"America is the wealthiest nation on Earth, but its people are mainly poor, and poor Americans are urged to hate themselves. To quote the American humorist Kin Hubbard, 'It ain't no disgrace to be poor but it might as well be.' It is in fact a crime for an American to be poor. Every other nation has folk traditions of men who were poor but extremely wise and virtuous, and therefore more estimable than anyone with power and gold. No such tales are told by the American poor. They mock themselves and glorify their betters. The meanest eating and drinking establishment, owned by a man who is himself poor, is very likely to have a sign on its wall asking this cruel question: 'If you're so smart, why ain't you rich?' There will also be an American flag -- no larger than a child's hand -- glued to a lollipop stick and flying from the cash register.

"Americans, like human beings everywhere, believe many things that are obviously untrue. Their most destructive untruth is that it is very easy for any American to make money. They will not acknowledge how in fact hard money is to come by and, therefore, those who have no money blame and blame and blame themselves. This inward blame has been a treasure for the rich and powerful, who have had to do less for their poor, publicly and privately, than any other ruling class since, say, Napoleonic times.

"Many novelties have come from America. The most startling of these, a thing without precedent, is a mass of undignified poor. They do not love one another because they do not love themselves. Once this is understood the disagreeable behaviour of American(s) ceases to be a mystery."

-- from a fictitious monograph by the fictitious character, Howard W. Campbell, Jr.

Serving The SPECIAL Needs of Women
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Certified American Board of Obstetrics & Gynecology

TURN HERE

submitted by Kathernine Donithorne
Cottonwood Pass
Pentimento...

Editors:

Over the Sierras, returning from an artists for peace — Vietnam — demonstration in Los Angeles by way of San Francisco to get home to Boulder in time for fall semester with husband Tom and our still in arms daughter, we picked up the first single male hitchhiker we encountered to help with running starts.

My wallet had been lifted in Berkeley with most of our cash; I’d put it down trying on earrings at a street vendor’s. Back on the road our hard-starting second-hand Ford station wagon became a non-starter. Tom diagnosed it as the solenoid, but since our Colorado checks were of no use out of state we had to rely on down hills and man-powered starts, or on keeping the motor running.

Midday we stopped at a one-street Utah town for groceries. They were out of everything we wanted, but the entire town turned out to watch our rider — with sandals, embroidered tunic, and hair beads flapping — and Tom get us going, with me behind the wheel.

Ten miles or so down the highway a state trooper pulled me over. “Wanted to be sure you had enough water.”

We did, but I didn’t have a driver’s license to show.

“Too bad. You can’t trust anyone,” he critiqued my explanation, “but you’ll have to see the judge. Follow me. You drive, if you have a license,” he said pointing to Tom.

Another 15 miles brought us to a cross-road diner. The trooper motioned us to park and he parked crossways behind us. “Wait.” He went inside and came out again in seconds. “The judge isn’t here. You’ll have to wait.”

We waited, wandering outside and in for coffee (no refills), milk, and vegetables for the baby. Woman to woman, I tried to get some information about the judge from the waitress, but she eyed the hovering trooper and volunteered, “The beans are fresh.”

Other travelers came and left. We suggested our rider thumb a lift, but he refused to abandon us. He was sure the trooper had been alerted by the grocery store proprietor and it was all his fault we were stopped. “Those hicks see a hippie and go on red alert.”

We discussed smuggling me out in some traveler’s car trunk, but everyone looked over, and the trooper made frequent spot checks on me. He never did a search of us or the station wagon, however — though he did poke his head in our car window to look around. Asked about the judge he routinely replied, “He’ll be here when he gets here. You’ll just have to wait.”

Our rider pooled his resources and we shared a dinner special. When the baby got cranky, our rider tickled her with his feathers and let her finger his ¾ guitar’s slack strings. But he didn’t lift our spirits with real and imagined scenarios of the worst that could happen to us.

It was bright moonlight and there had been no road traffic for ages when the judge miraculously arrived. The trooper ushered Tom and me into a back storage room — and no I wouldn’t leave the baby in the station wagon. Behind a metal desk, I could just see a bony face and forearms resting on papers. The judge.

He decided to be lenient. The fine was twenty dollars, which he would return if I mailed him proof of a current license within two weeks. And, yes, he’d accept a check — made out to him. I wrote it, and we were out of there.

Tom became the designated driver, with uni-sex rear power. Before dawn we reached Grand Junction. Our rider got out at the south-bound highway and we parked on a hill by a monument. After a little sleep we headed for the market. “We’re in Colorado; we can use checks!”

Nope. Though Tom had photo ID, the address was out of town. Although we needed most of our remaining cash for gas, we used some for canned milk, a banana, an orange, and some peanut butter crackers.

On impulse we went to the police station with our problem. They said if we hung around we’d be charged with vagrancy and fed in jail, and that the baby would be put in a foster home.

At an auto salvage place, they wouldn’t accept a check either, but agreed to trade Tom’s new wrench set for used parts. With some haggling, Tom was allowed to use the wrench set first to fix our old Ford.

Shunning civilization, we took to unimproved _back roads, however indirect. Near sunset we made it up Cottonwood Pass, tired and disgusted. The scent of pines, a breeze with just a hint of coming winter, a circle of blackened stones where the quiet was only disturbed by the rustling of the underbrush were so inviting we went no further.

We heated up the last of some vegetables in their cans, toasted Spam on sticks, added the orange to some canned peaches. We let the baby sleep in her car bed while Tom and I sat by the fire.

It was a starry night, with no moon. We thought we saw a meteor shower. We didn’t hear, nor see, a single other vehicle. I tuned the guitar and we sang a few popular — at the time — folk songs. The last song I started was Woody Guthrie’s “This Land Is Your Land,” but the words got us to laughing so hard we couldn’t finish.

Two days later I sent the judge proof of license. Our next bank statement included the check — cashed the day after my apprehension. Later inquiries to the judge and the state received no response.

Now, they’ve gone and paved most of Cottonwood Pass, but there are still plenty of places to stop and enjoy...

K. Wills Donithorne
Belfast, Maine
ex-resident Boulder, Nederland, Black Hawk

•Colorado Central Magazine• November 2000
DETROIT FABRICATION

Granada
low riding charger
metalic green wire wheeled
fuming no knock octane
incandescent glow pales stars
radio jungles country gold
in thrall to grid lock

Grrrana-da
wheeling charger
dappled grey unshod
snorting mountain air
pale moon glow shadows
silvertone spurs jingle
love locks enthral

The slouching driver revs his horses
And picks his teeth with a stimudent.

Katherine Donithorne
1978

"The biggest mistake most people make is putting flowers in a container that's too large."

GEORGE BUSH when head of the CIA said in reference to "winning: a nuclear exchange: "I don't believe there is such a thing. You have a survivability of command and control, industrial potential, protection of a percentage of your citizens, and a capability to inflict more damage on the opposition than they on you."

In other words. OK to t destroy cities deform babies, kill, as long as tthe other guy gets it worse.

submitted by Katherine Donithorne
Welcome to our toilet earth
We live for today
For there is no tomorrow

We're a bunch of evil bastards
We don't care for the future
We just want money in our pocket

All in the name of profit
We like to rape the land
We like to create waste
Let the next generation deal with it

Live for today
Just throw it away

— Edward S. Porter
Stockton Springs

submitted by Katherine Donithorne

submitted by Katherine Donithorne
We are a race in search of the joke. It occurs to a few that the greatest joke in the world is life itself, which, aside from being pleasant, full of hope, fears, sustained interest and laughs, finally winds up with a thing called death. Death is an essential part of life, like the laugh is part of the joke. It is a sort of recognizable ending.

It is really one more ridiculous facet of the joke, then, that we are so intent upon reaching the last laugh that a good many of us are fooling around with all sorts of means to the end. Perhaps we should enjoy more the telling of this tale, the living of this life and not hasten the arrival of the punch line. After our learning has set fire to the fuse of ignorance and we have finally blown the world into a billion funny pieces, what are we going to do for an encore?

submitted by
Katherine Donithorne

WILL SET YOU FREE

From a press release issued last winter by H. Andrew Chastain, an inmate at the Crossroads Correctional Center in Cameron, Missouri.

I entered the prison system at the age of twenty in 1979 with only a seven-year sentence for nonviolent crimes. In 1984, I was sentenced to life in prison with no parole for fifty years for my alleged role as an accessory in the killing of another prisoner. I am not guilty of this killing—as a matter of fact, I attempted to prevent it from happening—but I lacked the funds necessary to retain qualified criminal representation, and my innocence was not proven.

After many years of frustration, I have come to the conclusion that my innocence may never be proven unless I am able to retain an attorney who can, and will, prove my innocence. Unfortunately, such quality legal representation can be expensive. Since I am a poor person, the only alternative I have is to offer myself in exchange for said legal representation.

I am willing to donate (or lease) one of my kidneys for $50,000—or, alternatively, to exchange a kidney for the services of legal counsel. I am also willing to donate a section of liver, bone marrow, blood/plasma (on a continuing basis), and any other organ that is non-life-threatening. I am in excellent medical condition.

It is my desire to save and/or prolong the lives of others while proving my innocence and saving my own life.

submitted by Katherine Donithorne
The trouble with life is there's no background music.
Tuesday

I am afraid on Tuesday.
Tuesday can be lost
Between Monday and Wednesday,
Chewing each other
Like the blue lips
of the toothless hound.

Wednesday

Today, I will walk all the roads,
All the paths of the world.
I will work at plowing and planting,
Help with harvests.
I will build houses and barns,
Make hinges and handles,
Tables and chairs.
I will untangle yarn,
And watch weavers at work,
Pick apples in old orchards,
Bless abandoned farms,
And all places where hollyhocks
Show that gardens once grew.
I will write a poem,
Before it is Thursday.

Eugene McCarthy’s first collection of poems, OTHER THINGS AND THE AARDVARK, was published in 1970. He is the author of nine other books as well as articles for COMMONWEAL, FOREIGN POLICY, NEW REPUBLIC, HARPER'S, and other magazines. A former university professor, he was a U.S. representative and senator from Minnesota from 1949 to 1970, and became known nationwide through his campaign for the Presidency in 1968. He now devotes most of his time to writing and lecturing, and guarding the public interest.

Katherine Donithorne
BPI Scholar of the Month