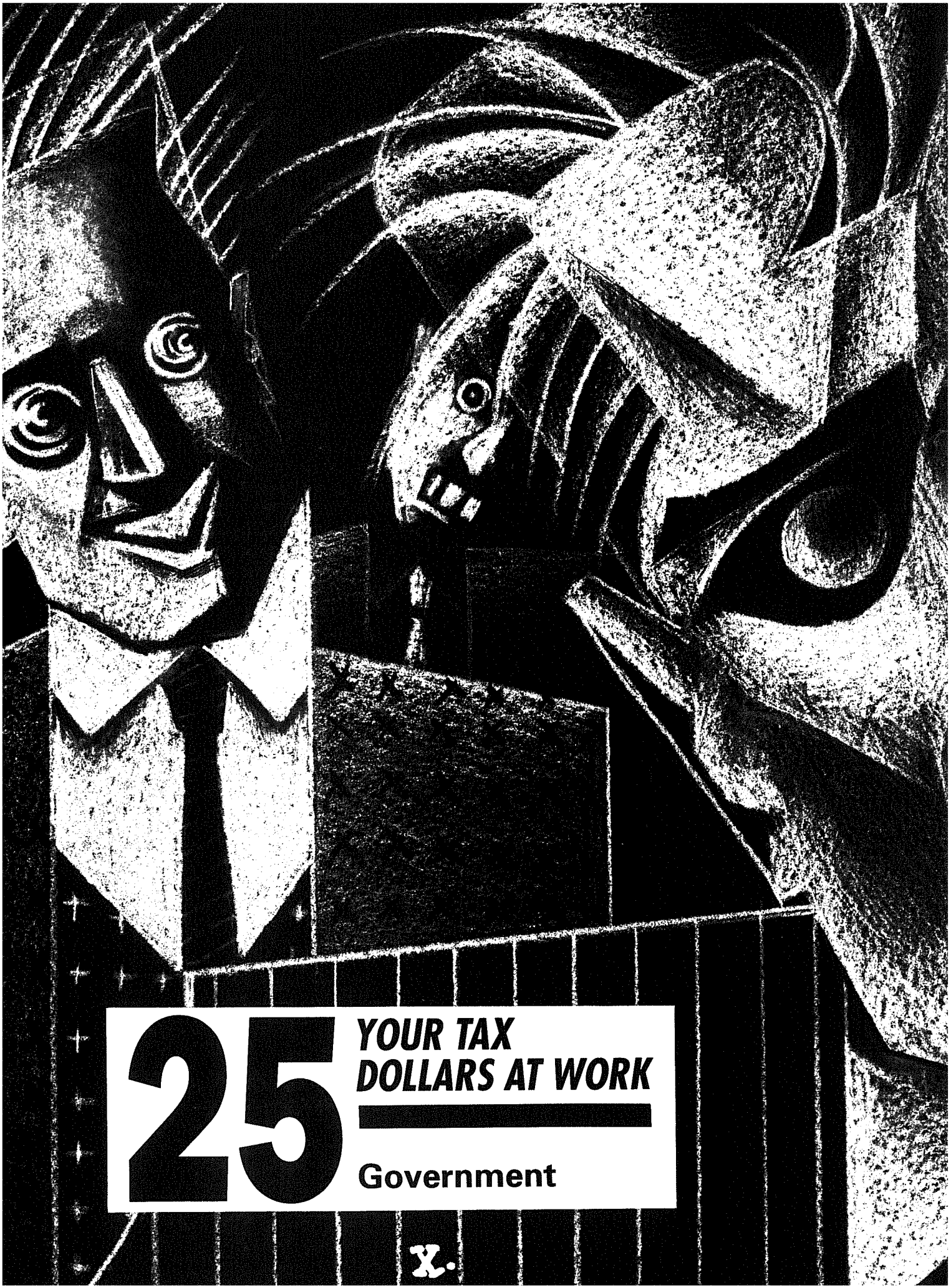


minimum net income of three times their rent, and that I'm to do a credit check on each applicant and base my decision on the credit check. I'm not supposed to rent to anybody who has been evicted by a previous manager or any previous residence. I basically throw these instructions right out the window. I rent the apartments to people I feel like renting them to. The entire application process is just a cover. I get a good understanding of the people through the application, but the actual figures on the piece of paper and the credit check have absolutely nothing to do with my decision. The owner has no idea of that because however I do it, it works.

The rent is due by the first of the month and then there's a five day grace period; if I don't get the rent by the night of the fifth I'm supposed to charge them a late fee. One of the things my tenants appreciate is that as long as I haven't delivered the rents to the owner, I count late rent as being on time. The concept of late fees is that the delay causes us trouble. But if they pay late and I haven't delivered the rest of the rents to the owner, then they really haven't caused any trouble and I don't charge them the $70 late fee. I've saved them a substantial amount of money by not being a dickhead.

When it comes to check-outs, the owner and the parting tenants end up splitting the cost of repairs, cleaning and other stuff that needs to be done, as opposed to places where managers use every trick in the book to get the maximum deduction. It's a question of what things I choose to include. An awful lot of managers make the most extreme judgment in favor of the owner. I'm very complete when I fill out the forms. With every little detail listed, it's hard for the owner to imagine that I would have missed something.

I'm still not compensated enough, but if it weren't for the fact that I like my job a lot, I wouldn't be doing it. I think that low technology jobs which deal with people, especially in their home-related life, are greatly undervalued. Garbagemen and babysitters have the lowest status, but when you think about it, they're providing the most vital functions. I think people's home lives are very important.



25 YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

Government

PAGE • MIKE

One of the main jobs of a page in the Montana House of Representatives is organizing these huge piles of papers outlining what's going to be talked about during the day. We had to manage a daily file for each representative. The system we were supposed to learn was very complex and based on all these strange numbers and bills. On my first day, it was really confusing. I was trying to go fast but I didn't really understand what was going on. All of the other pages were telling me to hurry up, so I stuffed the papers wherever I could.

At one point during the day, a bill was being discussed and the representative assigned to talk about it stood up and started talking about something completely different. Immediately there was chaos since no one had any idea what he was talking about. Nothing could really go on until everyone got things straight. It happened two more times that day and finally it got to the point where no one was listening to what anyone else was saying.

From then on I'd purposely put the papers in the wrong order. It was very entertaining.

SENIOR OFFICER • BRUCE

Federal employees are subjected to a wide range of management styles. The agencies and bureaus have widely different missions and very little training and development for their "professional" supervisors and managers. As a result, there is a wildly divergent set of standards among even adjoining offices.

The Federal Executive Board is a loose internal organization which establishes certain policies and procedures for federal agencies in a particular section of the U.S. — the "somebodies" who determine snow days and administrative leave. "Snow days" are reserved for worsening snow conditions, while "administrative leaves" are arbitrary employee leaves given around the Christmas holidays.

On a particularly slow Christmas Eve workday, I called the Regional Manager of all Northeast federal operations. I introduced myself to his secretary as "Steve Watkins" of the Federal Executive Board. The name was entirely fictitious, but the affiliation wasn't lost on the secretary. In a flash, she patched me through to the man who managed the entire Northeast.

Although I was a bit panicked, I plunged ahead and breezily introduced myself.

"Hello Ralph," I boomed. "This is Steve Watkins with the Federal Executive Board. How are you?"

This was the moment of truth. If he realized that he'd never heard of Steve Watkins, or had taken a similar phone call minutes earlier, the game would be up.

"Oh, hi Steve, how are *you*?"

This was fantastic! The Northeast Regional Manager was schmoozing away on the phone with a non-existent peer, at taxpayer expense.

"Ralph," I continued, "I thought I'd better call. We've decided

The fact that absenteeism is on the increase today should not lead us to forget what old-established practice it is: absenteeism after holidays and at harvest-time was significant in the last century.
— Sabotage in Industry, Pierre Dubois[1]

Personal use of long-distance telephone lines also mounts up, as the U.S. government has discovered. Unauthorized use of the federal long distance telephone systems inflates the phone bill by $89.5 million a year. The work time that employees spend making those personal calls costs an additional $76.3 million.
— UPI[2]

The breaking of rules brings considerable autonomy.
— Cheats at Work, Gerald Mars[3]

The U.S. Treasury has a problem: its employees are stealing the silverware.
Managers of the cafeteria at the Treasury Department, whose employees include the Internal Revenue Service, have issued a plaintive appeal to stop lifting the forks, knives, and spoons.
"Of 2,040 individual pieces of silverware available on 12/10/90, 1,430 pieces (70 percent) were MISSING on 5/13/91," reads a memorandum stacked beside the cashier's counter and made available to every patron.
— San Francisco Chronicle[4]

The Solicitor General is the person whose name goes on government briefs filed at the Supreme Court, and for some people — particularly those involved in legal disputes with the federal government — he is the very embodiment of the government. Although no one attacked him physically, one or more individuals vented their rage and a considerable quantity of urine on a new computer the Solicitor's office was using to keep track of cases and the work load of departmental attorneys.
No other trace was left. Because the building is heavily guarded, the chances of someone's just walking in off the street are practically nil. A departmental security official speculates that "a disgruntled employee" was to blame, but no one was ever charged with the offense.
— Science Digest[5]

that as of 3:00 pm you can let the chickens out of the coop."

"Great!" said Ralph. He thanked me for the call, and we exchanged hearty Christmas wishes.

It was a done deal and I was weak with relief. True to his word, Ralph called all his agency heads and, probably struggling into his own winter boots, passed on the good news. Within twenty minutes, all of the tiniest sub-offices across hundreds of miles in six different states had received the word. If news travels fast, good news goes out like a rocket.

I take pride in single-handedly affording hundreds of federal employees a crack at some last-minute Christmas shopping.

RECORDS CLERK • ZEKE

A long time ago, in the precomputerized days, I got a job with the records department of the Arizona Division of Motor Vehicles. I thought I'd be doing mindless filing from midnight to eight, but when I got there, I found that I was sitting there looking up vehicle registration numbers for cops who were investigating people. I said, "Oh Jesus, is this really what I want to do?" I couldn't afford to quit — I only had a hundred dollars — so I figured I could stand it for a while.

Four or five days after I started, I get this one cop who calls up and gives me half a dozen phone numbers and says, "Yeah, we got a pot party under observation and we're going to get these guys. Give me the information on them." I thought, "Oh, man!" and I just made up vehicle registration info: phony names and phony addresses for all of them. I never heard much more about it.

The following week, a narcotics agent calls and identifies himself as such. I gave him phony information too. This friend of mine was working there and started doing the same thing. Narcs would call in occasionally, and about seventy-five percent of the time, we'd give them bad information. This went on for about two and a half months, until we got word that detectives were coming around, talking to our supervisor. We called her the "peg woman" — she was absolutely awful. We got called in and she said, "Somebody is giving the police false information and we can't prove it's you, but if it happens again, we're going to fire everyone in the department."

My friend and I had both just gotten out of prison for dope dealing, and both of us were selling major quantities of pot at the time. I sort of felt like a Jew helping run a concentration camp. So at that point we both decided to quit rather than start giving the cops correct information. Fortunately, they were never able to pin it on us.

JUNIOR FEDERAL ASSISTANT • GLENN

My friend "Bob Francis" would never think of himself as a saboteur, but at one point he needed a job. Recently laid off from a retail sales job, with a new family to support, no education beyond a GED, a speech impediment and increasing New England unemployment, Bob was up against it. He was willing to work at a basic

clerical job paying the equivalent of $15,000, and since I was with the Department of Defense, I stepped in.

Pretending to represent the local library, I conducted a bogus poll for them, inquiring about the education of every Robert Francis in the state. I came up with a Robert Francis who had an engineering degree from Northeastern University, but Jesus, Bob passing himself off as an ex-engineer now selling home appliances? He'd flunked high school math! Obviously, the wrong conversation in an interview would have him streaking for the parking lot with visions of the hounds on his desperate ass.

So Bob applied and replaced a two-year factory stint on the application with an associate degree from Calvin Coolidge Jr. College. CCJC was a defunct, unaccredited go-nowhere education that didn't look odd for a guy who'd spent three subsequent years hustling refrigerators.

The interview came and went. Bob nervously alluded to a diploma buried in a closet at home somewhere and made it through the ordeal without the hounds. The Department of Defense, however, merely needed a few men — or warm bodies — and he was hired as Junior Federal Assistant at thirty-four! Bob is no revolutionary figure though, and he half expects FBI agents in snap-brim hats to pay him a visit with a subpoena.

All went well and he received a few good promotions and he's still merrily shuffling papers for the Department of Defense. The kicker to the story, however, is that after two years they ran a security check on him and awarded him a secret clearance! Almost frightening, huh?

TYPIST • DUG

My bosses at the Pentagon were captains and colonels. They smoked stinky pipes and looked over my shoulder to make sure I was doing everything the way they wanted me to. It was a big drag and I got pretty bored and tried to find ways to add more excitement to the whole thing.

One day they gave me a letter to type asking permission to build fuel storage tanks in Europe for the Eighth Army. The letter described what the tanks were supposed to look like, what they held, and whatever. One of the numbers was for the volume of the tank: 1000 — or maybe it was 10,000 — gallons. Whatever it was, I just added a zero. What the hell, I didn't care.

Anything that left my office went to an office upstairs which consisted of three big desks with people who were even more uptight than the ones I worked for. I figured that if it got through them, it would really happen. If I got caught, I could just say, "It was my mistake."

But the letter didn't come back. For all I know, there are these tanks in Europe holding airplane fuel that are ten times bigger than they're supposed to be. If my bosses knew about this, they would shit in their pants and bleed through their stomachs for the next month. They're so into control that something like that would shatter their universe.

Without lies, humanity would perish of despair and boredom.
— Anatole France

About every five seconds a piece of American history is made, thanks to the activities of an obscure office in a deep, dark corner of the U.S. Capitol — the flag office, which is in charge of flags that have flown above the Capitol.

Flags are taken to the roof of the Capitol and flown for anywhere from five seconds to a minute on several flagpoles. A seven-person staff is required to handle the requests for flags that flow in from senators and House members on behalf of constituents.

"I dread doing flags became [sic] it means spending the whole day dragging a huge handcart piled high with flags all over Capitol Hill," one congressional page told our reporter Tim Warner. "Once I finish my flag run (delivery of flown flags to congressional offices) I blow off work and go sleep somewhere."
— San Francisco Chronicle[6]

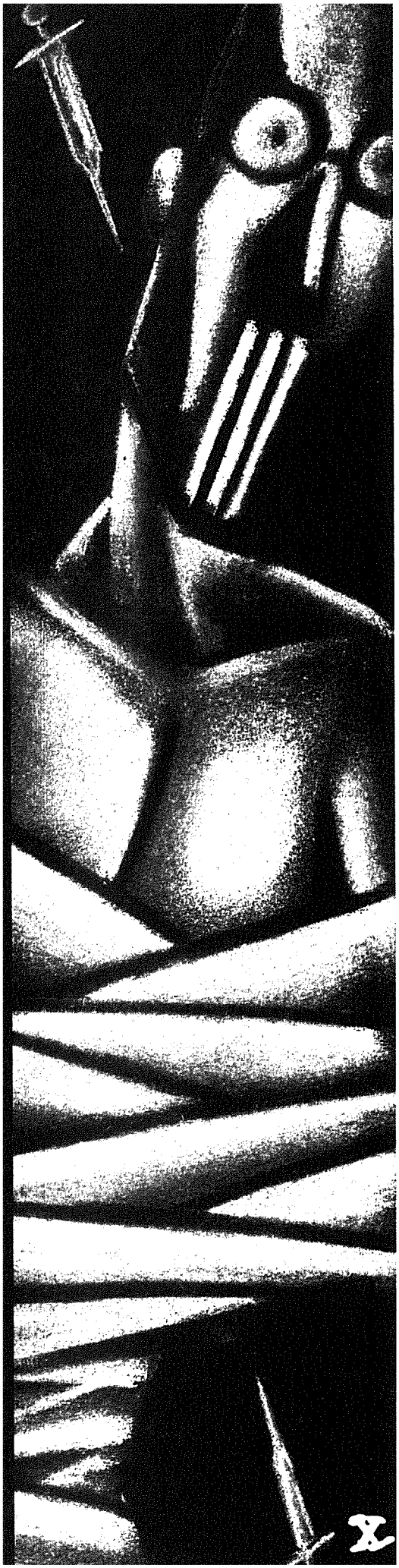
...deliberate violence is, no doubt, a relatively minor fact in the case as compared with deliberate malingering, confusion, and misdirection of work that makes up the bulk of what the expert practitioners would recognize as deliberate sabotage.
— On the Nature and Uses of Sabotage, Thorstein Veblen, 1919[7]

Administrative sabotage centers on the use of that most hazardous of all weapons, the ballpoint pen. Clerical "error" can cause cargoes to be misrouted or foodstuffs to perish due to delivery of quantities excessive for the available storage space.
— World Affairs[8]

They say hard work never hurt anybody, but I figure why take a chance?
—Ronald Reagan

26 STRIKING A NERVE

Medicine



ATTENDANT NURSE • TOM

I spent four years working at a state psychiatric hospital in the Midwest. We had to go through orientation, and part of that was observing shock treatment: a bunch of us in a room watching some anonymous patient strapped onto a bed surrounded by a dozen or so attendants. Just standing there with this group of people and watching something like this I thought, "What are we? We're a bunch of Nazis." There wasn't a lot of electroshock going on at that institution but it was still was part of our orientation.

For a year and a half I worked on a geriatrics ward. We were the on-line staff: we fed, we bathed, we dealt with the day-to-day lives of everybody who was locked up on the ward. It was very degrading, this day-to-day existence. After working there, I promised myself that when I got old, nobody was going to put me in a place like that. I quit after that and went on unemployment.

I went back because I needed a job. My second stint was in a locked adult ward which was all male. I had a reputation as being a good and reliable worker, so I was trusted enough to work freely. I wasn't naive about the work or its implications. I always had some sort of a conscience and felt pretty torn up about some of the stuff going on.

Every morning we'd bring out the medication cart. People would be given doses up to four times a day. I knew all the drugs. You had to know what you were giving out because some people were getting medication for a heart condition or for seizures. After I'd worked there a while I started trying to monkeywrench the medication system. It was sort of a way to calm my conscience. The problem was that the other staff, especially the night staff, were doing exactly the opposite. They would snow the patients: give them larger drug doses than prescribed, and add on a couple of hundred milligrams of Thorazine or whatever, basically drug them so they'd have a quiet night. If someone is given Thorazine for a long time, it affects their central nervous system. Anybody coming to our ward would see lots of people shuffling around. They called it the Thorazine shuffle. You get facial spasms and all sorts of things. If you go out into the sun and you've been on Thorazine, you burn. It has all kinds of bad effects. So I'd give the patients straight orange juice, and not put the Thorazine in.

One of the few people I could talk to on our ward was Donald, a man in his forties. He was very quiet — psychiatrically, they'd probably call him a chronic depressive. They put him on Prolixin, a heavy duty tranquilizer which is administered in intramuscular shots that last two or three weeks. It's extremely powerful. I didn't like it when it was introduced in our ward, so I'd take Donald to the medication room and ask him, "Donald, do you want this shot?" Donald would never talk much, but he would shake his head. I'd then break the ampule and dump it down the sink, snap the needle and throw it in the needle box. It was just one small way of dealing with a really bad situation. The unfortunate thing is, you can do all the monkeywrenching you want, but it doesn't change anything. Donald's probably still in that institution, and there are still people administering those Prolixin shots.

Most people think that medical care is good for you. The fact is that some medical care is good for you, a great deal is irrelevant and, unfortunately, some of it is harmful.

— Dr. Lester Breslow

When you work in an institution, one of the things you never escape is that you're basically a guard. If a doctor gives orders to put somebody in seclusion, whether right or wrong — I don't know if you could ever argue that it was right — you'd have to do that. If the person didn't go willingly, we were the people who had to take them to the seclusion room. If they were ordered to have a shot, we had to pull down their pants and stick them in the ass with this big needle. Sometimes it was because of the moods and the whims of the psychiatrists, who didn't want to listen to someone who was angry and maybe had something to say to that shrink. In the worst situations, they'd be thrown in the seclusion room, stripped down totally. There was nothing but a barred window with little holes in it. You'd look in there and you'd see this person stark naked in a corner, pacing around, spitting through the holes. It was pretty horrendous. After my second stint there, I decided that was it for me.

PHARMACY CLERK • ALBERT

Back when I was doing drugs, I had a friend who worked at this little pharmacy near where I lived. The guy who owned the pharmacy was this horrible, cantankerous, oppressive old man who treated my friend like shit and paid him as little as possible. He wasn't crazy, just really cheap. My friend wanted to get back at him, and me and two other friends wanted drugs. We were always trying to get him to steal us stuff but he couldn't do it. All the good stuff was locked up in the narcotics cabinet. If he got caught stealing, he'd get fired and busted.

We knew another guy that did occasional armed robberies to supplement his income. He was a strange person, a family man from out in the suburbs, with a wife and three kids. He was in his early thirties, had lots of mortgage payments, worked for Chevron, and didn't make enough money. Since they didn't know each other, we figured we'd put the two guys together.

We started planning something and my friend at the pharmacy was very amenable to it. He knew exactly when he and his boss were the only ones there. He chose a Saturday evening right before closing, when there would be lots of money in the register and nobody around. We drew up a list of the things we wanted and gave a copy to each person. We made a deal with the robber guy: he could keep any money he got from the register, and we'd get the drugs. We planned to use what we wanted and sell the rest. The pharmacy guy was going to get some of the money from the drugs. We even supplied the gun the guy used. Someone had left it at my house; it was a .22 target pistol that we didn't have any bullets for.

It went like clockwork. He went in about 5:00 pm and it was completely empty. The neighborhood was dead. He told the two of them to lie down on the floor. He had the list and two big paper shopping bags. They were worried about time, so our friend had already studied the list and knew what was on it. All he had to do was tell our other friend what he wanted. The clerk scurried around, emptied the drawer, and filled the order, while the robber guy kept the pharmacist on the floor. He was out of there in three minutes.

Perhaps the most we can say is that theft by employees is a significant and pervasive part of the work experience with between one-half and one-quarter of the typical work force involved in taking company money or property sometime during their employment.

— Theft by Employees, Richard C. Hollinger and John P. Clark [1]

He came over to my apartment and gave us the stuff. For junkies, it was like Christmas. There was an insane amount of drugs, thousands of pills and two quart bottles of liquid morphine. We did an absurd amount of them and sold a lot of reds that we didn't want. We made several hundred dollars and gave most of it to the pharmacy guy. After all, we were junkies. We had drugs, so we didn't need the money.

It had been a busy Saturday and the robber guy got about $400 in cash. The insurance probably covered it, so ultimately it was the insurance company that got ripped off. The owner's premiums probably went up a bit. The owner called the cops and gave a description of the robber but it didn't make any difference; he was long gone.

My friend continued working at the pharmacy for a couple of months but finally got fed up. He didn't feel any remorse, he felt excited about it. He didn't care about the money. His main motivation was to fuck over this guy, who had been fucking him over for a long time.

AUTOPSY TECHNICIAN • FIONA

My job was to remove organs from dead bodies at George Washington University Hospital. A lot of the time we ended up just sitting around waiting for people to die. Two of us worked in the morgue there. We maintained and ordered supplies and assisted all the doctors.

I worked with this guy who drank two beers for breakfast. It made me kind of nervous. As it turned out, he managed to drink all the time without ever getting really out of it. He worked the system to his best advantage. When I started working there I would do tons of stuff and he'd say, "Sit down, what are you doing?" and I'd say, "Well I'm just sick of sitting around," and he'd say, "Don't knock yourself out on your job; how much are you getting paid to do this shit?" I was getting paid $8.50 an hour, which is ridiculous considering all the diseases I could have caught from all the dead people. After I'd worked there a month, I caught on and relaxed.

Not everyone who dies has to have an autopsy; it has to be requested by the physician and approved by the family. So we only had to do four or five a week. The rest of the time we'd sit around or sleep a lot. We'd get there, eat breakfast, read the paper and be ready to work at about 11:00 in the morning. It takes about two hours to do a complete autopsy. After that, feeling way overworked and underpaid, we'd take a long two hour lunch break.

The morgue is where they keep all the bodies; funeral homes come and pick them up. Usually just one funeral attendant would come and they would always need help — so we would help and they'd give us $5. If they didn't give us money, we would never help them again. We also used to sell them supplies, mainly towels or gowns. We'd make maybe $5 or $10 a day and go out for lunch.

I didn't really hate my boss that much; it didn't feel like I had one. The people who ran the department were actually across the street, so they were never around. One woman who didn't have anything to do with my job was always sticking her nose in to check

If 'conspicuous consumption' was the badge of a rising middle class, 'conspicuous loafing' is the hostile gesture of a tired working class.
— Work and Its Discontents: The Cult of Efficiency in America, Daniel Bell[2]

Robert Half of Robert Half International conducts annual surveys of time theft. He has estimated that employers lost $150 billion in 1984 to time theft. Coming to work late, taking excessive breaks, conducting personal business, taking long lunch breaks, and leaving early add up over a year's time.
— "Employee Theft: A $40 Billion Industry," American Journal of Political and Social Science[3]

The greater the power, the more dangerous the abuse.
— Edmund Burke

... not all sabotage involves aggressive or violent actions. It can be as simple as slowing down one's work output — and can be just as damaging in the long run as destroying expensive machinery.
— Supervisory Management Magazine[4]

us out, so we did whatever we could to screw her over. She'd ask us to set up the conference rooms and we wouldn't do it. She'd call and ask about it and we'd say, "We're up to our necks in work, we really can't do it." Other stuff was done out of convenience. I stole Clorox, soap, towels, tape, surgical blades, and scalpels. The biggest thing I ever took was a human brain.

I never got caught. The guy I worked with got caught stealing from the cafeteria, but he's still working there. I finally left after a year and a half because I got bored sitting around and not doing anything.

BIOLOGIST • MORT

I was a research assistant in a group doing immunology. A company had given us money to develop an antibody detection test for HIV. The company wanted to market a kit to physicians that would actually speed up the process of HIV detection.

The problem was they were getting into the game a little too late, because people were already looking at other methods that were more sensitive and definitely more reliable. I felt the focus was really on making money. I knew the company was profit-oriented, but I saw the research program directors were even more concerned with making money than with the ramifications of the disease. To that end, they were even willing to shade the truth. They told the granting agencies that we had purified "x" amount of proteins when we hadn't. I didn't like that. It's not right and it's against the law.

They were erratic about their objectives, and squelched a lot of really good scientific ideas. I felt my immediate boss had some really interesting ideas, really pertinent, but they were often squelched by very irrational pressure shifts in the group.

We were interested in a basic science project that looked more closely at the proteins involved on the surface of the virus. It was a really fascinating project, but it received very little support. I thought that the project was very attractive and would get funded. But these people go for something that's big money, like a product that can be marketed.

Unreasonable requests would be placed on us. They'd want an evaluation of antibodies or proteins, and they'd want it yesterday. They'd ask, "Why haven't you done this?" I would put them off by saying, "I don't have the blots ready, and it's going to take me some time to finish them," when in fact it would have taken half of the time to do it.

Oftentimes it would just be a matter of putting it off a day. But there were times when I'd slow something down a week. It wasn't worth it to me to stay late doing something I was uncomfortable with. They were wound up so tight that they were going to blow, but it wasn't my fault. It was a matter of my personal priorities. All I had to do was think, "How much time do I need to do this? What else do I want to do and what else is more important?"

It was a very passive sort of resistance, although it ended up being an active one. I don't want to imply that it was only motivated by a feeling that they were unethical. It was primarily motivated by

ethics, but also by anger.

It wasn't malicious; I felt what *they* were doing was malicious. I think they had other motivations that I couldn't agree with. In this day and age, when people are dying, you don't want to squander resources for the sake of making a quick profit.

HOSPITAL PERSONNEL • MALCOLM

Reward programs are a major factor in lowering morale.
— Barbara J. Andrews, Minneapolis consultant[5]

One day the three hospital workers I lived with showed me a memo the hospital put out announcing a picnic for the staff. It said you had to bring your own food. The administration thought they were doing all the workers a great favor sending them this invitation to a bring-your-own-food picnic.

We took the memo and reworded it so it said the hospital would provide steaks and a bunch of other stuff. We sent it through interoffice mail so it went to every station in the hospital. Supervisors took it as a real message and posted it around their departments. Within a few days, the administration sent out a message saying, "Disregard all previous messages about the picnic. There is still going to be a picnic. The kitchen workers will be cooking up hamburgers and hot dogs." It went from bring-your-own-food to them providing it.

Being in the right does not depend on having a loud voice.
— Chinese proverb

The hospital circulated another memo about everyone having to help cut labor costs. We replied to it by sending out one suggesting that the best way to cut costs was to move the hospital to Korea. We listed all the options for moving and some people read it and halfway believed it, then realized it just wasn't possible. It was one of those jokes that gets to the heart of the matter.

The hospital puts out two magazines, one called *Pulse* and one called *Pulsebeats*. The first is internal, for employees, and the other is for the community, although it probably never gets out of the hospital. Because the memos we put out were well-received, we took *Pulsebeats* and turned it into *Deadbeats*. It was a complete parody of the official magazine.

Deadbeats was circulated and quickly became popular at the hospital. "We don't care" buttons were made and proudly worn by workers. Other hospital workers contributed material and another issue came out. Unfortunately, there were only two issues. The administration got wind of *Deadbeats*. They seized the mail room and searched all the mail packets to stop its distribution. The second issue was the last issue but a lot of people at the hospital still flash their "We don't care" buttons.

The stuff we did was well received. We only got negative reactions from one or two people. One nurse who made a comment like, "They must have too much time on their hands." I think that nurse was administrative and her job wasn't on the line.

It was a way of gaining leverage in different employee situations that were going on. They were cost-cutting and when they started to see all the sarcasm, they tried to do something that wouldn't get as big of a rebellion going. Judging from the stuff that was coming out, they knew they had to do something.

PARAMEDIC • DANNY

I worked for a private ambulance service that employs well over a hundred people and covers an entire county in Florida. Every bit of service that we offered cost money. When we performed CPR we were supposed to charge people $25.

We were assigned to the low-income housing projects, so most of the time the people we were helping couldn't afford the services anyway. We never charged for bandages, working on wounds or for oxygen. We never charged anyone for anything. The company knew what we were doing but there was nothing they could really do about it. On every call we gave something away for free. The only thing we couldn't get away from was the mileage, the basic ambulance cost of driving to the call.

All this was a common practice among people that worked there. Fifty percent of the time I did it because the people couldn't afford to pay, and fifty percent because of resentment towards the company. They overworked us and we didn't get a raise in over a year. We were low paid and treated very badly.

One time I worked a twenty-four-hour shift twenty-one days in a row. I had some blood on one of my uniforms and I was told not to wear it again until I'd washed it. After about five days I wore that uniform again, and they fired me for doing so. About a week later they called me up because they needed the names of four patients they had transferred because they couldn't bill them unless they had their names. I said that if they gave me my job back I might tell them the names. They said, "No. If you tell us maybe you'll get your job back." I said, "You're out of your minds." Needless to say, we never talked again. They were very mad at me but they never found out who those people were. The company has since gone out of business.

The next private ambulance service I worked for paid us hardly any money and ran us into the dirt. We got $125 for each twenty-four-hour shift and there was no such thing as overtime. The job was very stressful and was like working in a sweatshop. Like the other job, my uniform had to look perfect all of the time but when you're working on people who have blood all over themselves and you're working four or five days a week, what are you going to do? Carry thirty clean uniforms with you?

The company had this very good contract for one of the cities in the county. There was a standing order with us that if any of the councilmen or special people that approved the company's contract got hurt or injured, we had to respond immediately. One day we got a call from one of these people and halfway there I quit. I stopped the ambulance, got on the radio and told them that I quit and that I was going home. They went nuts. I've never seen a group of people go so nuts before. All three owners of the company called me up on the radio but there was no way they could convince me to go to the call. They didn't care about the person who made the call as much as they cared about returning his favor. I think I really nailed them for that one.

There are anecdotal data suggesting that the most likely thief on the job tends to be highly disgruntled or dissatisfied ... where job-related motivators are inadequate, employees may tend to steal more, and accounting, audit, and access controls and physical and personnel security safeguards are merely "hygiene" factors.

— Corporate Fraud, Jack Bologna[6]

Let the employee think that he has won his battle with authority. He may feel vindicated, that he has a friend at court. Some harmless lying may do a world of good — for both parties.

— Supervisor's Factomatic, Jack Horn[7]

Today's workers are by far the best educated and most knowledgeable workers employers have ever had at their disposal. As a result of educational programs and modern communication systems, the workers of today also have the highest level of aspirations and expectations of any workers in written history. In addition, these workers also have a very real and accurate understanding of the results of their on-the-job contributions and of the economic and social realities facing their organizations and their managers.

— Influencing Employee Behavior at Work, Richard I. Henderson [8]

NURSE • ED

I deal with patients who are near death. These people have one foot in the grave and one foot on a banana peel. Most of the patients die. My job is to get these people over each crisis. I follow doctors' orders but I do a lot of my own thinking too. I have to maintain a close watch because any change, good or bad, must be recorded, so my job is very important.

It's a rare thing for a nurse to come out and say, "This doesn't work," because no one wants to believe it. It's almost taboo. Bureaucracy is a good way to maintain the appearance of a stable environment, which is more important to the corporation that owns the hospital than the basic needs of the patients and workers. Hospitals are businesses and nothing else. They see patients as problems that need to be solved in order to gain profit. Hospitals help people, but profit always comes first. What they do with the profit makes me sick. Health is not something that you make a business of.

I look at our society which exalts what we do. To them we perform miracles with our technology because we help people. We don't solve problems, we create them. We cause undue suffering and pain. We're forcing patients to live beyond what is natural. I see pain being inflicted by brilliant people, doctors, because they're following rules which are insensitive to the human beings they treat.

The number one problem among elderly people is infection, which can cause death. When the elderly are in hospitals they need antibiotics or they'll die. It is common for nurses to have an ethical problem with giving elderly people antibiotics because it prolongs their suffering. It's better for these elderly people to die if they want to. It's their right. Our society denies death. We don't want to look at it, so consequently these people suffer. The nurses document on charts that the medication was given, even when it wasn't. The corporations that make the drugs and the ones involved with boarding people in hospitals are making millions of dollars keeping these people alive. Can you imagine the amount of money they would lose if they allowed people who want to die to do so naturally?

With the patients I deal with, the only thing that is really intact is their minds. They're still human beings but aren't being treated as such. Before people are put on life support the doctors explain to the patient their critical condition and how they will do their best to help them from getting worse. They ask the patient if they want to be on life support. Anyone and everyone says yes because it's a human urge to want to live and because they don't know what is involved with their medical situation. Because they sign papers saying they want to be kept alive at any cost, it takes a load of bureaucrats and specialists to find out if the patient is mentally capable of deciding if they want the machine turned off. They would also need a good lawyer. When you're gravely ill and you want to die, you're usually in no condition to deal with the bureaucracy. I've seen patients begging to die, and the doctor

ordering their hands and legs restrained to prevent them from disconnecting the life support mechanism. Every day we would hear these people moan and scream and there's nothing we can do about it.

Let me tell you about some common forms of sabotage I know are widespread among nurses. I've seen these things happen in every hospital I've worked at, from Michigan to California.

Many times when a nurse is confronted with a person whose ventricular beats are leading toward death, they will pull the curtain around the patient's bed and shut off the monitor so it can't record any fibrillation. If the doctors try to resuscitate them, the chances of success are far less. These people are elderly, at the end of their ropes, and have multiple serious problems like kidney failures, lung problems, respiratory problems and congestive heart failures. A common situation is a patient's heart going into v-tach and v-fib and then they code. The patient will stop breathing. The nurse will wait a couple of minutes then turn the monitor back on, record the immediate information and call the code where doctors rush in to try and save the patient by various means. They have to do this by law, but it's usually too late.

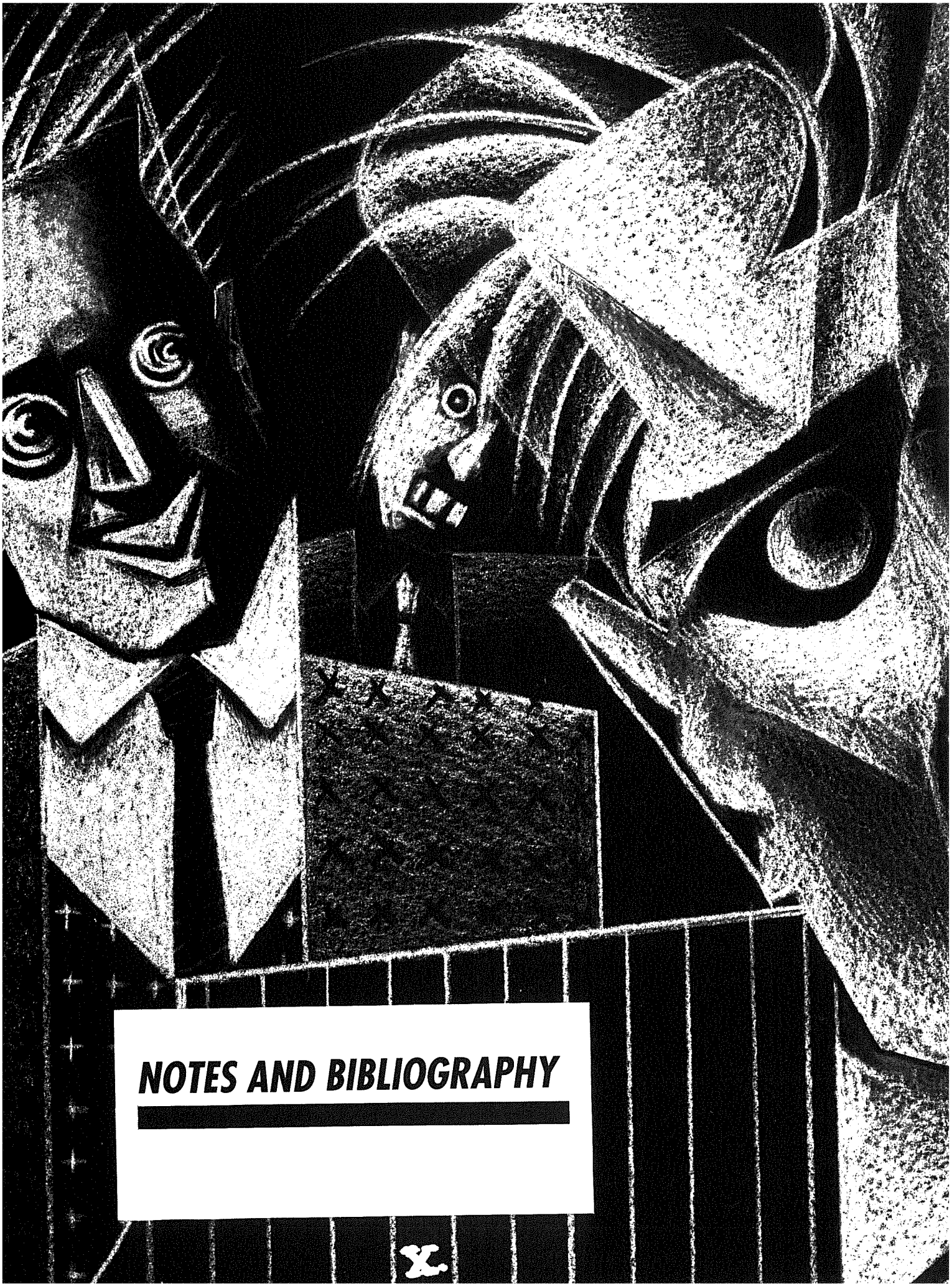
Nurses do this all of the time out of mercy and compassion for the patient. Sabotage at this level is highly illegal but it's the only way to beat a health system that does more harm than good. The medical field is not what it should be.

Few of nursing's highs surpass the one you get from recognizing subtle changes in a patient's condition, relaying the information to the physician, and thereby averting a code. You'll achieve this rich satisfaction more frequently if you have a mental checklist of dangerous signs and symptoms. Some require a stat response while others are merely urgent, but all red flags demand some level of nursing intervention.

— RN Magazine [9]

Hospitals are the only place where people aren't plotting to get something from you, the only place where man sympathizes with his fellow man.

— Céline



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